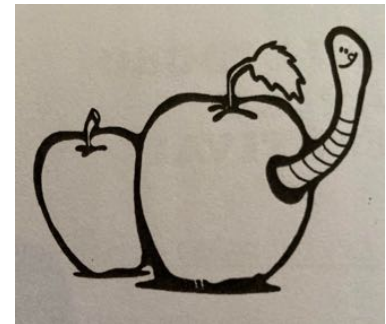


Hillsboro: Home of the Apple Festival 1968 - 2007



“Arthur the Appleholic Worm”
The Apple Festival logo,
designed by Sue Bason.

Great Things through Small Things Done Well: An Interview with Sue Bason

By Karla Cavarra Britton



Hillsboro’s welcome sign in 2006: “Home of the Apple Festival.” Photo Joe Britton.

No doubt many New Mexicans associate late summers with the state’s festivals and the celebration of local food, cowboys, Native cultures, music, folk arts, and Spanish heritage. Before 2007, when “The Last Bite of the Apple” took place, the annual Hillsboro Apple Festival was one of the most renowned of these beloved gatherings.

For decades the Apple Festival’s bustling energy, loyal purveyors, and throngs of visitors provided a contrast with Hillsboro’s size and otherwise quiet demeanor. Nevertheless, for many, many years travelers—sometimes numbering in the thousands—made their way on Labor Day weekend to mingle, shop, dance, eat and drink on Hillsboro’s Main Street.

“The Apple Festival is still missed by people all over this state,” said Sue Bason, the event’s respected founder, long-time chair, and tireless promoter. “If you go into any area of the state and say that you are from Hillsboro, people say, ‘Oh, the Apple Festival!’ People really looked forward to it. They *really* looked forward to it.” Sue oversaw the event for most of its 39 years.

(continued on page 3 ...)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We are making great progress on many Hillsboro Historical Society priorities for 2022. Even though it may look quiet on Carro Street, a lot is going on!

We have created a new conceptual plan for the backyard at the Black Range Museum. It is upgraded from past concepts, and now includes room for a small amphitheater, a blacksmithing area, a native plant garden, and a Carriage House. As Steve Dobrott noted in his *The Story of the Mountain Pride: A Case for Acquisition* article (GZP February 2022) and in his presentation for the New Mexico-Arizona History Convention in April, the HHS wishes to acquire the Mountain Pride stagecoach. We have now drafted plans for a building that will protect, display and house the coach if it is acquired. We will give you more updates on that project very soon.



Also moved onsite at the Black Range Museum is the fabulous old 1946 Ford Hillsboro Fire Truck. [See "A Fire Truck Comes Home, GZP II.1, February 2009 - Ed.] Two of our "Steves" (Dobrott and Morgan) were able to move it from Harley Shaw and Patty Woodruff's property on the west side of town to its new location between the Museum and Sue's Antiques. It has long been the plan to display the truck on our site, and now that is accomplished! We renew our thanks to the donors who helped us to purchase it back in 2009: Richard and Gloria Spellman, Harley Shaw and Patty Woodruff, Jan Haley and Gary Gritzbaugh, Bob Shipley, Kathy and Adrian Lovell, and Matti and Bill Harrison. Also note that the old air compressor and other mining equipment are now displayed at the park across the street from

the Museum. Placement there adds an interesting element to direct the attention of visitors to our local history and to the Museum.

We have an active committee working on oral histories for the HHS. Thanks to the professional and very generous assistance of the Las Cruces Farm and Ranch Museum staff, we have our materials in order to proceed with this project. We plan to do both audio tapes and video recordings if our consultants are comfortable with both. These interviews will be carefully archived in our Museum systems.

As you know, Covid impacted our hours and volunteers for the Black Range Museum, making planning over the past couple years very erratic. We are now working through a careful process to restructure and expand our volunteer program. We have developed a new Volunteer Handbook and will provide more complete training for volunteers who want to work with us. We also are planning more fun activities for active volunteers in the coming months. If you have interest in volunteering, please let me or Kathleen Blair know. Only a few hours a month can make a big difference in projects we need to accomplish, and in keeping the Black Range Museum and Gift Shop open for visitors. We hope to add more open days again starting in June.

Finally, note the article included in this newsletter about the honor that HHS Board Member Garland Bills received in April from the Daughters of the American Revolution (see page 16). The national-level Historic Preservation Recognition Award acknowledges his outstanding contributions to Historic Preservation work. We are all very proud of Garland for this award, and we are grateful for all he has done to make the Black Range Museum a professional, beautiful and very respected center in southern New Mexico.

