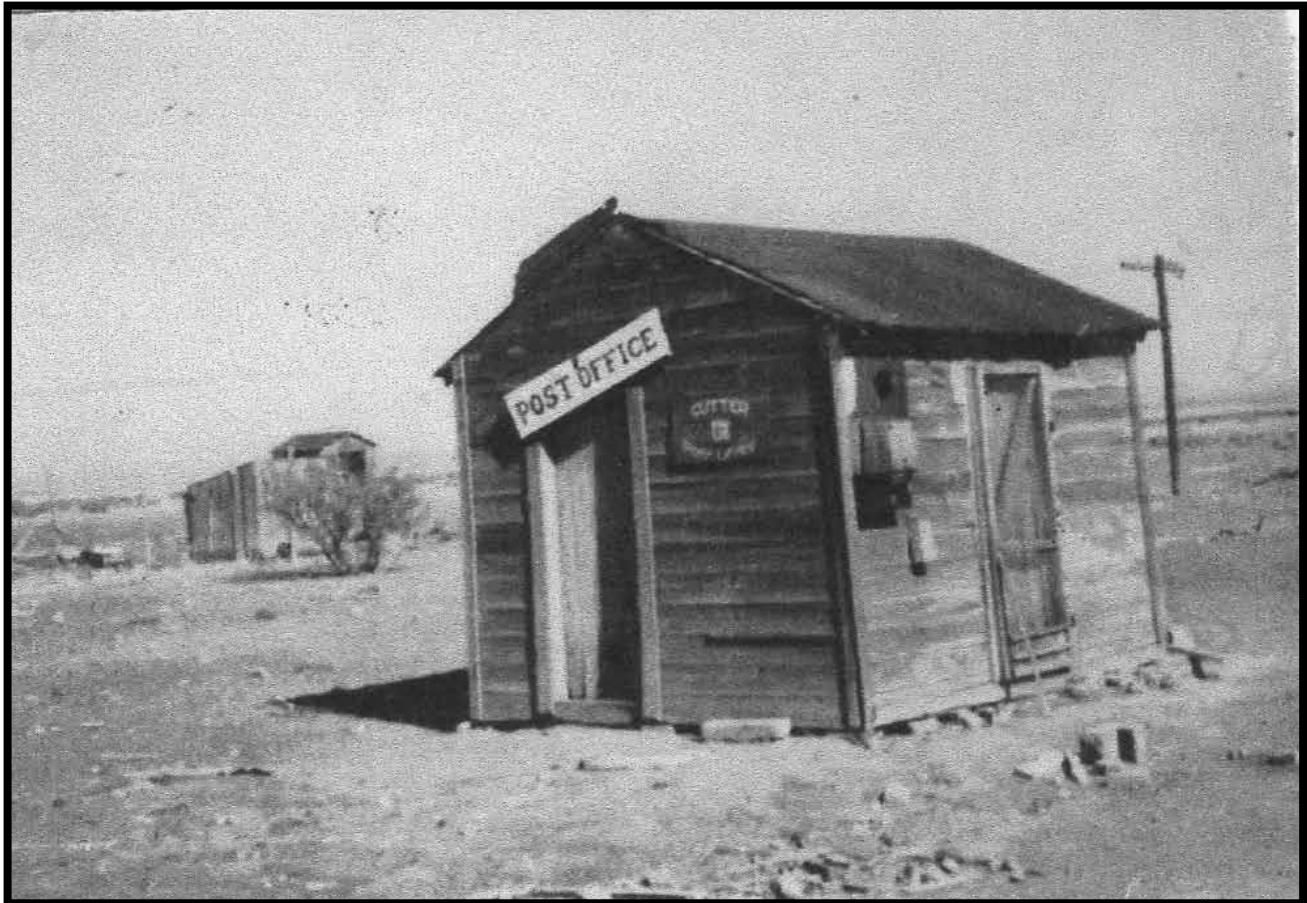


Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos

Vol. 13 No. 2 Hillsboro Historical Society May, 2020



Cutter Post Office, Date Unknown

When Sierra County Seat was (almost) moved to Cutter

What will history say about the coronavirus?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Although this is a difficult and challenging time for all of us, it is incumbent upon me, as president, to lead and encourage our members. As a historical society, we embrace the objects, people and events of the past. We strive to preserve our history for future generations so they can know and not forget the way life was and of those who lived it.

