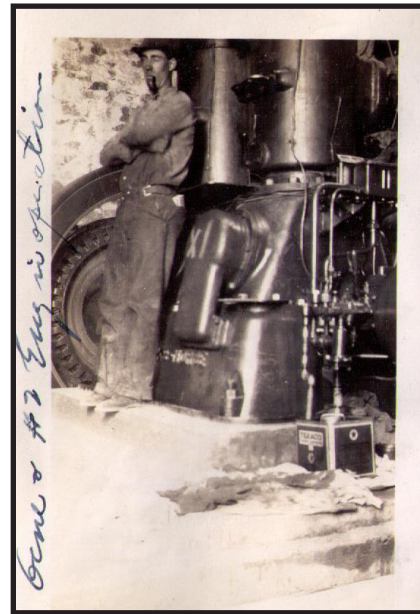



Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos

Vol. 11 No. 1 Hillsboro Historical Society February 2018

How Ice cubes came to Hillsboro
J. D. Witham's collection comes to Kingston.
New Board Members



Photos: Hillsboro Power Plant. Generator no. 2, tended by John Gnauck. Hillsboro's first power poles. Tom Ying's refrigerator and ice cube trays.

President's Message



Greetings. I hope this finds everyone healthy and looking forward to a new year. Due to the benevolence of the membership and board, I am serving another term as your President.

I want to welcome Nichole Trushell and Bob Barnes to the Board...thank-you for volunteering your time and energy.

I also want to thank outgoing board members Sonja Franklin and Steve Elam. Their presence on the board will be missed.

We have several things planned this year; restoration of the water tower, continual work on the museum building, landscaping the backyard and creating our outside displays. There will be an open house in June to present the landscape plan. Garland, Barbara and volunteers are proud to report the inventory of the museum contents is almost complete, exceeding 3200 entries so far.

We so appreciate their hard work, interest, and support. Happy New Year.... Larry



Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos is the quarterly newsletter of the:
Hillsboro Historical Society
P. O. Box 461
Hillsboro, New Mexico, 88042

The mission of Hillsboro Historical Society's 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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President: Larry Cospér

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Newsletter Editor: Harley Shaw

The title for this newsletter is inspired by the association of Hillsboro and Kingston with Percha Creek. The name Percha may derive from the fact that turkeys "perch" or roost along it. Perhaps there were more historically than there are now. Of course, Hillsboro and Kingston both have their own seasonal vulture (zopilote) roosts, so the term remains appropriate. Paisanos are countrymen or friends, a term that applies to us humans who also "roost" here. In our small towns, we are extremely diverse in roots, religion, and politics, yet we remain countrymen. In keeping with the avian title motif, in the Southwest roadrunners, which also live within the Percha Creek watershed, are called paisanos.



Hillsboro Historical Society News

Everyone gets busy with family matters during the holidays, and volunteer commitments are laid aside. Even so, a lot has transpired in HHS since the fall newsletter. As noted by Larry in the President's column, we have two new board members, both bringing a tremendous amount of historical knowledge and administrative experience to the board.

Nichole Trushell had already functioned as a board member, filling the slot abandoned by Sonja Franklin, whose health forced her to resign. Sonja is one of the founders of HHS, and she will be missed. She's still around, however, and we'll be leaning on her historical knowledge, even if she isn't attending meetings.

Nichole hit the ground running and she and her spouse and business partner, Steve Morgan, have already designed a landscaping plan for the Museum property. Anyone who attended Christmas in the Foothills got a look at that plan, if they stopped at the Historical Society booth. Work on the grounds has begun, and an outdoor event is planned for June 6 to show progress. Note the announcement on page seven.

Bob Barnes is no stranger to anyone interested in Black Range history. For several years, he has maintained the Black Range Rag website, which has become the go-to place to look up Hillsboro history and news. That site can still be visited at www.blackrange.org, and Bob continues to add online information on two new sites: blackrange2.org and blackrange3.org. He, too, has arrived on the board in full motion and provides the feature article for this issue of *Guajolotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos*.

Tom and Satomi Lander are ready to begin restoration of the water tower at the museum. They will be coordinating with Nichole and Steve in the overall landscape plan for the property. So far, our communications with various historians around the state have revealed no other small water towers similar to ours. Insofar as we can determine, the tower was built for Tom Ying sometime in the 1920s. We have no idea who built it, but the person was a skilled adobe artisan. The presence of the tower reminds us of how small details of history slip away unrecorded. It also reminds us that a little curiosity and awareness can reveal significance in seemingly obscure and small artifacts.



