

## Hillsboro's Black Slag Buildings

Garland Bills

*Slag: /slag/ stony waste matter separated from metals during the smelting or refining of ore.*

Anyone who comes to Hillsboro may wonder about the big black deposits of slag on both sides of Main Street (Highway 152) just to the east of the east bridge over Percha Creek. Photo 1 shows the prominent mound on the south side of Main Street.



Photo 1: Slag deposit near east bridge

The curious might be informed that these deposits derive from a smelter that long ago existed just to the north in the Happy Flats area. Photo 2 shows part of the slag on the north side of Main, the highway apparently having been cut through the middle of the slag mound. At the top of the photo you can see the old power station that occupies land just above and to the east of where the old smelter used to be.



Photo 2: Slag deposit with power plant in back

The inquisitive will learn that building blocks were made from this slag. The most prominent example of a black slag structure in Hillsboro today is the attractive Miller house next to the Union Church up on Elenora Street (see Photo 3). The blocks for this building were no doubt made at the smelter by pouring the molten slag into forms. These blocks are impressively large – approximately 16 inches long by 7.75 inches wide by 7.5 inches high – and very heavy (110 pounds each) according to the present owner of the Miller house, Craig Springer.



Photo 3: Miller House

There are also other slag structures in Hillsboro. Simply driving through town on 152 you might notice the slag blocks of the garage structure on the south side of West Main (Photo 4). You would have to explore more intently to find the vacant house on Rosa Street (Photo 5), which is strikingly similar in design to the Miller house.

*(Continued on p. 3)*

## President's Message

As we enter into the 9th month of quarantine from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is my hope that you are well and being constructive with your time at home. For me, it has been a time of accomplishment and reflection. Because of being at home, I have been able to finish home improvement projects that were on my list but just not getting done. I found that I had time to complete these projects with a sense of accomplishment while occupying my mind with thoughts of my friends, family and those who are trying to do the same. Enduring being at home and missing the companionship and fellowship with those I cherish has forced me to look inward for wisdom, discernment and motivation.

For me, as I'm sure for most, it has been a time of reflection on our lives with hope for our personal and collective future as neighbors, communities and as a nation. How does this relate to our local organization, its place in our times and its relevance to our lives? Well, I submit, that the Hillsboro Historical Society by our mission is dedicated to preserving our history for future generations by embracing our past so that it will be remembered by what we have done and how we have handled the challenges we face. By our commitment to gather and exhibit buildings and artifacts of the past, HHS is striving to provide some perspective on life in a world of challenges exacerbated by our situation, not dissimilar to challenges we have faced in the past.

The fact remains that no matter what continues to happen with respect to our "Covid conditions," life will go on and historians will document these days of quarantine and disruption. Therefore, we must continue to move forward with our commitments to others

and our organization. HHS was the dream of founding members who revered our history and sought to preserve it. Now thanks to you and your support, we have done remarkably well following in their footsteps by our many accomplishments. The outcome of our success as a non-profit will depend entirely on you, our membership, and on your support and contributions. We are eager to re-open our museum and share our unique history with the world. In the meantime, we are using this time for getting projects done at the museum and concerning ourselves with how we can be ready for re-opening. We can reflect on our accomplishments and have hope that we will be successful in weathering this pandemic. As always, I appreciate your continued support of HHS, its mission and vision for the future.

Steve Dobrott  
President

*Congratulations to*

**BARBARA LOVELL**

*who was given the L. Bradford Prince Award  
(for significant work in the field of historic  
preservation in New Mexico)  
by the Historical Society of New Mexico,  
in recognition of her work in the Kingston and  
Hillsboro area, especially at the Kingston School  
House Museum.*



Photo 4: Garage south of West Main



Photo 5: House on Rosa Street

(Continued from p. 1) Finally, you have to be a real snoop to find scattered around town a few loose blocks or those used in small projects such as the retaining wall at the back of the old Disinger house next door to the Black Range Museum (Photo 6).



Photo 6: Slag blocks in retaining wall of Disinger house

The present evidence begs for historical inquiry. And the place to start must be the Sanborn-Perris insurance maps produced for Hillsboro in 1893, 1898, and 1930. These maps specify the construction material for each building through color-coding. As we would expect for Hillsboro, almost all of the construction at all three time periods was of adobe (brown) and/or frame (yellow). The very few structures of brick stand out in red – for example, the courthouse and Union Church. Blue coloring designates the few structures made of stone, which is also used for slag block structures, but these are specifically marked “slag.”

On the 1893 map, there are no buildings made of slag. This map (like the later versions) covers only the central part of Hillsboro west of where the east bridge is now; that is, it does not include Happy Flats. However, it includes an inset for the Standard Gold Mining and Milling Company's stamp mill and smelter site in Happy Flats “located about 1000' N. E. of” the corner where Sue's Antiques stands at present. This 1893 inset is displayed in Photo 7. It shows the smelter about the middle of the operation with a dump area extending down almost to the creek. This dump ground is no doubt the area of our present black slag deposits. (Note by the colors that these buildings are adobe and frame, with one stone structure [a water tank] and two brick structures [a furnace and a forge]).