Lately, I have been thinking more of how it must have been to have gone through the great flu pandemic of 1918. The numerous unmarked graves called "children's row" in our local cemetery is a grim reminder of all those young lives cut short from this disease. In our museum collection, we have a child's coffin as a reminder of sad times. The current coronavirus outbreak has made me more aware of how people coped with and survived such deadly diseases and the hope that they had for a better future as medical knowledge progressed.

As they did back then, we too hope for a vaccine that will arrest the spread of Covid-19. We struggle to make sense of our current situation in disbelief of how this virus has changed our lives. But like those who survived past epidemics, we live in hope for a time when we can celebrate being together again. After all, we are Americans and we have a history of overcoming adversity. Because we are doing the right thing by staying home and being safe and respectful of others we are securing our future and hopefully moving toward economic recovery. We in Hillsboro are a caring community that shines by helping others get through times like this. Although we are socially apart, we have become closer as neighbors and friends.

I live in hope that we will soon be able to reopen the Black Range Museum and that "social distancing" will be part of our history. I long for the day that we can conduct board meetings in person and attend informative programs and inspiring community events.

I want you to know, the Hillsboro Historical Society is still alive and well thanks to your support and a great board of directors working diligently toward such things as remodeling the entrance to the museum with a new wooden deck porch and courtesy ramp to be accomplished within a month. By then, we will have implemented a monthly giving program by way of our website. We are also considering options on preserving and interpreting the courthouse and jail site. History will show that we continued to operate responsibly during challenging times for the sake of preserving history and the confidence and satisfaction of our members. We are living in historic times that will be recalled just as the 1918 flu pandemic is recalled today. It used to be "live long and prosper" now it is "be safe and stay well"!

Steve Dobrott

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

Hillsboro Historical Society

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

hillsboronmhistory.info

The mission of 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.

Hillsboro Historical Society News

Black Range Museum

Though the Museum remains closed for a while longer, our work continues. The use of the backyard for exhibits and events is being developed, and inside the Museum is enjoying one area of improvements.

We sorted through the multitude of things that had stacked up under the backyard roof that extends from the storage container, leaving only the items that will contribute to an outdoor museum or be useful for backyard events. In addition, to prepare for construction of the decking and ramps on the front of the Museum, we will be moving most or all of the mining and farming equipment to the backyard to form parts of outdoor displays there.

Inside the Museum, the principal activity concerns the Research and Education room, which is next to the Gift Shop. Gary Gritzbaugh built for us a beautiful map case in which many newspapers, documents, photos, and maps of our collection will be accessible for public perusal. We are planning to purchase a computer, printer, scanner, and copier for HHS use, and these will be available on a restricted basis for the general public. During this period of isolation, our diverse collections of digital photos are being put together in a coherent way that will enhance usefulness to any researcher. This digital photo collection will be accessible on our new computer.

Volunteers needed. At this time, we still don't know when the museum will open again. We hope soon. When it does, we will still be needing volunteers to serve as gift shop attendants and as docents. Anyone interested can contact Steve Dobrott or Garland Bills.

Program Series:

As with the Museum, we do not know when the Hillsboro Community Center will reopen. We have cancelled all of the scheduled programs until further notice.



Getting Ready

While the museum is closed, we're working on a new face for the building. The antique mining equipment is being moved to the outside display area in the back yard, and a new, handicapped-friendly ramp will be built for our front door. Step one was moving the old machinery and the crumbling rock wall. Construction of a ramp will begin sometime this month.

HELP US KEEP THE LIGHTS ON!

I would like to share a new opportunity to help the Hillsboro Historical Society during these challenging times and beyond!

Monthly giving to the Hillsboro Historical Society through our Black Range Partners in History program is an easy way to make a big difference in your community. For a modest monthly donation, you can help with HHS's everyday needs and more.

As a monthly giver you will get all the regular benefits of HHS membership including the exceptional Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos Newsletter and discounts on our books. Our Partners in History donors will also be welcomed to some special programs and outings during the year. Note that those enrolled in the monthly giving program will automatically become members in 2021.

