



# Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos

Vol. 13 No. 3

Hillsboro Historical Society  
Sierra County, New Mexico

August 2020

## Notification of a Change

Harley Shaw



Astute readers of our newsletter will see a change within our masthead: *Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* has a new editor! As of this issue, Joseph Britton will be gathering materials and assembling each issue. Relinquishing the position is not the result of a sudden decision or health crisis on my part; I've been working toward it for a year or so. Truth is that I sit in my office each morning working my way through a lifetime of journals and notes from past parts of my life, and I feel a yearning to deal with them all, before it's too late. A lot of the stuff, no doubt, should go to the dump, but I want to be the one to make that decision. And, as I delve into my own history, I realize I still have some thoughts I'd like to write within my chosen profession—wildlife biology and ecology. Simply said, I'm needing to focus on some personal projects.

Very shortly after Hillsboro Historical Society was founded, some of us realized the growing membership would need a source of information regarding our goals, meetings, and (hopefully) accomplishments. Interestingly enough, while recently helping our treasurer search for an early copy of the Articles of Incorporation, I discovered that the original name of our organization was Hillsboro Courthouse Preservation Society. Preserving the courthouse was our original and only goal. It took us nearly 12 years to acquire that property, and HHS has only begun to address problems of preservation and stabilization of the site. However, the interests and goals of the organization expanded so rapidly, that the original name ceased to apply. I honestly can't remember when or how we became HHS.

In addition to a means of reporting HHS activities, we also needed a place to publish articles on the history of our region. When Patty and I moved here in 2001, about the only published history I could find was *Black Range Tales* by James McKenna and *A New Mexican Family: Tafoya-Sullivan and the Origins of Sierra County* by Dr. James Sullivan. *Black Range Tales* is entertaining, but one has to read discerningly to separate the tall tales from fact. Sullivan's history focused on family history and dealt more with Monticello and Alamosa Creek than it did with Hillsboro. More detailed local history was available only in shorter articles scattered through historical journals, newspapers, private collections in university libraries and other archives, files at Geronimo Springs, and stories contributed by locals. We added at least one history article to each newsletter, pretty much on an opportunistic basis. Ergo, we published what came to hand as we approached press time. Over time, members began to contribute material, and many of our articles assumed a more professional tone.

GUAJALOTES, ZOPILOTES, Y PAISANOS

NEWSLETTER OF THE HILLSBORO HISTORICAL  
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DECEMBER 1, 2008  
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

Our first issue came out in a humble format in December, 2008 (see cover at left). I'm proud that we've managed to publish a quarterly issue steadily over the past 13 years. I hope that tradition continues and grows. In addition to maintaining the newsletter, four of us (Patti and Matti Nunn, Craig Springer, and I) worked with Arcadia Press to create *Around Hillsboro*—a photo history of our area. Our "publishing branch" then compiled the historic articles from the first 10 years of the newsletter into a book carrying the same title—*Guajalotes, Zopilotes Y Paisanos*. That was quickly followed by Garland Bill's fine biography of Sadie Orchard. And through roughly the same period, an anthology of writings about Las Animas Creek came out, *River of Spirits*. President Steve Dobrott and yours truly spearheaded that project, so HHS was certainly involved. Other books have also appeared, and interested souls will now find much more to read than was available 20 years ago.

As I began to lose the focus needed to produce an interesting quarterly, I felt obliged to help HHS find a suitable replacement before dropping the reins. I was overjoyed when Joe Britton, a former dean at the Divinity School of Yale University, volunteered (see the box below). I can only say I have no doubt that he'll do a good job, and that his new and different perspectives will rapidly show in upcoming newsletters. I'll still be around to help as needed, and might even contribute an article now and then. In the meantime, thanks, Joe, for taking over. I know HHS is in for some new and exciting ideas.