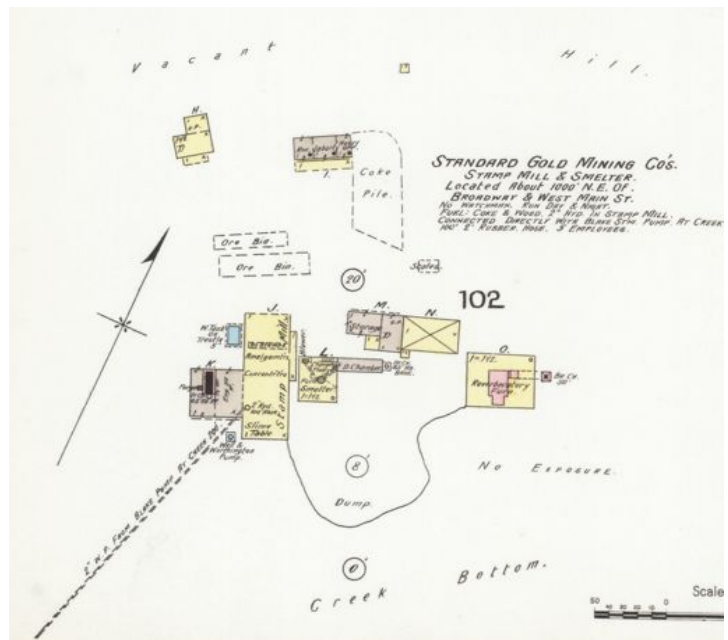


Photo 7: 1893 Sandborn map, smelter site inset





Photo 8: Standard Company smelter

Depicting the Standard Company site is Photo 8 taken by George T. Miller, who came to Hillsboro in 1893. He was the original owner of the Miller house as well as the brother-in-law of company manager Nicholas Galles, demonstrating felicitous historical connections in slag construction. The Standard Gold Mining & Milling Company was established in 1890 with Nicholas Galles as manager and having officers from Minnesota, including his father-in-law (for details see Mark Thompson's article in *Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* VII.1 [February 2014], or in Harley Shaw's anthology, 2018, pp. 141-45). The

smelter component began operation in 1892, as the *Sierra County Advocate* announced with enthusiastic boosterism on July 15:

At the Hillsboro smelter all is activity these days. Four or five teams are unloading ore and flux there almost constantly, and Mr. Wm. Kemp, the smelter superintendent, is one of the busiest men alive. Manager Galles, too, is giving much of his valued personal supervision to the plant, which starts up Monday. The effect of the successful operation of the Hillsboro [sic] smelter on general business and real estate in this place will be wonderful, and *The Advocate* confidently expects to see the present population of the town increased by at least five hundred more people, and as many as ten or twelve business blocks and private residences constructed immediately.

(Photos and maps provide excellent historical documentation – to the extent they're available. Newspapers offer a third important resource. The Library of Congress gives us a magnificent online facility, *Chronicling America*, that contains digitized copies of numerous old newspapers. The collection includes the *Sierra County Advocate*, published for many years in Hillsboro after a brief inauguration in Kingston. Of course, looking over a few old photos and maps is a lot easier than perusing old newspapers, with 52 issues each year for a weekly like the *Advocate*. The website has a sophisticated search function that greatly facilitates research. But the character recognition software is less than perfect for finding a term like "slag" in old, faded, often rumpled or torn newspapers no matter how good the digitization. My searches would occasionally miss an instance or turn up a false positive like "slug." Nevertheless, this is the resource I've used for much of the rest of this report.)

I haven't been able to determine when the smelter started to pour the waste slag into molds. However, by 1894 Peter Galles played a major role in developing the use of slag blocks, no doubt due to the fact that he was the brother of company manager Nicholas. The *Sierra County Advocate* of January 5 carries Peter's advertisement for "Galles & McLewis [sic, Lewis] Carpenters & Builders, painters, decorators, grainers." And the *Advocate* of March 2 reports that, "Peter Galles has begun the erection of a large business block with smelter brick." This "business block" – that is, a business building as opposed to a residence – refers to what will come to be called Peter Galles' Hall, to be fully discussed in a moment.

Moreover, on April 23 Peter and Lewis signed a contract with G. T. Miller (my thanks to Craig Springer for a copy of that agreement). The two builders were to carry out the carpentry work to complete the house up on Elenora Street (Photo 3) that already had the black slag walls in place. We may assume that Peter Galles had been instrumental in putting up these slag walls and had been forming the blocks already in 1893 or 1894.

Let me skip to the 1898 Sanborn-Perris map. The mill-smelter site is now labeled H. M. Porter's Huntington Stamp Mill. The company site has the same configuration as in 1893 (Photo 7), except that the furnace is "partly demolished," its surrounding frame building is gone, and the smelter is labeled "not in use." That is, before 1898 (or at least during 1898) slag was no longer being produced.

Five years after the first insurance map revealed no slag buildings, the 1898 map shows two structures made of slag, and they are precisely the two buildings just mentioned. On the south side of Elenora Street is the Miller house, next to the Union Church as it is today. And on the west side of Third Avenue, in the middle of the block about 100 feet south of Main Street, is a substantial rectangular building labeled "Public Hall."

We have only a few early but undated photos showing this Public Hall. Photo 9 is a cropped version of a broad overview taken from the south ridge above Hillsboro. This section looks down Third Avenue toward the Catholic church on the north side of Main Street. Notice that this is the old church that faced east and that it lacks the two towers. (If someone knows when those towers were added, it could help date the construction of this hall.) Also, above on Schoolhouse Hill is the original school with the bell tower on the east; this school was destroyed by fire in January of 1914, so the photo was certainly taken before 1914.



Photo 9: Public Hall in the center, with original school on hill



Photo 10: Blacksmith shop with Public Hall behind it

Another early photo, Photo 10, was taken from the opposite direction, from the north side of Main right at the side of the Catholic church. This captures a blacksmith or wheelwright shop (which is also visible in Photo 9) with the hall just behind it. We don't know the exact location of blacksmith shops that advertise in the *Sierra County Advocate*, but it's possible that this building had been owned by Peter Galles, too, along with partner August Engelman before the partnership was dissolved in May 1893.