In addition to helping cover operating expenses, the Partners in History monthly donations will help us work toward ongoing projects such as:

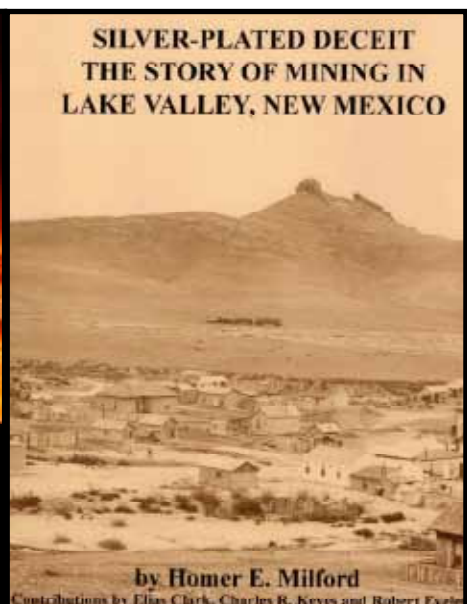
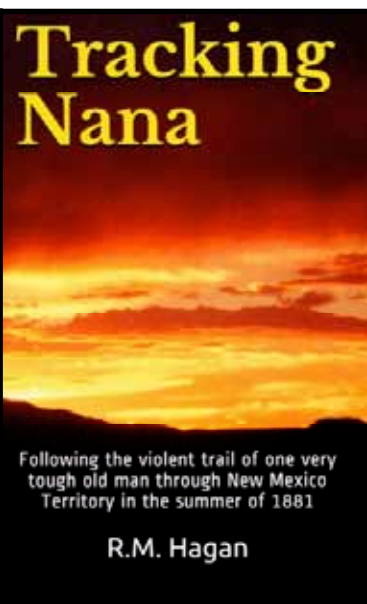
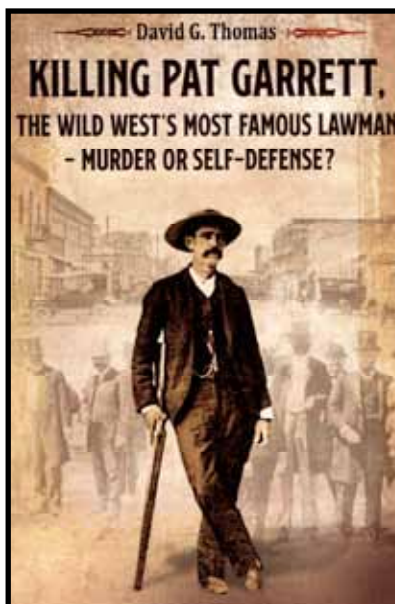
- Developing the entry and outdoor exhibits for the Black Range Museum
- Developing better access to the Courthouse-Jail site and protecting structures on site
- Updating our website for more easy to use experiences
- Creating new displays and adding interpretive signage

To sign up for our monthly giving program, please visit our website www.hillsboronmhistory.info click on the HHS Monthly Giving link on the home page then follow the process there. Note that you can cancel at any time by contacting hillsboronmhistory@gmail.com.

Supporting your LOCAL, VOLUNTEER-RUN organization is a great investment. We thank you for considering this!

Nichole Trushell, HHS Board of Directors

Three new books about our area.



A Young Hillsboro “David” takes on a Territorial “Goliath” Edward Tittmann goes to Washington to Keep the County Seat

by Lynn Tittmann Mullins

A Statement by the Author:

Edward Tittmann was my grandfather, and I wrote this story, based on his files, on the attempt to move the Sierra County seat from Hillsboro to Cutter. Statements in quotations are taken directly from documents in the file, including from transcripts of the House and Senate hearings. The story about the burning in effigy of Hopper and Chavez was taken from an article in the *Sierra County Advocate*, March 12, 1909. To provide a dollop of human interest, I peeked into my grandfather’s thoughts, had him walk (as he was wont to do) about Washington, and otherwise added touches that readers can easily distinguish from historical facts.

In 1909, as the New Mexico Territorial Legislature prepared to adjourn, three bills were passed to change the boundaries of Sierra County and move the county seat from Hillsboro to Cutter. These new laws took Hillsboro’s residents by surprise. The only body that could nullify acts passed by the Territorial Legislature was the United States Congress. In 1910, after many petitions and extended correspondence with W. H. “Bull” Andrews, the territory’s congressional delegate, Hillsboro was invited to present its concerns to Congress.

In March 1910 Edward Tittmann of Hillsboro journeyed to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress to disallow the three territorial bills. To accomplish that, he needed to explain the injustice done to the citizens of Hillsboro. Quite a responsibility for someone who had arrived in Hillsboro only two years before. But he was prepared to fight for his new town, a bit like David taking on Goliath.