***In a letter of appreciation to Harley, HHS Board President Steve Dobrott writes:***

*On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Hillsboro Historical Society, I want to thank you for your many contributions to the Society as a Board member and to the community of Hillsboro through your long standing interest and participation in researching and chronicling the history of this region.*

*As a member of the Board, your guidance has contributed mightily to the founding and success of HHS. You developed and selflessly edited and published the HHS Newsletter for a long time and have successfully escaped this task by passing it on to a fellow Board Member. You have authored several books pertaining to historical events and places. But mostly, you have been a strong supporter of our mission.*

**Joe Britton**, new editor of this newsletter, and his wife **Karla** own Bucher House on Main Street in Hillsboro. Natives of Fort Collins, Colorado, they reside in Albuquerque where Joe is Rector (pastor) of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, and Karla is Professor of Art History at Diné College on the Navajo Nation. They first came to Hillsboro in 1982 on their honeymoon, guests of the Rev. Ed and Caroline Ostertag, who had inherited the house from her cousin, Anne Bucher (see Joe's essay "Three Lives along Percha Creek"). After visiting Hillsboro numerous times after the Ostertags retired here in 1991, Joe and Karla were thrilled to become a permanent part of the community when they purchased Bucher House in 2006. Previously they have lived in Boulder, New York City, Boston, Berkeley, Paris and New Haven, but have always counted themselves Westerners at heart. They have one son, Nico, a commercial pilot who is equally attached to Hillsboro.

*"The interesting thing about Hillsboro's history,  
is that the people themselves are so darned interesting!"*

*-- Joe Britton, Editor*

## Three Lives along Percha Creek A Family Chronicle

Joseph Britton

*I dedicate this article to my father, Charles Britton, whose own love of family histories has inspired my own. Much of the research recorded here was first done by him.*

From an obituary published in the *Sierra County Sentinel*, September 15, 1993: “*Caroline Hopewell Ostertag was one of only two descendants of four pioneer families of Sierra County in the Kingston and Hillsboro area and they were the Buchers, Zollars, Wests and the Hopewells, who were involved in the development of the mining, ranching and banking industries in Sierra County.*”

To understand the Anglo history of Sierra County, you have to know something about four pioneer families who were interrelated both in business and by marriage: the Wests, the Zollars, the Buchers, and the Hopewells. These four families were daring, ambitious, cultured, adventuresome, civically-minded, and perhaps a bit snobbish—part of an informal network of men and women who ran New Mexico as it transitioned from territorial status to statehood.

My interest in these families came through Caroline Hopewell Ostertag, who in 1973 inherited the Bucher House in Hillsboro from her second cousin, Anne Bucher (the only child of William and Carrie Bucher). In those days, the house was virtually untouched since the early 1920s, when Anne and her Auntie Zollars made an around-the-world tour, bringing back souvenirs such as a broken teapot picked up after the great 1923 earthquake in Yokohama, Japan; a beaver top hat from the millinery shops of Paris; and numerous photographs taken aboard ships, inside temples, and at country estates such as that of Lord and Lady Aberdeen in Scotland. Caroline and her husband, the Rev. Edward F. Ostertag (“Fr. O”), made the house a get-away from their life in Fort Collins, Colorado, where my wife Karla and I both grew up, and Ed was the rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. Ed and Caroline were mentors to both of us, and at a wedding shower they hosted when we were married in 1982, they presented us with a box of old skeleton keys—the keys to Bucher House, where we proceeded to spend a part of our honeymoon,

falling in love with what Caroline described as “the most charming backwater in New Mexico.”

After Ed and Caroline retired to Hillsboro in 1991, restoring and modernizing Bucher House, we visited them on numerous occasions, though Caroline died prematurely in 1993. Ed always loved to tell a good story, and even after Caroline’s death he continued to delight in recounting the tales (and perhaps some mythologies) of her ancestral family over long dinners on the porch, showing off Bucher House in the process. (He and the house were once featured in an episode of the television series, “If Walls Could Talk.”) In 2006, Ed decided he was too old to live by himself in Hillsboro any longer, and offered to sell the house to us. We understood that a *de facto* part of the agreement was that I would eventually write down the history of the four families as he had shared it with us, and I am happy at long last to have the opportunity to begin doing so here.

The invocation of “three lives” as the thread running through this essay has multiple resonances. In the first instance, it refers to three daughters of the West family of Kingston, who in turn married three local men who were business associates, thereby becoming brothers-in-law as well. “Three lives” also refers to what Fr. O described as the contours of Anne Bucher’s life, who as the succeeding generation carried on the family’s traditions first as a cowgirl in Hillsboro, then as a New York socialite, and finally as a successful businesswoman in El Paso. Yet again,

“three lives” might be thought of as referring to Bucher House itself, for it has passed from the Buchers, to the Ostertags, and now to the Brittons. The whole range of these resonances is what is invoked here, by way of celebrating the patterns of living and dying that are woven into the communities of the Black Range generally, and into the story of this extended family in particular.

