



Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos

Vol. 11 No. 2

Hillsboro Historical Society

May 2018



GOOD NEWS!

President's Message



Greetings. It seems that spring or at least the winds of spring are hanging on a bit longer than usual this year and for some reason the springs rains just never showed up. Never the less we have been busy. Work on the historic water tower has begun, the landscape and exhibit area behind the museum is in progress and starting to take shape. Please come up for the June open house to see the progress that has been made and what the future plans are.

Some of you may be aware that the Hillsboro Historical Society was formed in part to acquire and preserve the Hillsboro Courthouse and jail where the as yet unsolved Fountain murder trial was held. For one reason or another we were not able to make it happen. Sometimes it is just a matter of timing. Recently a benefactor came forward and proposed they purchase the property and gift it to he HHS. After some discussion and consideration of our other obligations we agreed. A long time goal as been accomplished we know own the Courthouse and jail. I think some of us are still a little overwhelmed at what we have committed to, but are also excited to see it finally happen. Please make the time in June to come up and see what is going on. If you have any ideas or just want to come up and help....come on.



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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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 (*guajolotes*) "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

Almost 13 years ago, a small group of Hillsboro citizens met in the kitchen at the Community Center to discuss the fate of the slowly crumbling ruins of the old Sierra County Courthouse and Jail. The outcome of that meeting was formation of Hillsboro Historical Society. In April, 2006, we received our non-profit status and began fundraising efforts to purchase the courthouse site. In spite of tremendous support by the small community, we couldn't come up with enough money to culminate the deal, and the Historical Society moved on to other functions, which included development of a small gift shop and museum where the Black Range Vineyards Wine Bar now resides. We also carried out additional fundraisers in the form of Heritage days, historic home tours, music events, and plays.

About three years ago, the other significant historic site in Hillsboro, the Black Range Museum, became available, and we were able to raise the purchase price. Since then, as members who read this newsletter are often reminded, we have been occupied with documenting and protecting the museum contents, learning the history of the building, and developing plans for rehabilitation of the building and grounds. Nonetheless, those of us who were on that original founding board looked up the hill sadly at the old courthouse site, worrying about its fate.

Late last year, we were contacted by two long-termed residents of Hillsboro with the promise of a \$50,000 donation to purchase the courthouse and jail. We had not lost contact with Dr. James Sullivan, who owned the site and continued to indicate that he hoped we might purchase it. Other donors stepped in, and, along with funds that were left from our original fundraising efforts, HHS President Larry Cosper was able to quickly negotiate a

deal. Hillsboro Historical Society has now reached that original long-held goal. Needless to say, we're overjoyed. We're also overwhelmed. For a small community, the museum has been a major undertaking. The work remaining there is enough to keep our board and supporting volunteers busy for our lifetimes. Our heads are spinning at the thought of adding stabilization and interpretation of the courthouse and jail ruins. We've only begun to plan, and future newsletters will keep the membership informed about these plans. We'll need a lot of input and support from our members.

In the meantime, work at the museum goes apace. The landscaping plan is complete, and preparation of the backyard site has begun. We're hoping for a large turnout at our **Stroll Through History** event on June 16 (see Nichole's report, page 3). If all goes as planned, restoration of the water tower and a village-like facade covering the storage container

will be finished. We have a significant commitment of funds from another donor that will enable us to begin re-roofing the museum building, something that is badly needed before we begin to display the valuable artifacts that have been stored for protection.

And, of course, we continue to study and accumulate information regarding our region's history. Garland Bills has led the HHS effort to prepare a completely new version of the late Patsy King's book on Sadie Orchard. He has opened negotiation with a publisher. We also hope to publish a compilation of feature articles from the first 10 years of this newsletter.

We're excited about the rate at which things are happening, but I think we are all a bit scared when we look at the work ahead in terms of both effort and money. I suspect that a single word can describe the feelings of our board: **HELP!**



History Museum – Outside!