- Nichole Trushell, HHS Board President,
ntrushell@gmail.com



(Apple Festival ... continued from page 1)

The festival was held in conjunction with the Hatch Chili Festival, Sue explained. “People came to the Hatch Chili Festival (also held on Labor Day weekend) and then travelled up the back road Highway 27 to the Apple Festival. It was great because we could work with the Hatch folks, and they could work with us: it was a great way to celebrate New Mexico’s harvests.”

The Apple Festival was distinct and unlike other festivals in Southern New Mexico like the Great American Duck Race in Deming; the Festival of Cranes in the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge near Socorro; and the UFO Festival in Roswell. The catalyst for the Hillsboro festival was the simple apple—an ancient symbol that means many things, including happiness, and a deciduous fruit incongruous with the durable ocotillo and creosote of Hillsboro’s environs. Yet from the humble apple grew the Apple Festival, growing into a boast of the town and a claim for all Sierra County.

As Sue described, the festival began in 1968 with a Labor Day weekend sale she held in front of her shop, Sue’s Antiques, which opened in 1965 and remains today a Hillsboro landmark. Sue set the mission for the festival early on: it was intended to benefit Hillsboro’s residents (yet it quickly became a boost for the county as well). “It was really a community thing to begin with,” Sue explained. “Everyone made apple pies.”

“But the best thing about the festival were the vendors,” Sue continued. “We had the best vendors, and they really made the festival what it was.” She still has the names and addresses of the festival’s merchants. They would arrive on Friday evening and then start pulling out about noon on Monday, “and the street would be left just as it was.” For many years there was no charge to sellers to set up. Once funds were needed to run the festival, a \$5 a day set-up fee was imposed. By 2007 the daily set-up fee remained modest at only \$50 per vendor. Arriving for the festival, visitors would be greeted by the vendors’ brightly painted and custom-designed stainless-steel trailers, advertising fresh-squeezed lemonade, sausages, and Pepsi-Cola.

Festival visitors would also see bushels of fresh apples. Some apples came from Mr. Jones’s orchard in Lake Valley, and others from Sonya Rutledge’s orchard west of Hillsboro. If there was a late freeze in Hillsboro and Kingston, apples were brought from orchards in Las Cruces, Mimbres, T or C, Palomas Creek, Ruidoso, and Animas Creek. Tables were filled with home-made apple pies, apple turnovers, candy apples, apple cobblers, apple cider, apple butter, and apple preserves. Wayne and Cora Manning made hundreds of pies. And as anyone who experienced Kingston’s bumper crop of apples in 2021 can attest, there are years in Hillsboro when a profusion of apples is free for the taking.

Aside from apples, the festival offered antique jewelry, Mexican pottery, cowboy hats, and hand-painted santos. Set up in front of the old garage in town were four dealers with high-quality antiques. One year there were over 125 different arts and crafts offered (but no rummage was allowed!). Breakfast was served until noon at the General Store, followed by offerings from Geno’s Famous Hamburgers, plenty of barbecue, and the S-Bar-X’s tasty brisket. Roasted fresh corn, roasted green chili, tamales, and great baked potatoes with toppings rounded out the local offerings. Candy from Las Cruces, kettle corn, funnel cakes, and cinnamon pecans, fudge, and pralines provided a sweet draw. “It was just fun!” exclaimed Sue.

The town was filled all day with the music from live bands. In the lot across from Sue’s store, she recalled, “We built a big dance floor, and we got a big tent out of Las Cruces so that everyone could dance under it and people would sit around. I had four bands a day going. Some were local T or C people; we had one from Silver; and a guitarist from Deming and just wonderful music.” The big dances on Saturday and Sunday evening started at 5:00 pm, led by big bands like the Chili River Band, and they would play until 10 or 11 o’clock. “When people got tired of dancing,” Sue said, “they could run up to the S-Bar-X to cool off and go back and forth. We can only remember one fight ever happening, down by the Post Office, and that was from people we didn’t know!”

Local organizations participated in the festival including Republicans, Democrats, local Chambers of Commerce, the Forest Service, Vietnam Vets, and the Boy Scouts. Sue described vendors who came back year after year and asked to park in their usual location. From the General Store to the west were the Arts and Crafts people, including a seamstress who made calico-print fiesta skirts. To the east of town, for the children, the park was set up for pony rides by Earl Grey. There was a jumping bag, and wooden hand-made toys for sale. Another highlight of the festival was a ride around Hillsboro on Pete Paulson's trolley pulled by a team of two Belgian Draft horses. Also, there is some record of a team of horses belonging to Frank Keller, "owner of the beautiful Belgian horses, proved his team's driving expertise in the festival's traffic," Sue reads from a newspaper clipping during the interview.