In 1910 Washington was experiencing its warmest and driest March in 25 years. Tittmann walked from the Shoreham Hotel to the House of Representatives dressed in a topcoat, hat, and gloves, but with no muffler or umbrella. He had always found that walking was a way to clear and focus his mind. Besides, he enjoyed the beautiful city.

Washington may have changed since he had lived there 19 years earlier, but it felt familiar. He had been born in St. Louis, but when he was four years old his fa-



Edward Tittmann about the time he traveled to Washington to oppose change of county seat.

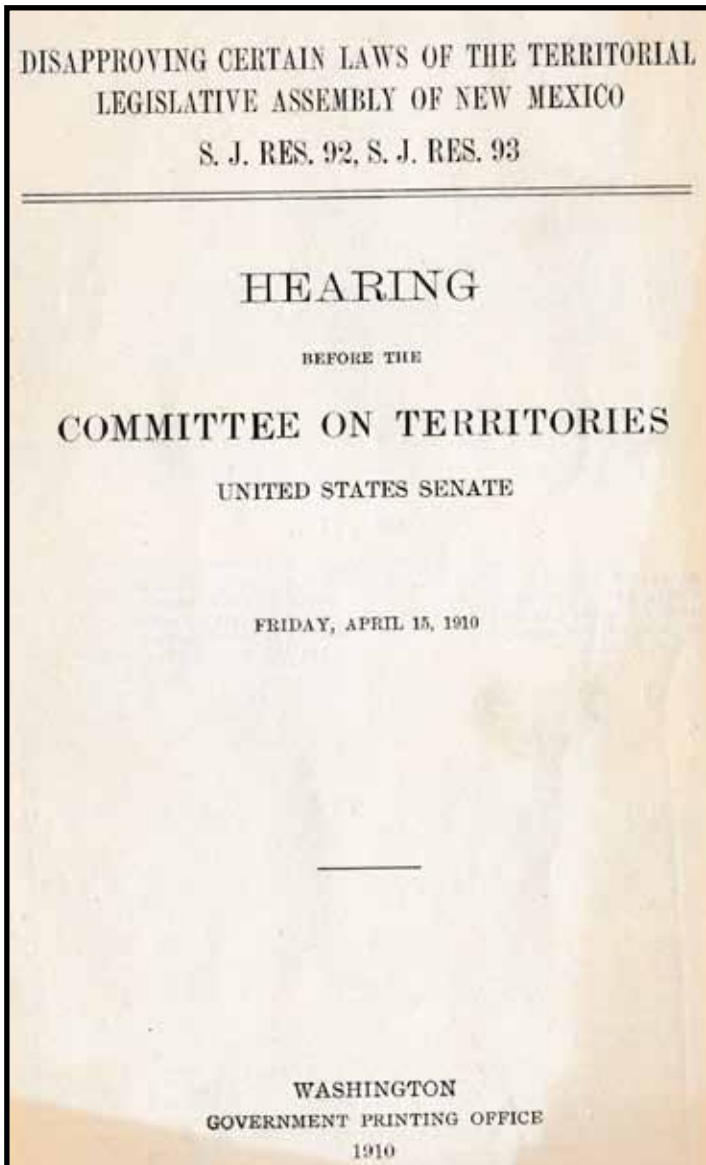
ther died and his mother took him and his younger brother to live with her parents in Germany. He returned to the States in 1891, when he was 19. In two years he completed a bachelor’s degree in Washington, then enrolled in Columbia Law School (in New York City) in 1893. Afterwards he practiced law in New York City and St. Paul, Minnesota before moving west to Hillsboro.

But this was not a courtroom he was about to enter, nor a judge or jury he would have to convince, but members of Congress.

Tittmann had been instructed to be at the House of Representatives at 10:30. He hoped to arrive early enough to get his bearings and further organize his thoughts. He had gone over his presentation numerous times, but couldn’t know what questions the com-

mittee members would ask. As he had learned in courtrooms, no matter how thoroughly an attorney anticipates the opposing side’s thoughts, a surprise question can derail a presentation.