Photo 11: Public Hall with children, and school visible on hill

Finally, Photo 11 provides the closest perspective of the Public Hall, showing a large group of children arrayed in front. We may guess that the children were there to attend some kind of performance (but see below for other speculation). Notice, too, that the original schoolhouse seen up on the right indicates that this photo also was taken before 1914.

Clearer evidence for the dating of what the Sanborn-Perris map labels a “Public Hall” appears in reports in the local *Sierra County Advocate*. I must note first that I’ve been unable to find the use of “Public Hall” in the newspaper. However, already in 1894, on June 15, the *Advocate* carries the

news: “There is talk of a company of our young men leasing the Pete Galles Hall at \$25 per month, for public entertainments.” What is surely the slag hall of our interest begins to be consistently referred to with the name of Peter Galles, Pete Galles or simply Galles. I think it’s safe to conclude that Peter Galles built the hall and did so around the time of completing the Miller house, that is, after the 1893 insurance map was prepared.

From 1894 on, events at the slag hall receive regular coverage. On August 3, 1894, the *Advocate* reports that the Woman’s Guild of the Episcopal Church “will give an entertainment at Galles’ Hall Thursday evening, August 9<sup>th</sup>. There will be dancing. Refreshments served and fancy articles for sale. Kingston and Lake Valley people and everybody cordially invited to attend. No admittance charge.” The day after this event “the bazar” was reported “a success.”

Such successful events continued in 1895 with a “Grand St. Valentine’s Night Masque Ball at Galles Hall” in February and an admission-free dance on March 2 to which “everyone in the county is invited.” The following week the “Hidden Hand Dramatic company of Lake Valley” gave a performance. Another dance was held at the Hall for Thanksgiving, and in mid December a “grand dance” took place “in Peter Galles’ new block.”

I’ve found no *Advocate* reports about the Hall in 1896 beyond the sale of the “Galles Hall piano.” But in August of 1897, “Hammel & Patten gave an Amet Magniscope and phonograph entertainment at Galles’ Hall” – Wow! Just imagine that! And in August of the following year we’re informed that a National Guard unit “is trying to rent Galles’ Hall for an armory.” 1898 is, of course, the year the building shows up as “Public Hall” on the second insurance map.

Subsequently, my searches in the *Advocate* yield fewer results. The August 3, 1900 issue reports a dance as well as a planned entertainment of the Catholic Church. In 1901, the February 15 edition informs: “The pupils of the public school will give a public entertainment in Galles Hall, Friday evening, Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>.” The January 9, 1903, edition reports: “Two Latter Day saints held forth here in Galles Hall Tuesday evening.” And finally, we find a note on “a grand musical entertainment in Galles Hall” on April 22, 1904. This 1904 report is the last I’ve found that specifically mentions Galles Hall.

There seems to have been a yearlong gap in the hall’s activities. But it resurfaced under the label Slag Hall, beginning with the formation of a young men’s club in June of 1905 that rented the building.

Many events were reported there from 1905 to 1907, including dances, concerts, and public meetings. The March 22, 1907, *Advocate* announces “a dance at Slag Hall to-morrow evening, Everybody invited.” Then news about the hall disappears for four years.

What happened? Why was the Peter Galles name removed after 1904? He continued to live and do business in Hillsboro until at least 1910. Who did the young men’s club pay rent to in 1905? I haven’t been able to find answers to these questions. However an important factor emerges: competition. In 1903, A. J. Hirsch built a brand new two-story adobe building on Main Street in the heart of town. This Hirsch Hall, which would shortly house the Masonic lodge as it does today, opened with a dance on July 24. Events continued there for many years.

Yet Slag Hall did survive the Hirsch competition. In 1909, the October 8 *Advocate* announces the three teachers for three different classes of the Hillsboro school. It gives the location for each class: the sixth-eighth graders in the Cooper building, the first and second graders in the church, and the third-fifth graders in “the Slag Hall.” That has to be our building. And Photo 11 may well picture that group of students with teacher Ethel Strausser. Maybe the place was rented by the school board for several years. A possibility. But why were these classes not held in the schoolhouse up on the hill? And who received the rent from the school board? So far I find no further evidence to answer these questions.

In any case, Slag Hall kept going, a clearly durable building. In the spring of 1911, attorney H. A. Wolford got control of the property and arranged to rent it to some young men (the same club maybe) on the condition that Wolford “will put down a hardwood floor, put in a fine system of gasoline lights and otherwise improve the building” (*Advocate*, June 16, 1911). He does so in time for a grand Fourth of July dance. Events continue in the renewed Slag Hall until 1913. Then it disappears from the news once more with no later mentions.

Time to get back to maps and photos. Thirty-two years after the second Sanborn-Perris insurance map, the third and final version appears in 1930. It displays only vacant land from where the Public Hall once stood all the way to Main Street; both the hall and the blacksmith building are gone. But two slag buildings are indicated – the Miller home as well as the present house depicted in Photo 5 above. The latter is accurately placed on the south side of Rosa Street, the second house west of Fifth Avenue.

It’s important to point out that the street we now call Rosa appeared on the 1893 and 1898 maps but was marked as “street not defined.” No buildings were placed on the south side of this unmarked street. In the 1930 map, the east half of the map labels the street behind the courthouse as “street not defined” and “not named.” But on the west half it is shown as “Ellen” but labeled “arbitrary,” whatever that means.



Photo 12: Della Gage on Rosa Street, 1911

Importantly, in the 1930 east half there are no buildings south of this street. But in the west half there are seven – three adobe, three frame, and one slag. I don’t know who built this slag house. We are pretty sure James Mackey lived there in the 1930s, but for reasons that will become clear below, I will call it the Hughes house. An early photo shows Della Gage in her burro carriage (see Photo 12). She is parked on Rosa Street, which we see winding its way up behind the courthouse and jail. The house on the right behind the burro’s head is clearly made of black slag; it is without doubt the Hughes house. At the base of the photo somebody has written the date May 29, 1911.