The trolley and Belgian Draft horses. Photo Ted of DGAR (see photo essay below).



Motorcycles parked outside the S-Bar-X. Photo Ted of DGAR (see photo essay below).

Motorcycles lined one side of the main street, parked in front of the S-Bar-X. Motorcycle clubs of New Mexico often planned trips around the festival dates making it a popular destination spot. Also, the Forest Service used to give permits to bikers to do a rally at Gallinas Canyon on Labor Day Weekend. Sue recalled one club with a good-looking leader out of Albuquerque who had the full respect of his club members. One Labor Day weekend, this leader walked into the S-Bar-X where his crew was cooling off. He said, "OK, time to go." And every one of the crew just put down their drinks and walked out of there and filed onto their bikes. "You talk about control," Sue said, "... well my goodness that was control." Sue thought it was wonderful to have the bikers in town and they were generous in spending their money at the bar and with the merchants.

Sue also recalled the most tragic event in the festival's history: the morning of Sunday, September 3, 1972, when the flood took out the Labor Day sale. Floodwaters from the Percha Creek and the North Percha Creek merged west of town, inundating Hillsboro. Heavy rainfall caused the confluence of water to break over the flood-control facilities, creating flood waters that reached six feet in town.

"We were having a Labor Day Sale and we had vendors when we saw the waters rising, they moved people, and people moved into the park." Sue said. "There was one little trailer with a woman artist and her husband; they were picked up by the water and taken right down the road and into the canyon. They found her drowned 9 miles down and they found him closer to town." The flood caused four deaths and Hillsboro was declared a disaster area both by Governor Bruce King and President Richard Nixon.

Sue remembered that the year following the flood, "we didn't do anything because the town was so devastated. And then we started again, but already the festival had grown and we were getting people from T or C, and Silver, and Deming and around, coming and participating. So, we decided that the Community Center might like it for a fund raiser and so the Community Center had it for a couple of years, but they decided to discontinue it because it was a little more work than they had wanted." But in the meantime, the Community Center seeking to boost the apple orchards in the area decided to change the name of the event from "The Hillsboro Labor Day Sale" to "The Hillsboro Apple Festival." After a time, Sue—along with Cora and Wayne Manning—took the festival back over knowing that it would not exist unless they persevered.



THOUSANDS ENJOY APPLE FEST - Thousands of persons during the Labor Day holiday weekend filtered into the hillside community of Hillsboro for the 20th Annual Hillsboro Apple Festival. The festival has grown into one of the biggest family outings in Southwest New Mexico during this time of year. (SENTINEL Photo)

Clipping of a photo of the Apple Festival with the caption "Thousands Enjoy Apple Fest" from the *Sierra County Sentinel*, September 7, 1988. Collection of Sue Bason.

The festival paid for itself. "It had to pay for itself," Sue underscored—it was not a profit-making organization. The festival was not set up to support anything else. The money generated by organizers Wayne and Cora Manning, Sue, and later Maree Westland "was solely used to generate this festival." Sue was not paid for her time and work. After a while other townspeople joined in, including Sammy Henry who started to help with expenses. Yet for most of the festival's history, Sue did most of the heavy lifting, including the advertising and arranging for the T-shirts, hats, balloons, and bumper stickers that were sold at the information booth. Sue even designed the festival's stationery with a logo of "Arthur the Appleholic Worm." The name came from Jimmy Alexander in the logo naming

contest he won. "But I'll tell you, we really didn't need much advertising," Sue noted as she showed the 1988 press clipping that reads, "Thousands Enjoy the Apple Festival."

The festival carried a one-million-dollar insurance policy, made out to the State of New Mexico Highway Department. (Some years cars were parked for two miles in each direction along the roads entering town). And the organizers had to pay people to do the garbage. "There were all these things that nobody took into account," Sue remarked. "We cleaned the whole street before the festival, and the day after the festival Mr. Manning and I and whoever were out there cleaning it again. We picked up every beer can, every cigarette butt. Everything. And the town was clean when we got through with that festival."

Many folks from Hillsboro continue to reminisce about the festival and all the people who contributed to its success. After decades of work on the event, Sue retired and handed over the responsibilities to the Hillsboro (Black Range) Business Association. After seven years, the business association decided to cancel the festival unless someone would step forward to continue it. Finding no volunteers, the association posted a notice on the bulletin board to the effect that all rights, responsibilities and assets were turned over to Maree Westland, who had offered to take charge of running the festival.