Nichole Trushell

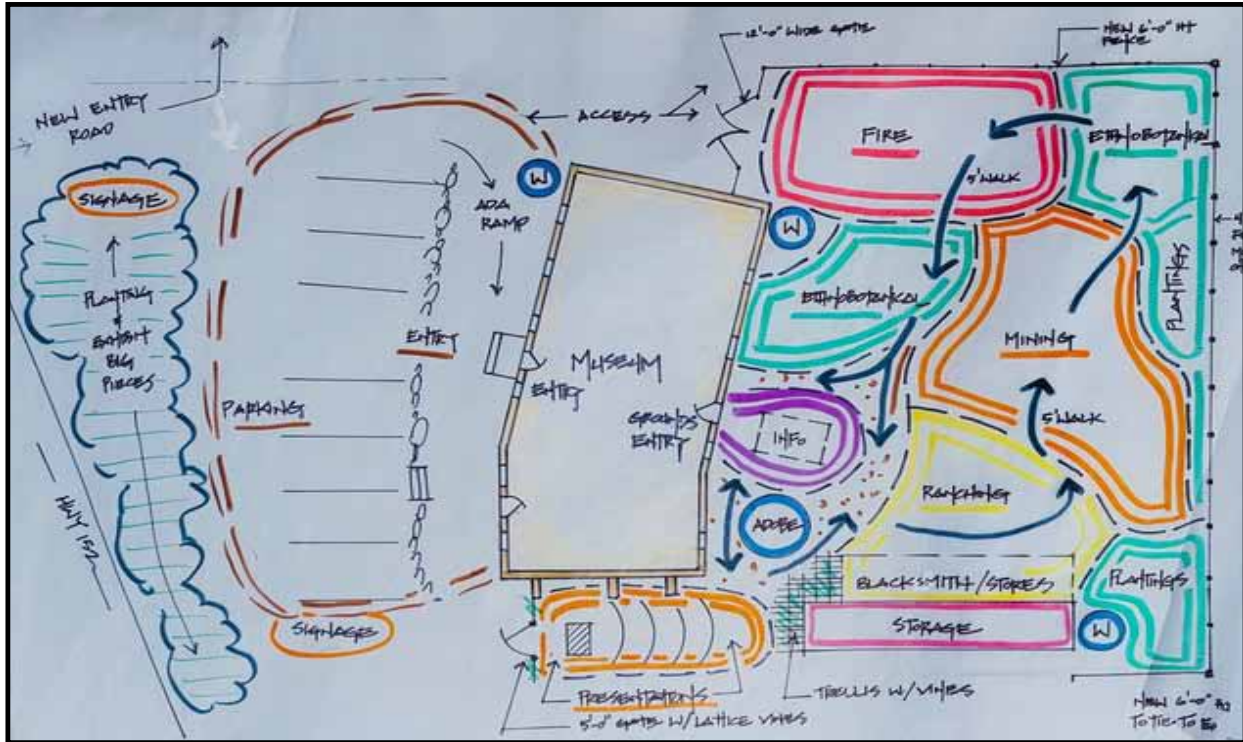
With the purchase of the Black Range Museum has come many challenges! As a new Board Member for Hillsboro Historical Society, I am impressed and excited by watching the progress of the Museum *indoors*, and I am learning a lot being part of this great group.

But what about the outdoors? The museum property has a very nice amount of space outside the building. Other than the unique circular adobe water tower and some remnant succulents, there is little to find in the backyard, and the front entry definitely needs some work too. So, my husband Steve Morgan and I have, as volunteers, developed a conceptual landscape plan for these spaces. Steve brings a long career in Landscape Architecture, and although I was the Director of a *natural history* education center, I do have a lifetime of experience in how people can best be engaged to learn. As well as creating a lovely outdoor space for the museum, bringing history topics more “alive” is one of our goals for outdoor development.

The Conceptual Plan for the backyard is shown here, below. After exploring the indoor exhibits,

visitors to the Black Range Museum will be encouraged to step outside and “Stroll through History” on a wandering path past the adobe water tower and a blacksmith shop, and find areas that will highlight mining, ranching, and ethnobotany (that is, the relationship between plants and people). The old firetruck will be on site as well. At events, we will have volunteers present to share the stories in these different areas with representative artifacts to touch and experience. Our plans also include a small seating area where visitors will find scheduled presentations about stories of the past here, living in the shadow of the Black Range.

So, join us and watch us grow! On **June 16 at 6:00 p.m.** at the Black Range Museum we will give you a glimpse into our backyard plans. At this first “Stroll through History” event you will find the beginnings of the outdoor development progress, as well as volunteer teachers, a blacksmith and a presentation about more specific HHS plans for the future. Music, snacks and cold drinks will be available; we will have fun, so **MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**



Help us build our Outdoor Museum!

We have generous donors who will match gifts up to \$2000 if given for the backyard development project at the Black Range Museum. You can find out more about our plans for this space at the June 16 Stroll through History event. Give a gift soon, get it matched, and help us grow!

A Few Words From Hillsboro Citizen

Concerning the courthouse, the following unsigned piece appeared on the front page of the Hatch Reporter of October 26, 1939. Who could have written it? Edward Tittmann perhaps? And might it also have appeared in the Hot Springs newspaper?