But we have earlier *Advocate* references. In May of 1910 there was a fire that consumed two adjacent homes on “Grand Avenue” (yet another arbitrary name for Rosa). It also damaged two other homes, one on each side of the two destroyed. The damaged house on the east was identified as a “slag residence owned by Mrs. Edna (Hughes) Ritchie.” The 1930 map shows the results of this fire, the slag home with two empty lots to the west (where the destroyed homes had not been rebuilt twenty years later) and then the other surviving home.

I had never before heard of the surnames Hughes and Ritchie associated with Hillsboro, which necessitated another deep dive into the *Advocate*. This search revealed not only important details about the slag residence but also a scandalous human drama.

Edna was the eldest daughter of the prominent Dr. C. C. Crews, who supposedly built the first home in Hillsboro in 1879. In 1893 Edna married a young mining entrepreneur from England, Arthur Hughes. To summarize quickly the marital history, after five and a half years of bliss, Arthur traveled to the smelter in El Paso in 1898 to complete the sale of ore from the Opportunity and Snake mines. Flush with success and the company’s money, he visited a couple of El Paso gambling houses and proceeded to lose most or all the money just received. Presumably in shame he abandoned his Hillsboro traveling companions and crossed into Mexico, never to be heard from again. It appears that poor Edna waited and waited, no doubt buoyed in the disgrace by her family and friends. She finally gave up hope and moved to San Francisco to become a nurse. There, eleven years after Arthur disappeared, she married Frank Ritchie.

But Hughes is the important surname with regard to our slag house. Although we don’t know for certain who the original owner was, it looks to be Hughes. Six months after his marriage, the *Advocate* tells us that, “Arthur Hughes is negotiating with a Chloride man for the purchase of a lot next to County Clerk Hall’s residence” (April 27, 1894). This lot is no doubt the Rosa property since Hall owned the second house lost in the 1910 fire.

*Advocate* issues of 1905 and 1906 identify three different families that moved into “the Hughes house” (March 24, 1905 and February 23, 1906). We may assume that the uprooted Edna Hughes was renting the place while in San Francisco. And in 1909 we’re informed that two teachers, including Miss Strausser, moved into “the Hughes house next to Mrs. T. C. Hall’s residence” (October 8, 1909).

We know, therefore, that the Hughes slag house was in place by 1905, and probably as much as a decade earlier. Did Hughes indeed buy the lot and have Peter Galles build the house? Very possible. As mentioned earlier, the design of the Hughes house is very like the Miller house, suggesting it was built by Galles about the same time even though it doesn’t show up on the 1898 map. But also possible, of course, is that Galles built the place for himself or another person. I just don’t know. Burrowing into the old property records at the Sierra County Clerk’s office might very well yield good results, but I’m not venturing into that place while the pandemic is raging.

Before finding out about the Hughes connection, I entertained the idea that the Public Hall blocks were used to build the Rosa Street house. But we now know the two structures were in existence at the same time. So what happened to the Galles/Slag Hall? Since I find no mention of it after 1913, perhaps it was one of the casualties of the terrible 1914 flood. I’ve found no mention of either it or the blacksmith building in the *Advocate* reports on that flood. However, we know that just next-door west on Main the front of the Bucher adobe home was torn away and the Catholic church across the street was demolished, as was the old brick facade of the Miller drugstore a short way down the street. We may suppose that the frame blacksmith shop on the corner also perished in the flood. But the hall was made of much sturdier material. Could it have fallen in the flood?



Yet the Hall certainly disappeared. Perhaps it was simply dismantled, like the old courthouse much later. If so, what happened to all those heavy slag blocks? They're not easy to hide. (A few remaining blocks are still visible along the foundation in the first building west of Third and south of Main, as well as in the rock fence on the site of the hall. – Editor) They might well have been used for the black slag garage-like building that now sits on Main between Fifth and Sixth (Photo 4). But if so, since the hall building was much larger, what happened to the other blocks?

So many questions. Always so many questions. If you the reader can shed any insight on these matters, please let me know ([gbills@unm.edu](mailto:gbills@unm.edu) or 575-297-0186).

## **HHS News: A Digital Archive**

Report by Garland Bills

Taking advantage of the isolation provided by the pandemic, I've been putting together a comprehensive digital file of photos and documents that could be useful to anyone interested in the history of the Black Range region. I started with Patti Nunn's fabulous digital file of mainly photos and have been adding many other photos and documents. While the archive is still a work in progress, the intent is that it will be made available on a computer in the Research & Education Room of the Black Range Museum in Hillsboro. Access will be password protected so that only an authorized person can make changes, though all users will be invited to submit corrections and additions. We hope eventually to make the archive accessible online at our website.

The structure of the archive is multilayered. At the top level are folders to access materials relevant across the Black Range: for example Apaches, Forests, Maps, Military, Newspapers, People by Surname, Places, and Stage Line.

The PEOPLE BY SURNAME folder is the largest and likely to be of greatest interest. It contains at present nearly 700 subfolders, each headed by a surname. So far the size of files has led to splitting up only a few surnames. For example, the unrelated Millers are split into C. C. Miller (early Hillsboro), G. T. Miller (later), D. M. Miller (still later) and D. S. Miller (Lake Valley). The busy Galles brothers of Hillsboro – Louis, Nicholas, and Peter – have their separate folders. Additional splittings will be necessary as surname folders expand.

For each surname family we would like to provide basic genealogical information of father, mother, and children with birth and death details. If you have such information for an area family, I invite you to send it to me for inclusion ([gbills@unm.edu](mailto:gbills@unm.edu)). And if you yourself have genealogical research skills and access and would like to help out with this work, please let me know and I'll send you some tasks.