## PART ONE: In- (not Out) Laws

### The Wests



*Robert and Anna West at their home in Kingston, c. 1895. Photo courtesy of Gloria Spellman.*

Robert West was born July 31, 1830, though no one, perhaps including him, seems to have known exactly where (his birthplace is variously listed in census rolls as North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Missouri). At about age 30, he married Anna Munday, from Person County, North Carolina, and sometime thereafter they ended up in the gold fields of California to seek their fortune, settling in Healdsburg in Sonoma County. From there they moved on to Cripple Creek and Victor, Colorado, though too late to strike it rich, and so finally came to the silver mines of Kingston, New Mexico arriving there sometime around 1885.

Robert had some success as a miner, and also became a judge. He briefly went to Arizona to scout out prospects there, but after five months returned to Kingston having concluded that Arizona would never amount to anything. When he died in 1899, he was buried in the Kingston cemetery.

The Wests had five children: a son, Charles (1860); and four daughters, Gertrude (1861), Caroline (“Carrie,” 1867), Anne (or Anna, c. 1876), and Mary (“Mamie,” 1878, who died at age 10 and is buried next to her father). As the mother of the family, Anna became something of a matriarch over the extended family as it grew, and was affectionately known as “Mama West.” She died in 1916, and is buried in the family plot in the Hillsboro cemetery.

Among the children, Charles was known as something of a drunkard and ne’er-do-well, though he did work as a store clerk and became postmaster in Hillsboro in 1914. He never married, and when he died in 1917, he was also buried in Hillsboro, next to his mother. What is most interesting, however, is that each of the surviving three daughters married men who were in varying degrees business partners (and therefore brothers-in-law as well), and it was these three families who together had a significant impact on the economic and social development of the Kingston and Hillsboro area.

### The Zollars



*John Zollars*

The first daughter to marry was Gertrude (October 1, 1889), whose husband was John W. Zollars. He was born in 1857 in Canton, Ohio. By 1878, he had entered the banking business in Leadville, Colorado, serving as cashier of the Lake County Bank in 1878 (later renamed the First National Bank) with his partner J. F. Eshelman (also from Canton). He had been married briefly at least once before, to Anna Rhoades of Ohio, who nearly died of “Pyæmia” (blood poisoning) in 1880. Having recovered, she moved with her husband from



Leadville to El Paso in 1882. He became the first cashier of the First National Bank, being a first cousin of the bank's president, Joshua Reynolds (or Reynolds), also from Canton, and one of the most prominent bankers in the southwest. Zollars served as a director of the bank for many years, acquiring considerable stock in the institution, and was also associated with U. S. Stewart, who became president of the City National Bank, and Charles R. Morehead, eventual president of the State National Bank.

The Zollars moved to Kingston in 1884, but Anna died of a recurrence of the "terrible disease" the following year. John became cashier of the Percha Bank—the first banking institution in Sierra County, originally established by Vincent Wallace—and later purchased it with Norman Raff and Jefferson Reynolds, inviting his cousin W. H. Bucher (about whom more in a moment) to join the enterprise as Assistant Cashier. (The bank building, built in 1885 by Oliver Wilson, still stands on Kingston's main street, having served as a Post Office and now as an art gallery, but containing the original safe and cashier's windows, as well as photos of Zollars and Bucher hanging in the lobby.) Given the gradual decline of Kingston's silver mines, the cousins started to look downstream to the gold mines of Hillsboro and founded the Sierra County Bank there in 1889, with Zollars as the president and Bucher as cashier. (It too still stands, now a private residence, but clearly marked as the former bank.)



*The Sierra County Bank, Hillsboro, 1890s.  
Photo courtesy of Gloria Spellman.*

Zollars soon left the Hillsboro bank primarily in the hands of Bucher, and spent most of his time in

Kingston. The bank seems to have flourished, increasing in net assets from \$89,160 in 1896 to \$235,129 in 1907 (or \$2,750,000 and \$6,481,000, respectively, in today's dollars), though thereafter it began to decline along with the region's mining industry. Jefferson Reynolds (brother of Joshua) apparently bought the bank, retaining Zollars as vice president and Bucher as cashier. Zollars also had interests in a number of Sierra County mines, as well as the McNary timber operation, headed by the prominent El Paso businessman James G. McNary.