When the festival was handed over to the Business Association, Sue wrote a letter on March 7, 1991 to her associates with her recommendations for the festival's Apple Pie Contest—a key annual event always held with the pies safely stored inside the S-Bar-X Saloon, as dictated by the health requirement of the Environmental Improvement Division. "These were pies like Grandma used to make, and everyone was invited to try their hand," Sue emphasized. In her letter, Sue encouraged that the contest should be advertised in the local papers—the *Sentinel* and the *Herald*—and that the ad should include the names of the judges as well as the fact that there were significant prizes to be had like a Sunbeam Mixmaster. One interesting detail was that it was stipulated that the apple pie judges "cannot be in anyway connected politically to state or county offices as stated by the Environmental Improvement Division's Food Service Rules." The letter also provided in amusing detail instructions about how to organize the event successfully, even down to the correct procedure for judging the pie contest:



"PREPARING FOR APPLE FESTIVAL — These ladies are preparing apple pie for the Appel Festival and Street Sale in Hillsboro, N.M. Sept. 3, 4 and 5. From left, Mrs. Margaret Gilfillan, president of the Hillsboro Community Center, Mrs. Helen DeVaney, center, and Mrs. Ralph O'Dell." *El Paso Times*, August 25, 1977. Newspapers.com.

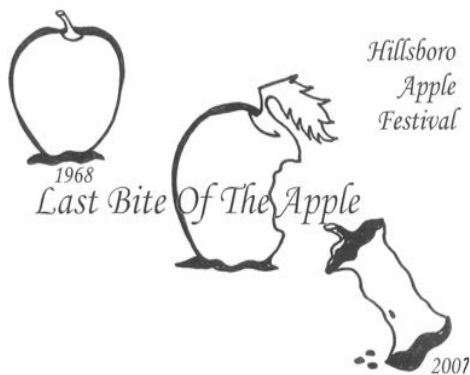
The Judges are seated at 2 card tables outside [the S-Bar-X] on the sidewalk. That way people can watch. Small slices are taken from each pie and placed on paper plates. The Judges are served and then shown the pie. I have that wrong, they are shown the pie, then served. They judge each pie on a 1-10 points system: #1 Fair, #2 Good, #3 Excellent. They are given a tally sheet to rate the pies on. They also are asked if they want water or coffee to go with the pie. When they have judged all pies, “the Apple Festival helpers” add the scores on each pie and pick the winner.

Despite such efforts at achieving rigorous competition, apparently Joann Merk always won the prize for the best pie anyway: “Gosh, her pies were SO good!” Sue said. And one year, just to confuse things, someone entered a pinto bean pie into the apple pie contest—and she was awarded a prize too.

For three-months each year over the course of many, many years, Sue worked by telephone to address the countless details necessary for staging the annual festival. First, she made certain there would be enough food and drink for the crowd—“if there was not enough food, people would just turn around and go back to Hatch.” She took requests from vendors around the state who were eager to participate; she mapped where everyone would setup and park; she made sure the vendors would know ahead of time where they would stay; and she arranged for volunteers and the team of “Apple Festival Helpers” (no easy task!). She saw to it, too, that the essential ice deliveries would be made throughout the weekend; and she set up generators, mailed invoices, found storage, and obtained the many permits needed from the Environmental Improvement Division for food purveyors and the apple pie contest.

Essential details of safety and hygiene had to be tended to as well. Every vendor had to sign a release form. There was the set-up for the many porta-pots and their cleaning and maintenance. Annual meetings had to be held with the New Mexico State Police and the Sierra County Sheriff’s Department informing them of the specifics for the festival. Ron Brown, the popular state patrolman, helped at many of the festivals. Not surprisingly, not everyone in Hillsboro loved the festival. Concerns were always raised by certain residents about the crowds, yet visitors continued to come from all over the nation and they brought money to spend.

But it wasn’t all work: Sue remembered the many evenings over Labor Day weekends sitting out in front of her store, relaxing with friends, grilling steaks, drinking cold beer, and having endless conversations with the folks who came through. “People really just had so much fun,” Sue said. “They were really the nicest people.”



In 2007, a “News Release” from Maree Westland and Sue Bason announced the “Last Bite of the Apple,” the final Hillsboro Apple Festival (see page 10). The release reads as a who’s-who of the community at the time, and of the town’s extensive creative output, including authored cookbooks, hand-crafted furniture, drawings, watercolors, photographs, quilts, and ceramics. A brief Sun-News YouTube video of the last apple festival by Norm Detlaff (“Last Bite of the Apple Festival, Sept. 1, 2007”*) includes comments from an enthusiastic former New Mexican who drove all the way from Georgia to attend the festival, and another fan from Las Lunas who said, “I read in the paper this was the last one, so I had to come down here.” The festival certainly had its devotees!