With regard to individuals, we have to be careful to respect privacy. Two other resources provide useful guidance. The US Census doesn't release individual information until 70 years have passed; thus, the data on individuals in the 1950 Census finally become available to the public only this year. Another resource, Ancestry.com, is even more stringent. It permits no public information on living persons, and a person who was born less than 100 years ago is considered living unless death information is provided. These restrictions are appropriate to our archive. The people that researchers will be most interested in were likely born before 1920 and therefore present little problem; we should exclude from the archive the name and details for any person born after 1920 unless we know the person has died.

The PLACES folder presents photos and documents concerning the communities closely connected with the people of the Black Range. It is also substantial in size, including subfolders and sub-subfolders. Hillsboro, Kingston, and Lake Valley naturally are our priority PLACES, but all towns in Sierra

County are included. Subfolders vary. To take Lake Valley as an example, its subfolders include Activities, Businesses, Cemeteries, Census Reports, Churches, Disasters, Homes, Mining, Overviews, Railroad, Ranching, and Schools.

You can appreciate, then, that this digital archive is quite large. At present it contains over 9,000 files spread across nearly 850 folders and occupies 16 GB of space on my home computer. It will be a powerful resource – and is requiring a lot of patient effort.

*Do you have documents or photos for our Black Range area that should be added to this archive?* We'd love to consider them for our collection. To avoid duplication, feel free to contact me ([gbills@unm.edu](mailto:gbills@unm.edu), 575-297-0186) to find out if a document or photo is already in the collection or for any other information. Please keep us in mind. We'd like to make this archive as comprehensive as possible!

# The Worden Family in Hillsboro

## Part One: William and Lizzie Worden

Susan Frances Worden

The Worden family first came to New Mexico in 1876. Various members of the family resided in Hillsboro for a hundred years, from the 1880s to the 1980s. The first Worden to arrive was William James Worden, a Civil War veteran from Minnesota, and his Irish bride, Lizzie Heslin Worden.

William J. Worden was the fifth of six children born to Barnes Worden and Betsy Ann Calkins Worden. He was born in 1838 in Mosa, Middlesex, Ontario, Canada. His father died when he was three years old, and his mother married James DeField. When he was about 20 years old, the family moved to Michigan. In 1862, at age 24, he enlisted in Company K, 7th Minnesota Infantry Regiment in LeSueur County, Minnesota. In 1862 and 1863 his regiment fought in the Indian Wars, including the Battle of Big Mound in North Dakota.

On January 6, 1864, William Worden mustered out of the Minnesota 7th Infantry Regiment, and was commissioned an officer in charge of Company A, US Colored Troops 62nd Infantry Regiment, in St. Louis, Missouri. This regiment was organized at Benton Barracks in December 1863 and was also known as the 1st Missouri Colored Infantry. Most of these soldiers had been slaves in Missouri. In March 1864, their

designation was changed to the 62nd Regiment United States Colored Troops.



The sword of William J. Worden, 1864

In June 1864, the regiment was ordered to Morganza, Louisiana, near Baton Rouge. By the end of October, it was stationed in the Port of Brazos Santiago, Texas, located on Brazos Island at the southeastern tip of Texas. In May 1865, 250 men from the 62nd US Colored Infantry Regiment fought in the last battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Palmito Ranch, six weeks after Lee had surrendered in Virginia. Subsequently, William Worden mustered out of the Army in March 1866 as a Brevet Captain in Brownsville, Texas. After the war he returned to Minnesota.

In 1876, at age 38, Worden married 23 year old Lizzie Heslin in Lake City, Minnesota. She was born November 8, 1854 in Middletown, Connecticut, the youngest of seven children born to Terence Heslin and Ann Conlon Heslin. Her Irish family had come to the US about 1850 and

settled in Middletown. Her family then moved to Merton, Wisconsin, where her father died when she was three years old. According to the 1870 census, at the age of 16 she was working as a domestic servant in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The next record of Lizzie is the marriage record of her marriage to William Worden.

Right after their marriage, in May 1876, they joined a "colony" of settlers and traveled to the New Mexico Territory. Since the railroad did not arrive in New Mexico until 1878, it is likely that they traveled at least part of the 1400 miles by covered wagon on the old Santa Fe Trail, after traveling by steamboat to Independence, Missouri.

When they arrived in New Mexico, they went to Fort Craig along the El Camino Real in what is now Socorro County, where Worden became the hotel keeper and postmaster. Almost all of the other residents of Fort Craig at that time were in the US Army. While at Fort Craig, their first two children were born: Helen Medora ("Ella") in 1877 and George Francis ("Frank") in 1880. Their third child Bonnie Anna was born in 1882 and their last child William James ("Willie") in 1891.

In 1880 William filed a claim to a homestead land grant of 320 acres on the Rio Grande in Derry Township between Arrey and Hatch. They built two houses of four rooms each, two corrals and had 5 to 6 acres under cultivation. The family moved to the homestead in June 1881, and in 1885 William was granted title to the land. They raised cattle and horses on the land with the help of their oldest son, Frank. In 1882 William was the secretary and general agent of the Humboldt Mining Company, which was operating in Cuchillo in the Black Range.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1884 the Worden ranch was flooded as was reported in *The Black Range* on July 18:

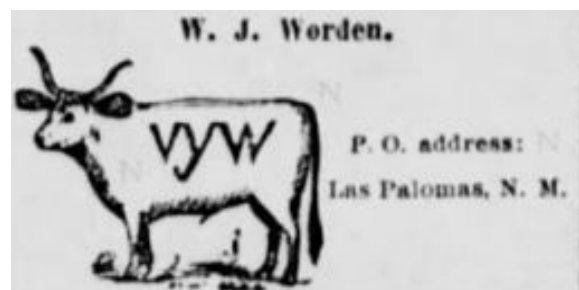
W. J. Worden reports that the late high water of the Rio Grande cut a new channel at his place fifteen miles below Las Palomas and

cut his meadow land off from his residence leaving him on the east side of the river along with the rugged hills and with no highway for communication with the outside world. By the unforeseen circumstance he will be compelled to put up new buildings on the opposite side of the stream or be subject always to great inconvenience.<sup>2</sup>