By 1899, John and Gertrude had moved to Las Vegas (then known as the "Anglo capital of New Mexico"), where he served as vice-president and manager of the First National Bank, which was among the most important banking institutions in territorial New Mexico. In the community, he was head of the Las Vegas Oratorio Society, which gave its first concert in March of 1899 in the chapel of the Normal School (now Highlands University). He and Gertrude embarked on a world tour in 1913-14, but he died in 1915 at the Cramer Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where he and Gertrude had been residing for the previous six months after returning from Europe. He had been in poor health for two years, undergoing several operations. He is buried in the West Lawn Cemetery in Canton. Upon his death, U. S. Stewart remarked, "Mr. Zollars was a man of sterling character and great business ability, and had a host of friends in the southwest."<sup>1</sup>

A very proper person, Zollars always wore a coat and tie. He was a Mason, member of the El Paso First Baptist Church, Chamber of Commerce, and Toltec Club (a downtown men's social club), and known as a great patriot. The story is told that on one of his last trips to El Paso, he was a passenger on the Southern Pacific's Golden State Limited. While he was talking in the smoking compartment about the Mexican situation with some El Paso friends, "a young American, well-dressed and with a know-it-all air, undertook to tell the smoking room party what Mexico would do to the

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<sup>1</sup> "John W. Zollars Dies in the East," *El Paso Herald*, 20 November 1915, p. 1. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

United States in the event of a war and how our army would fall in the field. Always tolerant of others' views, Mr. Zollars could not tolerate this patronizing talk long and in a mild but firm way, told the young man that he should be ashamed of himself and that he was making a fool of himself ... [The young man] left the smoking compartment in embarrassment."<sup>2</sup> At his death, John and Gertrude had been married 11 years, but had no children; and although he died early, he left Gertrude a wealthy woman. When the First National Bank of El Paso failed in 1931, however, Gertrude's income went virtually overnight from several thousand dollars a month to just \$90, or about \$1,400 in today's dollars. Thereafter she mostly resided with family, especially the Buchers and their daughter Anne in particular.

### The Buchers



*W. H. Bucher*

The second of the West daughters to marry was Caroline, only two months after her sister, to John Zollars' cousin and business partner, William Henry Bucher (December 17, 1889). Bucher was also from Canton, born in 1859 to a prosperous family in the dry goods business, and seems to have come to El Paso around the same time as his cousin ("about the time the railroads came," as his obituary later put it), perhaps having come to the Southwest to seek a cure for tuberculosis. Through Joshua Reynolds, he too became a stockholder in the First National Bank, and also in the First National Bank of Albuquerque and that of Las Vegas. He also moved from El Paso to Kingston, soon after as his cousin Zollars (his first recorded transaction there was a land purchase in 1887).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

His wife Caroline was a school teacher, having received a teaching certificate in 1886 while still in California with the Wests, and then again upon her move to Sierra County in 1887. In addition to his involvement with the Percha and Sierra Banks, Bucher began acquiring a variety of mining claims and delving into other business interests, such as a correspondence in 1891 with Edison General Electric about installing a power plant in Hillsboro. He also bought an interest in the Pitchfork Ranch north of Hillsboro, and had five cattle brands registered under his name (three in Hillsboro and two in Cuchillo).

The Buchers' daughter and only child, Anne, was born in Kingston, September 23, 1892. Following the silver crash of 1893, the family decided to relocate to Hillsboro. In 1896 they purchased a house from George and Adelaida Alert Perrault at the corner of Third and Main Streets in Hillsboro. (The house, now known as "Bucher House," is shown on the 1893 Sanborn-Perris insurance map, and had passed through five owners between 1890 and 1896. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1995.) Originally the house had only three rooms, but was enlarged after the 1914 flood swept the front wall away.