So what happened to the festival? “The Apple Festival kind of outgrew the community,” Sue said, “and so we had to stop it and just do other smaller festivals in town.” What happened in those days, now happened more than fifteen years ago, a time that for some feels like a lifetime. “It wouldn’t go now; it is

* Available as “Apple Fest 07” on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1dC3ivKVHo>.



over,” said Sue, reflecting not only on the festival’s suspension, but also the closing of the local favorite hangout, the S-Bar-X Saloon.

In Sue’s reckoning, both the Apple Festival and the S-Bar-X had their time and place. Now for the current day, she added, the little wine bar in town is perfect. But how has Hillsboro changed? Is it harder these days for people just to have fun? Or maybe the social cohesiveness that Sue helped to foster is just that much more difficult now? Those are questions for all who love Hillsboro, and other small-town communities, to ponder. Sue matter-of-factly summarized her personal attitude, speaking without nostalgia, complaint, or regret that the glory days of the Apple Festival have passed: “Times have changed. Hillsboro has changed.” Yet, in listening to Sue’s reflections, one adage comes to mind that still applies: “Great things are made by a series of small things brought together and done well.”

Sue Bason in her Hillsboro store, Sue’s Antiques, under a fiberglass apple mascot given to her by Wayne and Cora Manning in recognition of her many years of service organizing the annual Apple Festival. Photo Karla Britton.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE HILLSBORO APPLE FESTIVAL

The Hillsboro Apple Festival had its origins when Sue Bason set up a simple antique booth of four tables outside her store on Labor Day weekend in 1968 (though some sources date it as early as 1963¹). Over the next few years, other townspeople joined in, and then outside vendors, and soon Sue’s Labor Day Sale, sometimes called the Labor Day Fiesta, was a going concern.

Disaster struck in 1972 when on Sunday, September 3, floodwaters rushed through Hillsboro, wiping out the sale and killing four people. Regrouping in 1974, the event was taken over by the Hillsboro Community Center, under the leadership of Ross Bell, and it was then that it was recast as the Apple Festival, primarily for the benefit of two 10-acre apple orchards just to the west of town. As the *Clovis News-Journal* reported, the Hillsboro Community Center was taking the well-known Labor Day weekend street sale and “trying to make the event into the Hillsboro Annual Apple Festival.”² The article stated, “The usual flea markets, antiques, and art shows will be held, plus an apple bakery.”

Ross Bell, president of the Community Center, had a big hand in organizing the festival. He believed in getting everyone involved, saying “With your help this event (apple festival) has grown until we are known almost nationwide for our fine apples, our unique sidewalk sales, and the little village that likes to host our many visitors.” Indeed, the Festival had become known far and wide: on August 27, 1978, even the *Los Angeles Times* carried a brief notice



The Hillsboro bulletin board in 1974, announcing the “First Annual Apple Festival, Aug. 31st to Sept. 2nd. Everyone Welcome.” Jack Diven Photography, courtesy of Black Range Museum.

¹ “Holiday Will Offer Plenty of Food, Wine Festivals,” *El Paso Times*, August 30, 2006.

² “Hillsboro Initiates Annual Apple Festival,” *Clovis News-Journal*, August 4, 1974.

about it in a column on “Events Around the World,” listing similar events state by state and Canadian province by province.

Bell was best known for his antiques business and restaurant in the Old Schoolhouse, but he also had his own brisket and apple pie stand at the festival. At one point, he collaborated with Sue Bason in managing an estate sale of the belongings of “Silver City Millie,”³ some of which apparently made their way to Hillsboro. Bern Ganter, writing in the *Albuquerque Journal* in 1978, observed that “What intrigues one is the revelation by Ross Bell that the white elephant sale will be spiced by an offering from Silver City Millie. In southwestern New Mexico, particularly in the Silver City area, Millie is a legend—a former successful business woman, it is told. She operated a prominent house on Hudson Street in Silver City in what was described as a red light district in years gone by. The question now is—what could Silver City Millie possibly have to offer a white elephant sale at an apple festival in Hillsboro?”⁴ Apparently Sue Bason and Ross Bell knew the answer.