Our building committee, made up of Garland Bills, Steve Dobrott, Harley Shaw, and Rand Berger, has begun planning and prioritizing stabilization and restoration for the museum building proper. We will be applying for grants from various historical preservation organizations and looking for dollars wherever we can find them. The building is badly in need of protection from the elements, and needs better indoor climate control. Volunteers tending the shop on winter days shouldn't have to wear long johns and ear muffs. And by May, they'll be digging out those Chinese folding fans left by Tom Ying.

And speaking of the museum volunteers, we have to thank profusely those folks who show up on those cold mornings and patiently wait for customers. These include Barb Lovell, Ruth Miller, Susan Stowall, Claire Avallone, Linda King, Chelsi Brown, and Garland Bills.

New Collection Donated

When Joseph David (JD) Whitham first came to Kingston, he, like so many others, was searching for the illusive wealth that the mines could offer. He left West Virginia in 1883 leaving his wife and three children behind. By February 1884 he was well enough established that he was able to move his family to Kingston to join him.

JD continued his mining activities but also began looking around for other opportunities to supplement his income. He undertook several business ventures, but, in every case, he seemed to end up with someone else's debt. He was a very honest and trusting individual who assumed that his business partners were the same. Unfortunately, this was not the case. "I have been treated in a way that I never thought one human being could treat another" (from his diary, December, 1888).

In addition to mining, JD was a surveyor. He surveyed the east end of Kingston for a water system. However, we're not sure that it was ever installed. He also surveyed the ranch that he lived on three miles east of Kingston and numerous mining claims and lots in and around Kingston.

JD purchased the *Kingston Shaft* newspaper in on May 31, 1887. He sold it on March 5, 1889, again being left with it's debts. He was a prolific writer and it was a great outlet for him. His proudest accomplishment was a play entitled "16 to 1, or The Appeal of the West for the Free Coinage of Silver". It was performed in the Hillsboro County Courthouse on May 12, 1894.

His third major endeavor was the construction of a toll road at his ranch which he began in 1889. He labored for many hours over a two year period constructing and maintaining the

road only to eventually shut it down and saying that he never made over \$5.00 in any one day.

He was also a Justice of the Peace in Kingston. In March 1887 he was accused of "Extortion and Oppression while in office". On April 18 he was arrested and put under guard for two hours before the case was ultimately dismissed. He could not meet his debt payments and a settlement offer was not accepted at that time.

JD established a branch of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in Kingston. He traveled around the country attending their reunions. He was responsible for the establishment of the Kingston cemetery and personally installed the fence around it's 10 acres. A disastrous fire in 1890 burned the north side of Main Street and the GAR Hall was destroyed along with it's Civil War flags and other memorabilia.

JD and his wife moved to Denver where he died in 1908. His 3 children, Datemus, Xavia and Bronte remained on the ranch outside of Kingston. Date was a miner in Kingston while the two girls taught school in Hillsboro.

The Kingston Schoolhouse Museum was recently given the entire Whitham collection by Barbara and Joe Whitham of Dallas, Texas. Joe is the great-grandson of J. D. Whitham. The collection inclues photos, documents, books, diaries, newspapers and other miscellaneous artifacts which span 5 generations. Included are JD's brass surveying instruments, his civil war artifacts (12th W. Va. Inf), diaries from 1852-1892, many early Kingston photos, his many writings and much more.

This collection has provided a wealth of information regarding the early history of Kingston. We are planning an open house in the fall where we will display some of these many wonderful artifacts.

Black Range Museum Events

We are open Friday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. The Sadie Orchard-Tom Ying display opened April 15. HHS meets during winter months on the second Tuesday of each month, 5 pm at the Community Center. Everyone interested in our local heritage is invited. We are always looking for new members and volunteers. Members/Volunteers are the backbone of our society, and we welcome your ideas.

Its Cold Inside - Hillsboro Refrigeration**

Robert Barnes

**If you have received this article in electronic form it contains links to source material. Link addresses are provided for hard-copy readers.

On September 26, 1931, Fleischer Studios released a Betty Boop cartoon entitled “Minding The Baby.” It contains the wonderful line “the ice man still brings ice you see, but our ice box runs with ‘tricity’.” The world was changed dramatically by electricity, including - perhaps - a need for “the ice man” to be more discreet.