In 1885 the Worden ranch was listed in the Territorial census as having 320 acres with fences and buildings worth \$1500, implements and machinery worth \$400, and livestock worth \$7000. They had 40 horses, 300 head of cattle and 150 dropped calves. In August 1886, a round up notice was published by the Sierra County Cattle and Stock Growers' Association in *The Black Range*:

This roundup will meet on the first day of September at Gregg's ranch, eight miles from Lake Valley on the Matcho. Will work from there as far west as the summit of the range and as far east as the Rio Grande river, continuing northward until we reach the northern boundary of the district of Cuchillo creek. Working from the river to the summit of the Black range and on the east side of the river over Worden's range.

The captain of the roundup will furnish supplies and all parties not members of the association working with the roundup will be expected to pay 75 cents a day to the captain.<sup>3</sup>



Brand of W. J. Worden's ranch, from the *Sierra County Advocate*, April 3, 1886

By the time the children reached school age in the mid-1880s, the family was living in Hillsboro at least part of the year. In 1887 their daughter

<sup>1</sup> *The Deming Headlight* (24 Jul 1930), p. 1, quoting the *Sierra County Advocate* (15 Apr 1882).

<sup>2</sup> *The Black Range* (18 July 1884), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *The Black Range* (20 August 1886), p. 3.



Bonnie Anna died at age 5 and was buried in the Hillsboro Community Cemetery. William was the proprietor of the Union Hotel in 1887 and 1888.<sup>4</sup> He advertised often in the *Sierra County Advocate*, noting the fine brands of cigars and the choicest wines and liquors available at the hotel. He promised to give 100 cents on a dollar at the hotel.

By 1889 the Wordens had acquired a house in Hillsboro. It was next to the post office on the west side. Lizzie helped raise funds for the community graveyard fence by selling ice cream and cake on Wednesday and Saturday evenings in May 1889.<sup>5</sup> The Wordens' last child, Willie, was born in 1891. In December 1891 the family moved to and managed the boarding house at the Snake Mine near Hillsboro.<sup>6</sup>

Around 1892 their oldest son Frank completed sixth grade and went to the ranch to run the operation there. His older sister Ella completed high school in Hillsboro in 1891 and went to Las Cruces College for one year and then became a school teacher. In 1894 Lizzie served on the decoration committee for the July 4th celebration in Hillsboro. The celebration was described in the *Sierra County Advocate*:

All day Saturday a force of men under Geo. Ross were at work on the streets, cleaning them up and smoothing them off, and all day Monday the decoration committee spun wreaths and rosettes of evergreen and national colors for street, wagon and house decorations. ... All Monday evening and Tuesday morning visitors from the surrounding towns came pouring in, until there were nearly 2000 people in the town. The day's celebration opened with a grand procession of decorated vehicles bearing the Goddess of Liberty, and young ladies representing the states, Mercantile and Mine displays, miners and citizens, all headed by the Hillsboro Brass Band and followed by riders on horseback. After making a circuit of the town the procession returned to the

<sup>4</sup> *Sierra County Advocate* (20 May 1887), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Sierra County Advocate* (21 May 1889), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Sierra County Advocate* (4 Dec 1891), p. 3.

public square where three rousing cheers were given it and the band played several national anthems, and the whole was dispersed.

By 1895 the family was again living at the ranch. According to the 1900 census William, age 62, was listed as a farmer. Their son Frank was listed as a stockman at age 19 and Ella was listed as a school teacher at age 23. Willie was 9 years old. In 1901 William was approved for a veterans' pension based on partial disability. He was awarded \$8 per month from June 1895, increased to \$10 per month in February 1899. He received almost six years of pension arrears.



Home for Disabled Veterans, Los Angeles

In 1902 or 1903 William moved to Santa Fe where he worked as a clerk at the territorial penitentiary.<sup>7</sup> He also had a position among the employees of the Thirty-seventh Legislative Assembly in Santa Fe in 1907.<sup>8</sup> William was admitted to the US National Home for Disabled Soldiers in Los Angeles, California in 1912. On admission he was described as 5 feet 8 inches tall with light complexion, blue eyes and gray hair. He lived at the home until he died May 6, 1927 at age 89. He is buried in the Los Angeles National Cemetery.



After William moved to Santa Fe, their oldest son Frank ran the ranch and supported the family. In his youth he was a cowboy and was a lifelong friend of Eugene Manlove Rhodes, the cowboy

<sup>7</sup> *The Santa Fe New Mexican* (2 May 1906), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *The Santa Fe New Mexican* (23 Jan 1907), p. 4.

author, and Frank Bojorquez, later Sheriff of Sierra County. Frank considered Bojorquez to be the most skilled cowboy of the southwest at that time. Frank also rode for Russell A. Alger, former Secretary of War, who owned the Bar Cross Ranch.

In December 1903, gold was discovered near the Worden ranch, and chaos ensued, as reported in *The Deming Graphic*:

The scene of the strike is some four miles distant from the Worden ranch and on the east side of the Rio Grande and something like two or three miles from the river. Latest report has it that 200 men are on the ground and that a large number of claims have been taken up and many more are being located. Everybody is armed to the teeth, but so far quiet and peace prevails.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately no gold was found on the Worden ranch.