After a couple of years, however, the Community Center found the ever-growing festival too difficult to manage—and Sue stepped back in to take it over, along with Wayne and Cora Manning. They continued to expand the event, including live music (a dance floor was added in 1988, built by Richard Bickle), and eventually vendors came from all over New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, as well as multiple bands from both local venues and from the outside. At the festival’s peak, as many as 10,000 people came to Hillsboro over Labor Day weekend, over half of them from the El Paso area, but also from throughout the Southwest and other parts of the country. “Porta-Potties” were therefore ... well, necessary—16 of them in all. Ironically, the Deming residents who some years provided the porta-potties, also ran a booth selling beverages.⁵



Some of the 16 porta-potties, lined up in front of the Enchanted Villa Bed and Breakfast. Photo Ted of DGAR (see photo essay below).

Not everyone in the community was enthusiastic about the annual event, however. In 1981, Dusty Rhode presented a petition with 170 signatures of supposed Hillsboro residents to the Sierra County Commissioners, asking for them to pass some ordinance to control the crowds, which he thought were threatening the safety and welfare of the community, as well as dangerously blocking NM Highway 90 (as it was then numbered). The Commissioners pointed out they couldn’t pass an ordinance for just one community, but promised to see what could be done.⁶

Sue stepped down as lead organizer in 1991, turning the job over to the Hillsboro (Black Range) Merchants Association which ran it for the next several years. Then in 1998, the Merchants Association decided it also wanted to discontinue the festival, in part due to insufficient volunteers. Maree Westland, however, offered to take it on and she ran it successfully for another nine years. Gradually, though, Labor Day events in other communities began to draw away both attendees and vendors, and in 2006 a wet weekend dampened attendance still further. Moreover, some people had concerns that the festival had outgrown Hillsboro, with a resulting loss of emphasis on the local community. So in 2007 the decision was made to have one last hurrah, “The Last Bite of the Apple,” and then shut the festival down. Maree Westland explained to the *El Paso Times*: “It was a tough decision to make, but this is our final year. Mainly, it’s the fact that we’ve lost all our orchards up here, so we don’t have our own apples anymore. ... We had two in the area, but we lost both of them when the owners died. ... It’s a big weekend for us, but it’s time to go out with a smile on our faces, so we’re going to celebrate it.”⁷

³ See “Ross Bell: The Milliner, Antiques Dealer, and Restaurateur of the Old Schoolhouse,” *GZP* 14.4 (November 2021).

⁴ Bern Gantner, “Around the State,” *Albuquerque Journal*, August 6, 1978.

⁵ Sandy L. Broadbent, “Hillsboro Apple Festival Sees Record Crowds,” *Desert Winds Magazine* (Fall 2002).

⁶ “Group Protests Annual Influx of People to Hillsboro,” *Albuquerque Journal*, October 7, 1981.

⁷ “The Last Apple: Hillsboro Fest to End after 39 Years,” *El Paso Times*, August 30, 2007.

After so many successful years of festivities, perhaps the most appropriate way to conclude this brief synopsis would be to share one of the tempting recipes from the Apple Festival Cookbook, in this case submitted by Lois Jarvis, Sue Bason's own sister:⁸

Lois Jarvis' Apple Cake

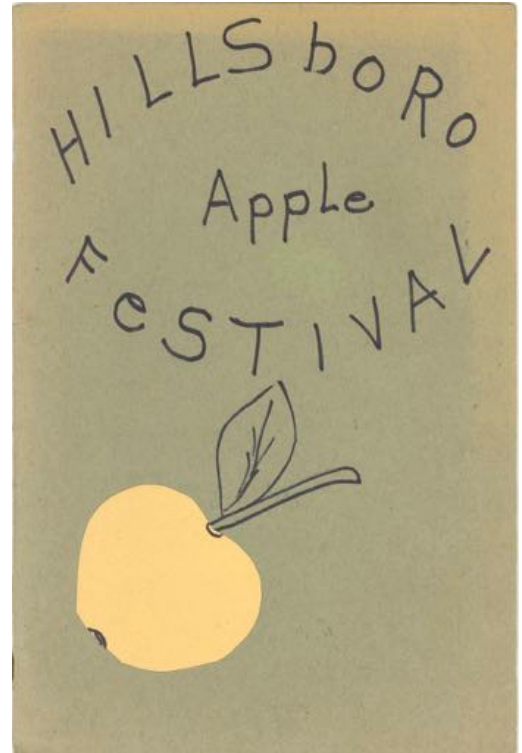
- 4 large apples
- 4 teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ cup sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup oil
- 2 ½ teaspoons vanilla
- 3 cups regular flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ cup orange juice

Peel, core, and slice apples very thinly. Mix in small bowl with cinnamon and the ½ cup sugar and set aside.