In 1930, a power plant (**pictured below**) was constructed in Hillsboro.¹ The building is



now a private residence. It is now difficult to imagine, but this home once housed coal, and, later, diesel generators to provide Hill-

sboro with the juice to run all of those new electric appliances.

Various companies began competing for service areas. An electric company in Las Cruces was selling appliances in Hillsboro by 1931. Sierra Electric Cooperative was formed in 1941, with its headquarters in Hillsboro – five years after the county seat had moved to Hot Springs (1936). By April, 1947 the Cooperative was duking it out with Hot Springs in the New Mexico Supreme Court. A little matter of jurisdiction.² The powerhouse remained in operation until 1952. Without this bit of history the rest of this story could not be told. Electricity brought significant changes to Hillsboro.

The following is transcribed from the vid-

1 The construction of the power plant was part of the use of technology for political, not just social, purposes. For other examples, see “Technology, Politics, and the Decline of a Sierra County Seat: Hillsboro, 1884-1939”, James B. Sullivan, Southern New Mexico Historical Review, Volume IX, No. 1, January 2002. (<http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/HistoricalReview/2002/HistoricalReview2002.pdf>).

eo interview of Federico Antonio Chavez Luna (**photo below**).²

Barnes: “When did electricity come to Hillsboro?”

Luna: “...I don’t remember. Bob Kinock was the one who built the building, from El Paso, and put up two motors up there for the lights. They would repair one motor, run it for a month, then they would stop it and start the other one, repair it and start it - that’s where we would get the light.”



Barnes: “What was it like before?”

Luna: “...that’s about it, kerosene light, I still got mine back in my trailer...”

In other discussions Luna told of the flickering lights and limited hours of operation, but even with those disincentives, it was the flickering wave of the future.

One citizen who foresaw this future was Tom Ying³ (**next page**). Ying owned a restaurant in Hillsboro, and on or about May 18, 1931, he bought a refrigerator from the Las Cruces electric company. The salesperson was Hudson Murrell. In the spring of 1995, in an interview by

2 View: Federico Antonio Chavez Luna Interview (<https://vimeo.com/user21669494/the-black-range-interviews/video/125336359>)

3 For more information about Tom Ying see: Guajalotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos, May 2016, Volume 9, Number 2 “[The Black Range Museum](http://www.blackrange.org/The_Black_Range_Rag/Guajalotes,_Zopilotes,_y_Paisanos_files/May%202016%20Vol.%209%20No%202.pdf)” pp. 4-7 by Harley Shaw, Garland Bills, and Barbara Lovell (http://www.blackrange.org/The_Black_Range_Rag/Guajalotes,_Zopilotes,_y_Paisanos_files/May%202016%20Vol.%209%20No%202.pdf) and “Tom Ying’s meal tickets - Chinese translated” (<http://hillsborohistory.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-03-28T05:40:00-06:00&max-results=9&start=27&by-date=false>) by Max Yeh.



Jay Jackson,⁴ Murrell noted that he had sold the “big-
gest electric refrigerator in the county” to Ying. An extract of Murrell’s interview, provides this

account of the transaction:

...“I ordered one for him - he said the bigger the better - but, when I asked for a down payment on the \$600 ‘fridge, he backed down...the fellas said Tom Ying wouldn’t cheat anyone, he’s A-1, but don’t push him or you’ll hurt his feelings. He didn’t pay a dime until we had it running. Then he went to the back porch, picked up a board and pulled out \$600.”...

“...As a district supervisor of sales, Murrell regularly drove the company’s Ford panel truck through Hatch and up to Hillsboro to read meters and peddle well pumps, ranges and water heaters. It only took Murrell (**pictured right in 1995**) three hours for a round-trip from Las Cruces to Hillsboro in the early 1930’s.”

Seems he was a pretty fast driver, for a Ford truck on the roads of that time - on the other hand, maybe roads have not



changed very much at all.

“Those were the days when we did everything... I’d have to sell enough equipment to justify building lines to outlying areas.”...

“...By the late 1920’s, Hillsboro, though still the Sierra County seat, was a small town of about 200...”What I remember most about Tom Ying was that he read Chinese newspapers and told lots of stories, and had good Chinese food!”...

Murrell’s narrative says a lot about the early 30’s in Hillsboro. First of all, \$600 was sizeable sum⁵—the equivalent of about \$9,700 if we apply the inflation rate from 1931 to 2018--and yet under the porch was a safe place to keep it.