In 1903 Lizzie briefly operated a restaurant in the Lannon building in Hillsboro.<sup>10</sup> By 1907 the Worden house in Hillsboro was rented and Lizzie, Frank and Willie continued to live at the ranch. In 1905 Ella married Oscar Wood in Las Cruces and they settled down there and had two sons. He became Treasurer of Dona Ana County. In 1908 Frank left the ranch and established a general mercantile business in Las Palomas. By then his younger brother was 17 and old enough to run the ranch and support his mother.

According to the 1910 census Lizzie, 56, and Willie, 19, were living at the ranch. Her occupation was stockraiser and his occupation was herder. By then the ranch was mortgaged. Soon thereafter Lizzie and Willie made numerous efforts to sell the ranch, none of which were successful. By 1913 Lizzie and Willie were in Las Palomas and took over the lease of a pool hall and restaurant.<sup>11</sup> By 1917 Lizzie had moved to Las Cruces and was living with her daughter Ella and her family.

In the early 1920s Lizzie lived in a boarding house in Santa Monica, California near the home where William lived. She visited him every other day. On July 27, 1923, she wrote to Senator H. O. Bascom in Washington, asking for an increase in her husband's disability pension. "He gets \$50 now. They keep \$10 for expenses, give me \$40. I pay \$16 per month for one room if nothing goes wrong; I can make it on the balance \$24. I go out every other day to sit with him and amuse him that costs me 20 cents then I take him fruit, candy and a good cigar. He is like a child always expects something. I do not think Mr. Worden can last much longer and if I get the increase, from the date of the act, it would place me very comfortable."

On December 26, 1923 the Pension Commissioner wrote to Bascom that the increase in pension to \$72 per month was approved effective December 11, 1922. No doubt Lizzie received the arrears, and most of the \$72 per month for the next few years.

Lizzie filed for a widow's pension from Los Angeles, still living at 1514 Sixth Street in Santa Monica. She was awarded a pension of \$30 per month. She returned to New Mexico and died in Hot Springs, Sierra County, New Mexico on November 5, 1928 at age 74. She is buried in the Hillsboro Community Cemetery.

William and Lizzie's fourth child, Willie, did not marry until after his mother died. In 1928 he married Cleo Conwell and they lived in Hot Springs where he was the Superintendent of the water plant. Willie and Cleo had four daughters. They named their oldest daughter Elizabeth Heslin Worden. She died as an infant, so they also named their second daughter Elizabeth Heslin Worden. By 1940 the family was living in Hobbs, New Mexico and Willie was working in the oil fields.

The time and place of Willie's death is unknown. His descendants believe that he enlisted in the US armed forces under an assumed name and was killed in World War Two. He was past the age of enlistment, and because he took a draft deferment during World War One as the sole support of his mother, the Army would have had

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<sup>9</sup> *The Deming Graphic* (2 Dec 1903), p. 3.

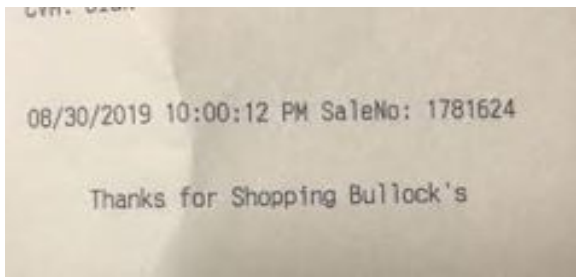
<sup>10</sup> *Sierra County Advocate* (6 Feb 1903), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Sierra County Advocate* (4 Jul 1913), p. 2.

a record of his age. An exhaustive search has produced no record of his death.

Frank Worden married Margaret Martin and they had one child, Robert Francis "Bob" Worden. Frank was a well known rancher and farmer in the Rio Grande valley. He served as the New Mexico Land Commissioner from 1936 to 1940, running as a Roosevelt Democrat. His family lived in Hillsboro in the 1930s. Frank and Margaret's story will be told in a subsequent article.

*Susan Worden is the great-granddaughter of William Worden and Lizzie Heslin. After 30 years of practicing law in New York and Virginia, she is happily retired in central Virginia. She is a lifelong lover of horses and riding and lives in a community with a farm and an equestrian center. When her father, Robert Francis Worden, retired, he lived in Hillsboro from 1983 to 1988. It was then that she got to know about her family's roots in southern New Mexico. Our thanks to her for reaching out to HHS to share her family's story.*



*As a community service, Bullock's grocery store in Truth or Consequences will donate 2% of store receipts returned by any non-profit.*

*The Hillsboro Historical Society has traditionally been a beneficiary of this program, but we need someone to take over collecting, tabulating, and delivering the receipts.*

**It's not a difficult job,  
but we do need a volunteer!**

**Would you consider taking this on?**

*If so, please contact Linda King:  
tchwnet@gmail.com*

**And our thanks to Bullock's for their support!**

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

**The Hillsboro Historical Society**

P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro, New Mexico 88042

[www.hillsboronmhistory.info](http://www.hillsboronmhistory.info)

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*To become a member, please visit:*

[hillsboronmhistory.info/membership-subscription](http://hillsboronmhistory.info/membership-subscription),  
or fill out and return the form in this newsletter.

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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*Anyone who might want to serve on one of the committees, please contact any of our board members.*





## KEEP THE LIGHTS ON!

### 2021 Membership Application/Renewal

The Hillsboro Historical Society is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of the Hillsboro, Kingston, and Lake Valley region. Memberships are on a calendar year basis (January 1 to December 31). Dues are \$25 annually for individual or family. All contributions are tax-deductible.