Combine eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla. Mix for one minute. Mix baking powder into the flour and alternate orange juice with flour as you continue beating for about five minutes.

Grease 10-inch tube pan lightly. Pour half of cake batter into the pan, then add evenly half of apple mixture. Put rest of batter on top and add remaining apple mixture.

Bake 1 ½ hours at 350 degrees.



Cover of the 1974 Apple Festival Cookbook, courtesy of Black Range Museum.



Apple pies for sale at a stand on Happy Flats on the east side of Hillsboro, "the first one and the last one you see," a still frame from a video from YouTube, "Apple Fest 07." The sign reads: "Regular Apple Pies 11.50; Mini Pies 3.50; Sugar Free 12.50"



Bumper sticker on the glass door of Sue's Antiques. Photo Joe Britton.

⁸ Included in "Hamlet of Hillsboro Plans Annual Apple Fest," *El Paso Herald-Post*, August 29, 1984.

NEWS RELEASE

LAST BITE OF THE APPLE

It started in 1968 and for 39 years thousands of people have had a wonderful time tasting the apple at the annual **Hillsboro Apple Festival**. The cliché that “all good things must end” applies to this year’s Apple Festival. So, come join in the celebration of the culmination of this wonderful event.

This Labor Day Weekend, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, September 1 – 2 & 3 [2007], there are great things happening throughout the picturesque, tree-lined street of Hillsboro. Apples head the list with lots and lots of fresh apples, apple pies, apple turnovers, fried apple pies, apple cobblers, apple cider and Ellen’s yummy apple butter and apple preserves.

If you get there early join Ben and Doreen at the General Store for breakfast served until noon. After that, sample Geno’s Famous Brisket and hamburgers, and S-Bar-X’s tasty barbeque. Corn is at its peak this time of year and there will be booths selling roasted corn, corn-on-the-cob, and kettle corn. Maree at the Enchanted Bed & Breakfast serves up great baked potatoes with your choice of toppings.

And what would a festival be without hotdogs, tamales, turkey legs, funnel cakes and sweet treats like cinnamon roasted pecans or fudge and pralines from the Las Cruces Candy Company? To wet your whistle after tasting all that great food, grab a Coke, a lemonade from J.R.’s, or stop at the Barber Shop Café for their wine tasting event.

While eating all that good food – browse the many local businesses and booths featuring Arts & Crafts, Antique Jewelry, Mexican Pottery, Cowboy Hats, Hand-Made Wooden Toys, Southwestern Pottery, Hand Wrought Clocks, Collectibles and Primitives from Mantis Market Place, Potpourri from Sandy at the Scent-sational booth and the most creative and whimsical santos and crosses by Sue Bason at Sue’s Las Cruces de los Santos.

Don’t let the fun end when you go home – take some Iris Bulbs from the Happy Flats Iris Garden, stop by and see Ike Wilton at his Saddlery and buy some Saddle Blankets, Purses or Tack from the Hillsboro Tradin’ Post, hand-made jewelry from Pretty Rocks Jewelry, Metal Art by Dale Bradshaw, Children’s Antiques from Tasado Da Moda, Collectibles and Antiques from Karla’s, and an autographed cookbook by award-winning author and food columnist, Lynn Nusom.

There are also new and used cookbooks at bargain-basemen prices and The Hillsboro Library has an annual book give-away where good books are yours for a small donation. The Percha Traders Co-Op is comprised of a host of brilliant artists in the Hillsboro area including Matilde Holzwarth’s lyrical photography, Melody Sears who paints still lifes, Jane Turner a potter and watercolorist, Diana Vineyard presents a collection of photo note cards, and Quilts y Mas’s Betty Reynolds has her gorgeous quilts, quilt note cards and purses on display.

Kathy’s Kritters and Kathy Lovell make whimsical figures to delight people of all ages. Willian Lindenau’s love of beautiful stones is reflected in his pendants and pins. Veronique DeJaegher creates wall sconces out of handmade paper and twigs, and a line of “Back at the Ranch” leather fringed table runners, pillows and placemats showcase Joan Robinson’s work.

Famed author, LouAnne Johnson, has several books available. Janie Dobrott sells new natural skin care products, Sherry Harman crafts lovely tapestry purses, Geno and Diane Washburn fashion one-of-a-kind wood furniture and decorator items, and Robert “Shoofly” Shufelt is displaying his prints of Western pencil drawings.