And what is this about the electric company selling refrigerators? Murrell captured the economics of the time succinctly. Electricity was new to those “out-lying areas” and it cost money to get electricity to them, whether via onsite generators or long transmission lines. So the electricity companies would sell you anything that ran on electricity. Creating a power load was an essential part of their business plans.

And what did Ying buy, exactly. His refrigerator, **pictured right**, is on display at the Black Range Museum. It has an oak cabinet with a Kelvinator cooling unit behind the upper left door, which is covered by a mirror. All of the other doors are of clear framed glass.

Home refrigerators were invented in 1913. Kelvinator was founded in 1914 and originally manufactured ice-boxes.



⁴ Jay Jackson’s account, dated August 9, 1995, is part of the archives at the Hillsboro Historical Society’s Black Range Museum. The date of the transaction is set by a hand written note on the inside of the refrigerator door.

⁵ \$600 in 1931 → 2017 | Inflation Calculator.” FinanceRef Inflation Calculator, Alioth Finance, 14 Jan. 2018, <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1931-dollars-in-2017?amount=600>.

It sold its first refrigerator in February 1918.⁶ For a long time, refrigerators were only for the wealthy, and before 1930, they could be dangerous. They used refrigerants like sulphur dioxide, which can cause loss of vision and burns, and methyl formate, which is toxic if inhaled or ingested. These dangers were real. Not just in the realm of “could happen,” serious accidents did happen. In 1930 less toxic refrigerants, fluorocarbons (you know, the ozone killers) were introduced.

Tom Ying’s refrigerator was a modern unit. Not only was it much safer than the earlier refrigerators, but the Kelvinator cooling unit could even produce ice cubes (**photo below**). Prior to this time, refrigerators were about cooling things, not freezing them.

But note--this is *not* a Kelvinator refrigerator. That would be too easy and would miss the dynamics of the times. It was “equipped with Kelvinator Electric Refrigeration”. In this case, the Kelvinator unit was placed into a wooden cabinet built by craftsmen in another company.

Paperwork on the inside of the cooling unit door indicates that the this refrigerator was made by the Ligonier



Refrigerator Company of Ligonier, Indiana (Catalog No. 223, Serial No. 30083). Ligonier, McCray, Alaska, and several other companies converted old ice boxes into refrigerators, simply by installing cooling units. Other companies specialized in building complete refrigerators to order. These were beautiful pieces of furniture, using cutting edge technology--expensive, and a sign of the changing times. Ice cubes in the summer, imagine! When was the last time you saw a beautiful custom-built refrigerator with a hardwood cabinet?

It is sometimes easy to take what we have for granted. Electricity brought light to Luna, ice on demand to Ying, and changed Hillsboro in fundamental ways. An oak refrigerator captures the essence of it all. Not dramatic perhaps, but without it Hillsboro would not have been able to hold on to its county seat status as long as it did. Without it, Hillsboro would now *really* be a ghost town.

The Black Range Museum, now owned and operated by the Hillsboro Historical Society, has several rooms of artifacts and an ever-growing collection. Each item has a story; learning that story is what history is all about.

I would like to express my appreciation to Max Yeh, Barbara Lovell, Rebecca Hallgarth, and Garland Bills for their review of this article. I also wish to acknowledge the special effort made by Barbara Lovell and Garland Bills for the long hours they’ve spent curating the museum’s artifacts and for alerting me to the refrigerator and its special story. And thanks to Barbara Pearlman and David Farrell for permission to use the photo of the power plant.

⁶ “Domestic refrigerators: recent developments” by Radermacher & Kim. p. 61 (<https://www.scribd.com/document/219581473/Domestic-Refrigerators-recent-Developments>).





SAVE the DATE!

Join the Hillsboro Historical Society Board, members and friends for a fun and informative evening. Enjoy snacks and a beverage, see our progress, and find out more about our plans for the future!

Date: June 16 Time: 6:00 p.m.

**Place: the outdoor space behind the
Black Range Museum**

JOIN HILLSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIPS ARE ON A JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31 BASIS.

The Hillsboro Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization that preserves and shares the history and artifacts of the Hillsboro, Kingston and Lake Valley. Member benefits include the quarterly newsletter, priority registration for lectures, programs and field trips. Dues are \$25 annually for individual or family. Please mail this completed Membership Form, along with your check made payable to Hillsboro Historical Society, P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro NM 88042.

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