Active in Democratic politics, Bucher was the elected treasurer of Sierra County from 1889-94. He was a founding member in 1896 of the Hillsboro "Bryan & Sewall Club," along with his brother-in-law W. S. Hopewell, whose members in the age of William Jennings Bryan pledged themselves "to the support of only such persons for office who are in favor of the Free and Unlimited Coinage of Silver and Gold, independent of foreign nations ..."<sup>3</sup> Bucher later switched his party affiliation and became chairman of the Republican county convention in 1908. This gathering passed a resolution that "endorsed and approved the administration of President Roosevelt," and Bucher was elected a delegate to the national party convention in

<sup>3</sup> "Bryan and Sewall Club of Hillsboro, New Mexico," *Sierra County Advocate*, 23 October 1896, p. 1. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc\\_advocate\\_news/1608](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc_advocate_news/1608).

Chicago in June that same year. He was nominated to run for the State Legislature in 1911 “because of the principals [he] represents as well as for [his] sterling worth as a man.”<sup>4</sup> As a local community leader, Bucher was partly responsible in 1907 for the building of a 400-foot dyke at the juncture of the two Percha Creeks west of Hillsboro; he served as a scorekeeper for the Happy Flats baseball team (which was not very good — in August of 1908 they lost a game to the Sierra Browns, 31-5); was an examiner of teachers; and was involved in organizing a Red Cross Chapter for Sierra County in 1917, serving as its first president. He had an interest in music, demonstrated by an Edison graphophone concert he gave in Sing Hall in June 1906, with “a fine selection rendered by the operator which was highly appreciated by a large audience.”<sup>5</sup>

Like Zollars, Bucher was a Mason, 32<sup>nd</sup> degree. Full member membership in the Scottish Rite was conferred upon him in 1903, after which Hillsboro boasted of having the largest class of 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Masons of any town in the territory. Two years later, Bucher hosted the traditional Maundy

Thursday gathering of the Masons at his own home, where they partook of “the time-honored ‘White Lamb,’ dear to the heart of every 32-degree Mason.” The meal was of such a convivial and delectable sort that it was “a very bountiful and enjoyable repast; so much so that one brother ... created suspicion by eating so heartily, and upon being asked if he had eaten anything since

breakfast unblushingly replied: ‘No; and after looking upon all these good things spread before us, I am very, very sorry that I breakfasted at all this morning.’”<sup>6</sup>

Bucher continued to develop his business interests. In 1892, he became the treasurer and an insurance agent for a new local branch of the Fidelity Building and Loan Association. In 1917, he served as one of three founding directors of the LangSol Mining and Development

Company, based in the town of Cutter, New Mexico. As Hillsboro declined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, Bucher shifted much of his business activity to El Paso. Among other ventures, he was involved with the wholesale grocer James A. Dick, and the Elite Confectionary



*A West family gathering: Robert West, Anne West, William Bucher and unknown woman (back row); Anne West Hopewell, friend Will Robins, Carrie West Bucher, Anne Bucher, Charles West and Robert Hopewell, Clara and Grace Robins (middle row), and Ella Bucher (Will's sister, front), c. 1898.*

*Photo courtesy of Gloria Spellman.*

<sup>4</sup> “Republicans Have Splendid Meeting,” *Sierra County Advocate*, 3 November 1911, p. 3. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc\\_advocate\\_news/2379](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc_advocate_news/2379).

<sup>5</sup> “Local News,” *Sierra County Advocate*, 01 June 1906, p. 3. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc\\_advocate\\_news/2100](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc_advocate_news/2100).

<sup>6</sup> “Local News,” *Sierra County Advocate*, 28 April 1905, p. 3. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc\\_advocate\\_news/2044](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc_advocate_news/2044).

<sup>7</sup> For more on Cutter, see “A Young Hillsboro ‘David’ takes on a Territorial ‘Goliath’: Edward Tittman goes to Washington to Keep the County Seat,” *Guajalotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos* 13.2 (May 2020), pp. 5-10.

which was involved in ice-making and ice cream. The family residence nonetheless remained in Hillsboro, and when his wife and daughter came to El Paso, they stayed either in the Cortez or Paso del Norte Hotels. In 1933, Bucher purchased a half-interest in the First Mortgage Company Building—also known as the First National Building—through the Bucher-Hill Corporation. (The fifteen-story building, designed by the Dallas architects Bargelbaugh and Whitson in 1921, is not to be confused with the adjacent seven-story First National Bank of 1910, designed by the well-known local architect Henry C. Trost, whose firm also designed the high school in Hillsboro.<sup>8</sup>) The First Mortgage Company Building itself contained some of the most sought-after business and professional office space in the city, and was later successfully managed by Bucher's daughter, Anne. At the time of his death from a heart attack in 1935, having been in poor health for the previous three years, he owned at least five mines, including the Comstock, Equator, Seaside, Lady Franklin, and Templar mines all within a few miles of each other near Kingston. Described in his obituary as a "pioneer real estate man, banker, and cattleman,"<sup>9</sup> he too is buried in the family plot in the Hillsboro cemetery.