Once at the Capitol, Tittmann began looking for the room in which the committee meeting was to be held. As he walked down the large, rather ornate hallway, he heard someone call his name. He turned to see Mr. Andrews, the representative from the Territory of New Mexico, who would be his guide and support throughout the hearings. Andrews’ support had been secured prior to his arrival, as Tittmann knew from telegrams he had received from Howard A. Wolford, a fellow at-



presentation. At the stroke of 10:30, Hamilton called the meeting to order and distributed copies of the resolutions they would consider. House Joint Resolutions 117, 118, and 119 dealt with the acts passed by the New Mexico Territorial Legislature to move the county boundary and change the county seat.

Tittmann had struggled to find a way to explain Hillsboro's concerns and to describe how and why the acts had been introduced and passed by the territorial legislature and signed by the governor. It didn't help that the committee members had copies of three letters written by Governor Curry to the Secretary of the Interior, defending the governor's decision to sign the territorial bills. Educating the committee and convincing them to act favorably was a herculean task.

When Chairman Hamilton gave Tittmann the floor, he took a deep breath and tried to make eye contact with as many members of the committee as he could. It was something his mother had always told him would make the people he was addressing believe in his sincerity. He began telling his story. As he did, he was mindful of the events leading up to this moment.

In 1884 the Territorial Legislature had created Sierra County, had set its boundaries, and had made Hillsboro the county seat. Then, in 1909, the Territorial Legislature had passed three acts. The first established guidelines for changing counties and their boundaries. The second and third bills abolished Sierra County, created a new county with the same name but with different boundaries, and moved the county seat to Cutter, a tiny village at the eastern edge of the county. The new Sierra County would include a strip of land taken from Socorro County, to make Cutter appear more centrally located. In exchange for this unwanted land, Sierra County would pay \$25,000 (the equivalent of \$680,000 today) to Socorro County.

The residents of Hillsboro had no prior warning of this agenda in the legislature, and would not have agreed to have their representative introduce such acts. However, the legislative district for Sierra County also included Socorro County and was allotted two representatives. Socorro County selected one of those representatives, while both counties voted on the other. However, Socorro County had about 1500 voters and Sierra had about 900. Thus, under the laws of the Territory of New Mexico and because of the disparity in the number of voters, Sierra County had no exclusive voice in the legislature.

In 1908 the county convention had been held at Hillsboro. The delegates' choice for a representative to the legislature ran into difficulty. A clerk from the district court, who did not reside in Sierra County, appeared at the convention and strongly suggested that a Mr. Julian Chavez be nominated. Mr. Chavez was well

torney in Hillsboro and chairman of the "County Seat Committee"—formed by Hillsboro's residents to fight the unwanted bills. The telegrams had instructed him to "confer with Andrews and secure his friendship and support. . . You must work though Andrews." In response, Tittmann wired Wolford that "Andrews promised getting County Seat Bill out of committee and not oppose Bond issue repeal." In a different telegram he added, "Am friendly, giving him no chance to back out on any pretense."

Andrews led Tittmann to the room where the committee would meet. He introduced him to Edward L. Hamilton, a representative from Michigan, who chaired the House Committee on Territories. The other members of the committee introduced themselves and indicated where Tittmann should sit.

Tittmann settled himself, opened his briefcase, and organized the papers he had gathered to help with his