Tear down Begins

Situated on a high mesa, and overlooking the business section of Hillsboro, stood a rather stately and imposing building – the “Old” Court House of Sierra County. This building reflected not only hardships

and deprivations of pioneer days, but also played a most interesting role in the colorful history of this section. Here many people came and closed business deals, investing their lives and fortunes in the vicissitudes [sic] of mining activities. The people of Hillsboro, and of Sierra County, were so impressed by their court house that it became to them an expression of law and order, and a symbol of justice. To be sure, we were sentimentally attached to it, for it guided us in our daily work and brought back to many of us the memories of yester-years.

Today, our Court House is being torn down and moved away piece by piece. In this connection we would remind some of those in authority of their Hitlerian promises. We endorsed your candidacy for office, and we have lost our building, too. The tragedy, however, lies in the fact that we lost our faith in you. Your answer perhaps, is that had

the building been left standing, despite the many purposes our community could have used it for, it would have become a burro castle and a haven for wild pigeons. Our reply to you is a simple one – it would have been far better for the building to have only given shade to burros than for the destruction of it to represent a shady deal – a deal that punctuates our minds with question marks.



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Today we are demolishing the old and dedicating the new. We have blindly ignored the historical significance of the old in setting up appropriate objectives for the new. In fact, we are re-enacting the parable of

the fool – replacing the old with a more spacious new, one in which we can store the harvest of many years. But what shall we say, if in future years the new shall be required of us? When in the course of time, it becomes necessary for the consolidation of counties, we shall, through posterity, plead for your building. Those who come after us will ask that your building be left standing to mark the second milestone in the history of Sierra County, for the first milestone stands only in our memories.

[The newspaper editors note following the piece includes: “Just for a few paltry dimes, one of the most noted historical buildings and landmarks of the state has been demolished, and our sympathy is with the old pioneers of the Hillsboro country.”]

Hillsboro Historical Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Summer meeting time is 6 PM. We encourage society members and anyone interested in our local history to attend.

Put It On Ice

Robert Barnes

I once flew into Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada on the Beaufort Sea. My pilot pointed out pingos as we flew from Inuvik to the edge of the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean. Pingos are literally hills of solid ice and the locals dig tunnels into them to store produce, meats, and other things which need to be kept on ice. Keeping things cold in that part of the world is not a big problem, in the Black Range in the late 1800's, it was.

In the last issue, I wrote about Tom Ying's first refrigerator. It was a big deal. But, how were things kept cold before that refrigerator came to town? In an ice box, of course. It so happens that just a few feet away from Ying's refrigerator in the Black Range Museum stands the ice box pictured below. It looks very similar to the refrigerator except that it is about half the size and the upper left compartment is empty - sans a Kelvinator refrigeration unit.



This fits with the information I found for the last article, that existing ice boxes were often retrofitted with refrigeration units when they became available. Or, at the very least, they served as the model for some of the new refrigerators.

The upper left compartment is empty because that is where the block of ice went, and it melted long ago. A block of ice could not keep a large area cold, so ice boxes tended to be smaller than the refrigerators which eventually replaced them. Cold air flows downward so block ice was placed at, or near, the top of ice boxes. The museum has another ice box. It is a few feet away from the ice box pictured above and is a White Frost (shown to the right). I show it here to demonstrate that not all ice boxes were "wood furniture" - but I will not dwell on the White Frost; it is from Texas.

History is a rabbit hole. When you crawl down into it you often find that it is easier to continue than it is to back out. I was half-way down the hole when I remembered last summer, the summer before that, etc. The obvious question posed itself in front of me, down in that tunnel, "Where did the ice come from,

bucko"? Not something that jumps to mind in a world powered by electricity. Based on my extensive experience, I surmised that there were no pingos here in the late 1800's. Harley Shaw, the editor of this newsletter, verified that fact for me - with an odd sideways look of the eye.

There was technology to make artificial ice by this time. In fact, the French had shipped their ice-making equipment, based on an ammonia-and-water absorption process, to the Confederates when the south was cut off from northern sources of ice. But "artificial ice" was expensive and generally found only in the big cities, so where did the ice for this ice box come from?

Barb Lovell, stepped in to posit that the ice may have come from Kingston. "Kingston?" I said. "Kingston!" She said. Seems that Kingston had an ice house where water from Percha Creek was funneled into a standing pool and harvested when it froze to ice. She went to the archives of the Kingston School Museum (which she curates) and found the photo shown on the next page. The ice house is long gone, the victim of fire, flood, or the recycling of wood. Its approximate location was not far west of Kingston, about a hundred feet beyond the first stream ford of the Middle Percha.



The ice harvesting photo did not get me out of the rabbit hole, though. I thought that ice shown in the photo would not be good for more than a month before it melted; and the summers are long.

Frozen pond water can be much more dense than the stuff which comes from our ice cube trays (anyone still have ice cube trays?). It is this fact that Frederic Tudor relied on to ship ice all around the world in the mid-1800's - that and sawdust. Sawdust turned out to be a great insulator. Thick blocks of ice packed tightly and insulated with sawdust could remain unmelted for a long time - long enough

to ship ice from Boston to Calcutta.