## The Hopewells



*Willard Hopewell*

The last of the West daughters to marry was Anne (November 10, 1892), whose husband was Willard Sherman Hopewell. He was born in Chester, England in 1847 or 1848. According to one account, he ran away from home in 1863 going first to Halifax,

Nova Scotia for school, and later on a trip through Central and South America. According to this account, he successfully entered the coffee business in Chile, and then came to the United States, first engaging in business in Denver (including the introduction of trolley cars), followed by involvement in the Colorado mining districts of Leadville and San Juan County, finally moving to Las Palomas, New Mexico. An alternative account is that Hopewell went to Canada in 1862 to join his uncle in blockade running during the American Civil War, then to Denver in 1869 and from there to South America for two and a half years, returning around 1874 to Leadville. Yet another version is that he was schooled in private schools in England before coming to Halifax to work as a blockade runner in 1864-65, after which he lived in Jamaica, West Indies for two years, coming to the United States in 1866. According to this account, he resided in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio and California, before working as a trader in Central and South America, coming to New Mexico in 1889.

In any case, Willard Hopewell was clearly an adventurous and colorful character, and he may have first encountered John Zollars when they were both in Leadville. After arriving in New Mexico, he organized the Las Animas Land and Cattle Company, building up herds that reportedly totaled as many as 60,000 head. He bought the Great John Cross holdings, and the Ladder and Hermosa Ranches. He also acquired a number of mining properties, such as the Fresno, Home Stake, Caledonia, Rattlesnake, Katherine, Lilliput, and Hibernian mines. Having served as a first sergeant in the Chaffee Light Artillery in Colorado, he was made captain in the New Mexico National Guard by Governor Otero, later rising to the rank of colonel (he was always known in later life as "Colonel Hopewell"). He became involved in Democratic politics, being one of the county commissioners who helped to organize Sierra County, and served in the Territorial Legislature in 1892-93.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Patricia P. Sze, "Hillsboro High School," *Guajalotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* 2.4 (November 2009), pp. 4-11.

<sup>9</sup> "W. H. Bucher, Pioneer, Dies," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 October 1935, p. 1, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>10</sup> For an account of one of Hopewell's (mis)adventures, see Mark Thompson's "Did Two Hillsboro Heavyweights Bring Down a Lightweight New Mexican

Hopewell married Sarah (Daisy?) Fuller of Hillsboro in 1885, but divorced her in 1887. He was also briefly married to Ella Arbackle (Arbuckle?), with whom he had one child. From his marriage to Anne West in 1892, two sons were born: first Robert (1896) and then Willard (1898).

In 1900, Hopewell came to Albuquerque, where he became associated with several railroad companies (The New Mexico Central; The Albuquerque Eastern; The Albuquerque, Durango & Gulf; and the Torrance, Roswell & Gulf. The lines were put out of business, however, by competition from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe). A true visionary, his goal was to connect New Mexico with the wealth of Caribbean, and his obituary named his greatest achievement as the building of the 117-mile New Mexico Central from Santa Fe to Torrance. At least two stations on the railroads were named by Hopewell: Vera Blanca, south of Santa Fe, whose name was taken from his ranch home; and Willard, which was at the intersection of the Santa Fe Central with the A.T.&S.F. in Torrance County. (The town of Hopewell in Rio Arriba County is also named for him, based on the cattle interests he had there.) Hopewell was also involved with New Mexico Fuel & Iron, which owned and operated the Hagan coal mines. At least some of these business dealings got Hopewell into political and legal trouble: for instance, a scandal involving timber land purchases made from the Territory in 1906 in the Manzano Mountains by the Pennsylvania Development Company (a railroad construction company of which Hopewell was general manager), made its way to Theodore Roosevelt's White House, and although the governor's action in making the transfer was found to be "illegal and improper" by a Territorial House Special Committee,<sup>11</sup> Hopewell never seems to have been censured or fined. He was chair of the Board of Control for the Sixteenth National Irrigation

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Territorial Governor?", *Guajalotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* 8.2 (May 2015), pp. 3-10.