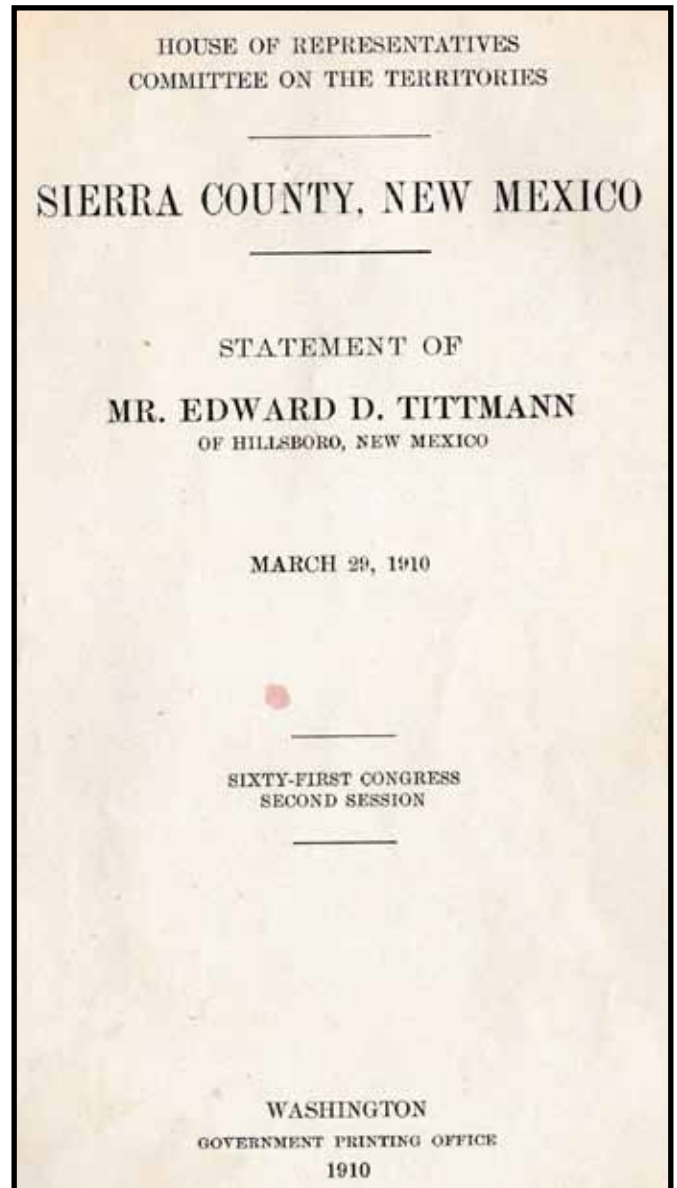
known, although not favorably, to the people of Hillsboro and Sierra County. In the election that followed he did not carry Sierra County so in practice, he represented Socorro County's interests.

Tittmann explained that once in the legislature, Chavez introduced a series of useless bills. One would add a tax on bachelors. Another would put a bounty on jackrabbits. (The idea of such a bounty must have elicited a quiet guffaw from one of the committee members, a Mr. Cole from Ohio, who asked for clarification: "I assume there are a great many jackrabbits?" Tittmann assured him there were an "awful lot" and that the proposed bounty had been so high, paying it might have bankrupted every county in the territory.) Although the Territorial House passed Chavez's bills, the Council (the territorial equivalent of a state senate) tabled them.

Tittmann now turned to Mr. Chavez's "crowning effort": the plan to move the county seat from Hillsboro to Cutter. The people of Hillsboro had had no idea that Chavez had introduced such bills, and it was only by accident that they learned about them. A resident of Sierra County was in Santa Fe, visited the legislature, and heard the bills being introduced. He immediately sent a telegram with the news to Hillsboro. Thus alerted, the town's residents sent a telegram to Chavez to ask whether the story was true. A second telegram went to the president of the Council and a third to the speaker of the House. All three replied by telegram that such bills had indeed passed and had been signed by the governor.

Hillsboro's residents immediately sent a committee to Santa Fe. Once in the territorial capital, the committee members found that while the bills had passed, the governor had not yet signed them. Evidently the telegrams to the contrary were meant to preclude anyone in Hillsboro from taking action. When the President of the Council and the Speaker of the House were questioned about the telegrams, they insisted that the content had been altered. Specifically, the person entrusted to send the telegrams had added the sentences about the governor signing the bills. When the governor learned what had happened, he severely criticized the person who had altered the telegrams, and vetoed the bills.

As there was only one more day in the legislative session, the committee extracted a promise from Chavez that he would not submit any more bills to the legislature. The citizens of Hillsboro returned home, convinced they would retain their designation as the county seat. But as soon as they left Santa Fe, Chavez introduced three bills almost identical to those the governor had vetoed. The new set of bills stipulated that the removal of the county seat to Cutter was contin-



gent on a "special election of the qualified voters of Sierra County," which would be "called for the first day of June, 1910." This apparent answer to local concerns seemed to have influenced Governor Curry to sign the bills.

Chairman Hamilton interrupted Tittmann, wishing to clarify the issue. He referred to one of Governor Curry's letters to the Secretary of the Interior, which stated, "the people would be overwhelming in favor of Hillsboro."

Tittmann answered, "Our rights were absolutely violated and why should we be put to the expense of an election?" He explained such an election would cost between \$500 and \$700 (\$13,600-\$19,000 today). Many voters would have to travel at least two days, thanks to New Mexico's wide open spaces. Tittmann continued, "While we can vote against the trans-

fer of the county seat to Cutter, we have no remedy to provide against the transfer of the strip of desert land which was forced on us and which we do not want.”