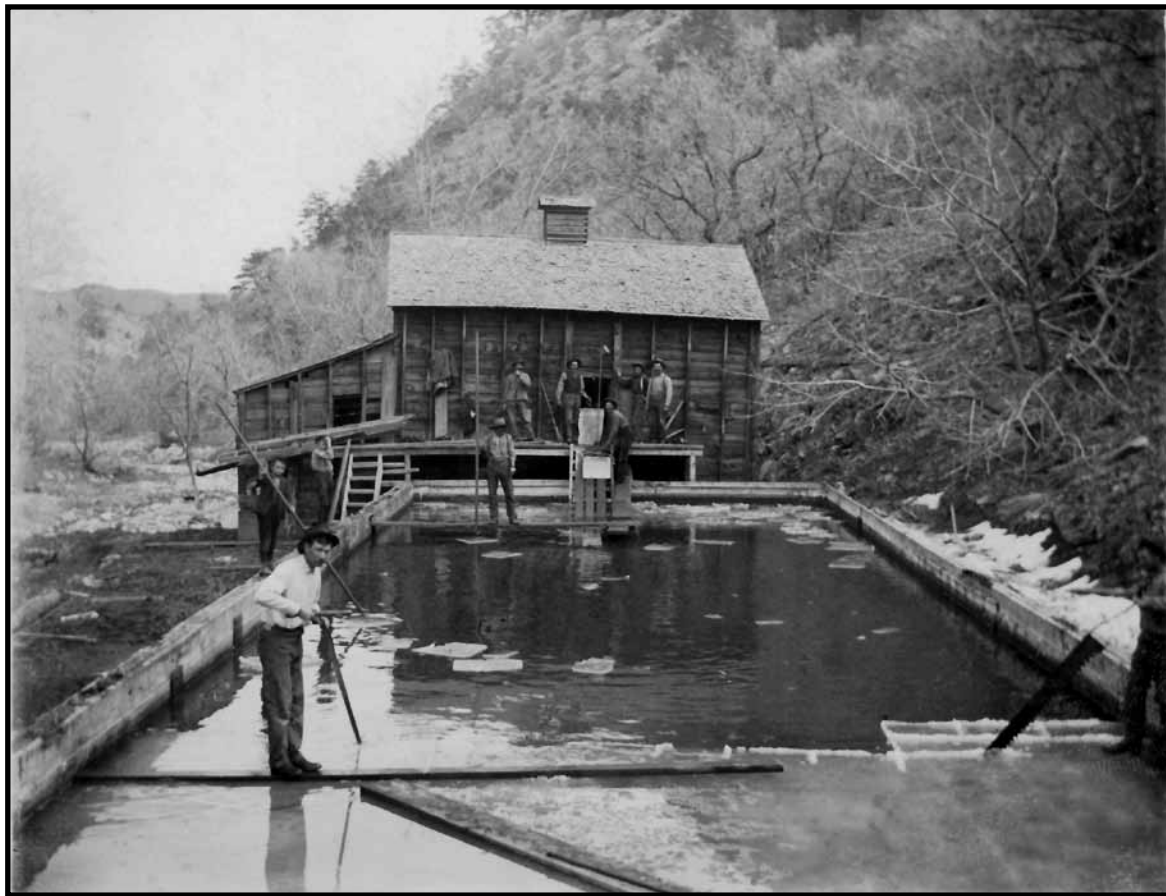
I was in search of something a bit more on point, however. How long could ice in sawdust last? I discussed my concern with Gary Gritzbaugh when we ran into each other at the Hillsboro Post Office. He remembered that his grandfather told of how he stored ice for his store and ice cream parlor. The ice was cut from the river near their home in Kirkland, Illinois and packed in blocks with saw dust as an insulator. The ice was used to make ice cream all summer. (This in about 1910).

Kingston had sawdust, Kingston had ice. Ice houses were fairly common structures prior to refrigeration. Not the type of ice house pictured below but the kind used to store ice. They were usually

thick walled, often sunk into the ground, and generally located in shaded areas. Block ice stored with sawdust in these conditions could last from the last freeze of the year to the first freeze of the next.

Not as easy as using an ice dispenser, but it worked.

The harvesting of ice, the methods of storing it, and its use in ice boxes are all well known and answer the question of how ice from Kingston may have been used in an ice box sitting in the Black Range Museum. Like many things, however, the mundane are not often documented. Does anyone know of ice (storage) houses in this area? Does anyone know of a business which dealt in ice? Not a simple rabbit hole, I say, but a bona fide warren.



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 6PM 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.



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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