Weary of all that walking – get a massage from April Heather’s Good Medicine Gallery, buy the last-ever HILLSBORO APPLE FESTIVAL Tee-Shirts, gas up the car and get camping supplies and snacks from the Hillsboro Court and don’t forget to take home some delicious fresh green chile, roasted to order.

ADIOS AMIGOS

“FUNKY TOWN, FUNKY FESTIVAL”

A photo essay on Flickr by Ted of DGAR (2001)

*“Hillsborough [sic] New Mexico Apple Festival
A funky town and a funky festival ... sadly no longer held!”*



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SAMPLE APPLE FESTIVAL FOOD VENDORS

Ross Bell and Richard Bickle (Brisket, Pies)
 Bobby Hamm (Cozy Kitchen)
 José Flores (Candy)
 Cruz Sanchez (Mexican Food)
 Nita Paternoster (Funnel Cakes)
 David Thatcher (Sodas)
 Geno's (Brisket and Hamburgers)
 Las Cruces Candy Company
 (Fudge, Pralines, Cinnamon Roasted Pecans)

Flying Tamale Café (Tamales)
 General Store (Breakfast)
 Barber Shop Café (Wine Tasting)
 James Rutledge (Lemonade)
 S-Bar-X Saloon (Barbeque)
 Maree Westland (Baked Potatoes)
 Verna Maheny (Breakfast, Hamburgers)
 Earl Grey (Barbeque)
 Albert Aquilera (Candy Apples)

Garland Bills Receives National Award

In September 2019, the Magnolia Ellis Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) wanted to recognize Dr. Garland Bills and his work for the Hillsboro Historical Society.

The Chapter applied to the National Society in Washington DC for the Historic Preservation Recognition Award. This award was created to honor people who have made outstanding contributions to Historic Preservation. The application process can take four to six months for approval. Notably, in Garland's case, the approval was given in just three weeks. However, with complications due to Covid, he was just presented with the award in April.

Here are some of the excerpts from the approval letter written by Sally E. Patterson, National Vice-Chair of the NSDAR:

What a delight it was reading the application from the Magnolia Ellis Chapter, NSDAR, for the Historic Preservation Award for Dr. Garland Bills, and it is with great pleasure that I approve the award. I must say the articles were probably some of the most colorful I have read since assuming this chair. Your community is so blessed to have a dedicated historian such as Dr. Bills!

In her letter she also highlights Garland's work on Sadie Orchard, the Fountain Trial, and the many, many hours he has dedicated to the Black Range Museum.

This information and the award were presented by Marilyn Poitras, Mary Wagner and Robin Tuttle from the Magnolia Ellis Chapter on April 16, 2022. Marilyn stated, "It is with great pride that the Historic Preservation Recognition Award is given to Garland for his dedication to Hillsboro history."

Congratulations from all of us at the HHS to Garland for this well-deserved award!



Editor's Note

The Hillsboro community was saddened to learn of the death last month of Margie Weiche (Rubio). She and the whole Rubio family have been a bedrock of the town for many years, and I hope we will be able to do a commemorative story on their lives and contributions to the community in a future issue of *GZP*. Many of us cannot quite imagine Hillsboro without her presence.

Meanwhile, this issue focuses almost entirely on the famous "Hillsboro Apple Festival," a fixture of the town's life from 1968 until 2007. It involved countless people in a myriad of ways—as volunteers, vendors, participants, musicians, cooks, and more. Yet it remains indelibly associated with Sue Bason, its founder and lead organizer for most of those years. I am grateful to Karla Cavarra Britton for interviewing Sue, and shaping her recollections into a portrait of the annual festival. Carrying several stories in this issue about the festival's history, ambiance, and place in the town's identity is a fitting celebration of the important place it still holds in the community's collective imagination.

As announced in the February 2022 issue, three of our HHS Board members gave papers at the annual convention of the Historical Society of New Mexico, held this year April 7-9 at the Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces. The three speakers, and the titles of their presentations, were:

- Joseph Britton, "The Three Lives of Anne Bucher (1892-1973)," chronicling the life of one of Hillsboro's prominent citizens, in a session on Women that Made a Difference in the West.
- Steve Dobrott, "The Mountain Pride," on the stage line between Lake Valley, Hillsboro, and Kingston and its famous stagecoach, in a session on Borderlands Miscellany.
- Garland Bills, "The Hard Undaunted Life of an Early Chinese Immigrant to the Black Range," about local restaurateur Tom Ying in a session on Chinese and Irish Immigrants in the Borderlands.

-- Joe Britton

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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.

HHS is a member of the
Historical Society of New Mexico.

We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.
All donations are tax deductible.

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