<sup>11</sup> "Governor's Action Illegal and Improper," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 18 March 1907, p. 1.  
[https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sfnm\\_news/6575](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sfnm_news/6575).

Congress, held in Albuquerque in 1908, whose goal was to "save the forests, store the floods, reclaim the deserts, and make homes on the land."<sup>12</sup> He was then appointed by Governor Curry to the Seventeenth National Irrigation Congress held in Spokane in 1909 (as was W. H. Bucher), and played a leading role in developing Elephant Butte dam and reservoir around 1911.

Hopewell died in 1919, after visiting a mine near Salt Lake City where he became chilled and contracted pneumonia. He was on a trip representing the New Mexico Cattle and Horse Growers' Association at a conference on the use of public lands. After an Episcopal service at his home in Albuquerque, he was buried with Masonic honors at Fairmont Cemetery. The day of his death, the city commissioners passed a resolution acknowledging "the loss of a citizen ever having at heart the welfare and advancement of his home town and state he loved so well."<sup>13</sup> He was survived by his two sons, Robert and Willard. Each had one daughter—the two descendants of the Wests mentioned in Caroline Ostertag's obituary at the beginning of this essay. Caroline was born to Robert Hopewell and Martha Miller in 1932, and as a young woman was close to Anne Bucher. When in 1973 Caroline inherited Bucher House in Hillsboro and several mines in Kingston from her, they were ironically the last remaining ties of these pioneer families to Sierra County.



*The West/Bucher/Ostertag family plot, Hillsboro Cemetery. Photo by the author.*

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<sup>12</sup> "Sixteenth National Irrigation Congress," *Roswell Daily Record*, 21 July 1908, p. 1.  
[https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/roswell\\_record\\_news/1491](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/roswell_record_news/1491).

<sup>13</sup> "W. S. Hopewell, Railway Builder, Pioneer, Dies," *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 14 August 1919, p. 3.  
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84031081/1919-08-14/ed-1/seq-2/>.



So the three families descended from Robert and Anna West—the Zollars, the Buchers, and the Hopewells—were all bound together by a remarkable intertwining of business and personal interests. They shared powers of attorney, loans, mortgages, traded land and mines between them, and celebrated holidays together. Yet the times were still rough and tumble. In 1902, for example, W. H. Bucher was the victim of a bank robbery in broad daylight at the Sierra County Bank. According to an account published in the *Socorro Chieftain*, two men entered town by way of the North Percha road. After reconnoitering to be certain the bank was empty of customers, “they entered, and throwing down ... Mr. W. H. Bucher, the cashier, and Mr. Lee Crews, the clerk, demanded, ‘Hands up.’ One of the men stepped to the door and closed it and drew the curtains. After effecting the robbery the holdups marched Mr. Bucher and Mr. Crews out through the back yard to the corral, and, mounting their horses, the robbers rode out of town by the way they had come.” They were never caught, though they were spotted several times while making their escape.<sup>14</sup> Bucher is also recorded as having been the victim in 1906 of “the larceny of a calf,” for which the thieves were held in prison for several months before being released on bond.<sup>15</sup> Such episodes remind us of the frontier spirit that was still very much alive and well at the time these families were helping to “civilize” Sierra County.

But the strongest common thread of the three brothers-in-law was their respective marriages to the three West sisters, Gertrude, Caroline, and Anne—and it is to their story that we will turn in a second installment of this family chronicle ...

<sup>14</sup> “Sierra County Bank Held Up in Broad Daylight,” *Socorro Chieftain*, 20 December 1902, p. 3. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/socorro\\_c\\_news/259](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/socorro_c_news/259).

<sup>15</sup> “Local News,” *Sierra County Advocate*, 01 June 1906, p. 3. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc\\_advocate\\_news/2100](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sc_advocate_news/2100).