**Yes! I want to help HHS to “keep the lights on” as well as to grow and maintain its historic sites. I will become a member/renew my membership by annual payment or by the new monthly-giving program as follows:**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **ONE-TIME ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR 2021: \$25.00**

Additional contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_

Gift membership(s) \$\_\_\_\_\_

(Please provide name, address, and email for each person on a separate sheet)

Total 2021 annual contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_ (Payment information below)

**MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM:** As an alternative to a one-time annual membership, the monthly program requires a \$15 minimum pledge per month payable by credit card (Visa or MasterCard only). Please choose your monthly giving amount:

\$15\_\_\_\_ \$20\_\_\_\_ \$30\_\_\_\_ \$50\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:

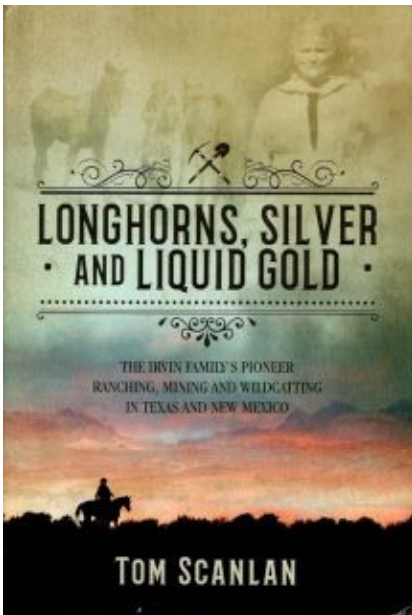
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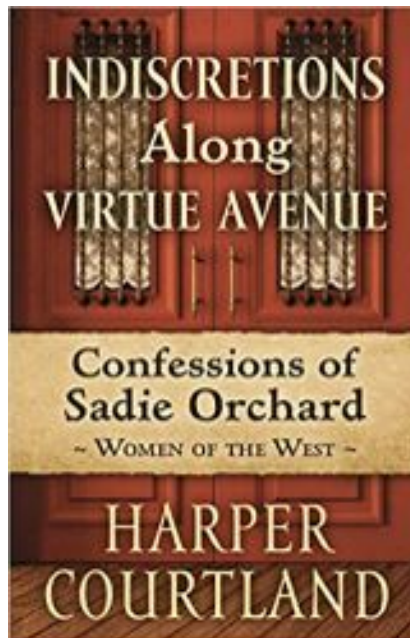
**THANK YOU!**

## BOOKS OF LOCAL INTEREST



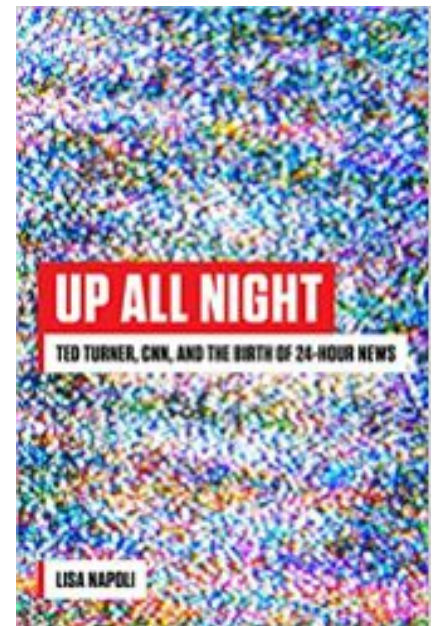
Former newsletter editor Harley Shaw called our attention to this new book by Tom Scanlan, who has written previously for *GZP* (“A Young Rancher’s Adventures in Lake Valley, 1879-1884,” IX.4, November 2016). This well-documented account of pioneering in Texas and New Mexico during those states’ formative years focuses on just a single family. However, their lives likely parallel those of many local families. The Irvin family’s story spans over one hundred years, almost equally divided between their adventures in the hill country of west-central Texas, and in the rugged southwestern and northwestern corners of New Mexico. The first generation of the Irvins to settle in Texas were farmers, but they soon left their farm and earned their living by rounding up and raising longhorn cattle. The next generation continued cattle ranching, but they were lured briefly to southwestern New Mexico Territory by the rich silver strikes of the 1870s. Here their lives were threatened on more than one occasion by raids from

defiant Apaches and a complicated encounter with a notorious gang of cattle rustlers. Returning to west Texas, the next generation continued cattle ranching as the family expanded, but they were eventually defeated by floods, drought, fences, and the economics of scale. The Irvins finally chose to migrate all the way to northwestern New Mexico, seeking their fortune in a place where water was plentiful and commerce was just beginning to boom. They put down roots in the small but growing towns of Farmington and Bloomfield. BookBaby, 2020 (\$14.95).



Adding to the seemingly ever-expanding literature on Hillsboro’s own Sadie Orchard, this historical novel follows her life from her origins in Iowa to Sierra County. Sadie moved into Kingston, New Mexico Territory, in 1886, claiming to be from London. Within a year, she had her own brothel on Virtue Avenue. Harper Courtland blends the myths with known

details of Sadie’s life, adds an element of the supernatural, and lets Sadie fill in the rest. As the dust jacket claims, “If you find things in this story that seem hard to believe, remember that, above all else, Sadie was a liar.” Not for the feint-hearted, the book is a “lively” read. Five Star Publishing, 2019 (\$25.95)



This book explores the rise of Ted Turner, owner of the Ladder Ranch. As the *Wall Street Journal* observed in its review (15 May 2020), “Mr. Turner is 81 now and suffering from an uncommon form of dementia, but his place in the pantheon [of American journalism] is secure. His harum-scarum, visionary creation of the Cable News Network [CNN] in 1980 irrevocably changed television news and has had a tangible impact on print journalism as well.” Written by Lisa Napoli, a journalist who started her career as an intern at CNN in 1981, it “presents an indelible portrait of the media mogul in all his profane, cartoonish glory.” Abrams Press, 2020 (\$27).