### *A note about sources*

*This essay is the result of the intertwining of several distinct sources. In the first instance, my father did extensive archival research into these four families after my wife Karla and I purchased Bucher House. These archives include The Rev. Edward Ostertag Collection at the Institute of Historical Survey Foundation, Las Cruces, directed by Evan Davies. This collection contains diaries, papers and photo albums of Anne Bucher, as well as diaries of Anna West and Gertrude Zollars. Additional papers of Anne Bucher are at the Branson Library Archives and Special Collections at New Mexico State University. My father’s research also took him to various sources such as census records, recorded land transactions, and registered cattle brands, and the Willard S. Hopewell papers at the Center for Southwestern Research at the University of New Mexico’s Zimmerman Library. The online Digital Repository at UNM provides invaluable access to local newspapers of the time, as does the Library of Congress’ Chronicling America website and the subscription service Newspapers.com. Hillsboro’s Gloria Spellman (who as a girl knew the Buchers personally) has also shared conversations and photos, as well as Gary Sapp (who for a time owned and lived in the Bucher home in El Paso).*

*My gratitude and appreciation to all who have assisted in this project!*



*Members of the prosperous and very proper Zollars, Bucher, and Hopewell families. (Left to right) Anne Bucher, Willard Hopewell, John Zollars, Bob Hopewell, and Gertrude Zollars, c. 1910. Photo courtesy of the Black Range Museum.*



## President's Message

Steve Dobrott

Stepping out from under my President's hat, I would like to broaden my usual audience to include not just the Hillsboro Historical Society but our community at large.

I have been thinking of late of the current circumstances our community is in and has been enduring for the last 5 months. At first, social distancing was novel and masks were recommended but not mandatory as they are now. Folks are becoming weary of staying at home and away from each other. This is not what Hillsboro is about!

I have observed our citizens doing their best to comply with state regulations while trying to maintain some semblance of community spirit and operation. But recently I have noticed our community spirit waning: the spirit that brought us to Hillsboro. The spirit that inspired our sense of well-being and purpose seems, if not dormant, to be succumbing to the lack of social stimulation that once brought us together and formed the community that we love. Whether it be the Museum, Community Center or just a small gathering over a cup of coffee around a table at the General Store Cafe, we miss it!

With the numbers of Covid cases still growing in New Mexico and surrounding states, it seems entirely possible that it will not be safe to resume our preferred way of life any time soon. Our smiling faces will likely be covered in public for the foreseeable future. Handshakes and hugs will be hesitant, if at all. How can we maintain the life-blood of this community—its businesses, Historical Society, Community Center, Library and churches if we have to go on for another 6 months to a year of isolation from each other. The prognosis seems dire. So, where is the good news you say? Well, so far, we are relatively safe and well.

We can't do much about the virus as it has to run its course, but we can continue to be diligent and respectful of each other. In order for our non-profits to sustain this period of limited and non-use, we must continue to support them if we want them to remain viable. Therefore my message to you today is in the form of an appeal not only to HHS members, but to the community at large. We must continue to support our prized institutions and businesses if we want to come out of this intact as a community. Please continue to donate what you can to HHS, the Community Center, Library and your church, all of which have bills to pay even while closed.

Without a sense of community, we are not a community. I believe in this community— including Kingston, Lake Valley, Berrenda and Animas Creek citizens—who are just as concerned as me and are grappling for ways to hold on to what we all hold dear.

So, members and fellow citizens, now is not the time to feel sorry for our selves but to be thankful that we are safe and well and have caring neighbors. It is also the time to step-up our monthly giving in order to preserve what makes our community special and worth maintaining, for us and for future generations.

***Please turn to the monthly giving form on the next page to make your commitment.***



### **After being closed, we'll be ready to be open!**

A handsome new handicap accessible entry porch and stone retaining wall are in place at the Historical Society's Museum. Designed by Steve Morgan and built by Bruce Cospers of Black Range Construction, the project also had help from Nichole Trushell and Steve Dobrott.

*The Museum remains closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

*Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos*  
is the quarterly newsletter of the:

**Hillsboro Historical Society**

P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro, New Mexico 88042  
www.hillsboronmhistory.info  
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The mission of the Hillsboro Historical Society is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of Hillsboro, Kingston, and the surrounding area. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.  
All donations are tax deductible.

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**KEEP THE LIGHTS ON!**

**Yes!** I want to help HHS "keep the lights on" as well as maintain its sites and grow. I understand that becoming a member of the monthly giving program entitles me to all benefits of membership.

By returning this pledge form, I understand that the account listed below will be billed monthly.

**Please choose your monthly giving amount below. The program requires a \$15 minimum pledge per month:**

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*Thank you!*