Tittmann then spoke of the governor’s personal interest in Cutter. He described how the Albuquerque Commercial Club, representing New Mexico’s business interests, sponsored an annual “boosters journey” each year to promote various parts of New Mexico. One trip had taken the group to Cutter, where Governor Curry had laid the cornerstone of a proposed building and had given a speech on the “great future of this grand town that was going to spring up out of the desert.” From this episode Tittmann surmised that Governor Curry hoped that the local mining ventures would be a great success and that as a result, Curry would be seen as a forward-thinking, pro-business political leader.

The questioning then began. The committee members wanted to know why Cutter was selected as the new county seat. Tittmann explained that a Robert Hopper and a Julia Howe Bigelow were major investors in the Victoria Chief C. M. & S. (probably “Copper Mining and Smelting”) Company, which had claims near Cutter. The two investors were trying to boost the place into a mining metropolis. When asked about the populations of Hillsboro and Cutter, Tittmann explained that Hillsboro had about 800 to 850 residents and Cutter had “maybe” 24. Chairman Hamilton asked, “24 hundred?” Tittmann answered, “No, only 24 people.”

Having been handed this opening, Tittmann compared and contrasted the two towns. He quickly produced photographs. The images of Cutter showed a desolate, desert landscape and only one building, a one story concrete block structure that housed a saloon.

He then showed photographs of Hillsboro, revealing a main street lined with businesses, a church, a school, and a three-story brick courthouse built in 1892.

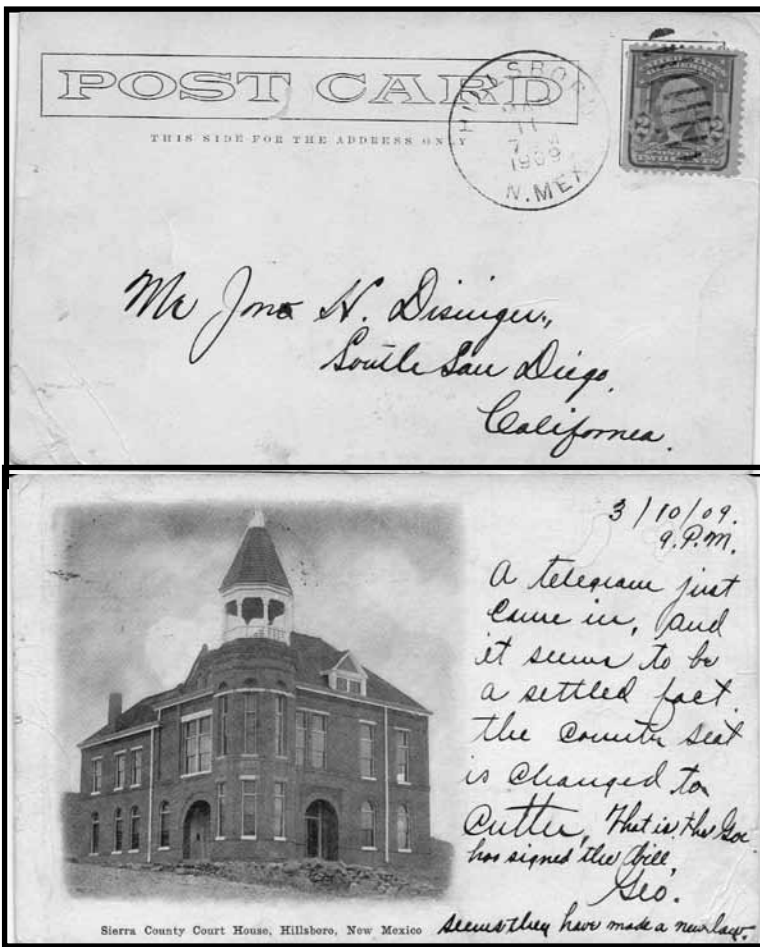
Tittmann then produced a map he had prepared, showing Cutter at the very eastern edge of Sierra County. The map included the number of miles between Cutter and other settlements in the county, to show how difficult it would be for most county residents to travel to Cutter on official business. Tittmann indicated the strip of land to be transferred from Socorro County, which would move the county boundary further to the east. He pointed out this was a transparent attempt to make the change of county seats seem less of a bad idea. He again made it clear that Cutter served the interests of a single mining company and its investors.

After a variety of questions, each answered successfully, the committee chairman shifted the topic.

“What became of Julian Chavez?” he asked.

“Julian Chaves is not mentioned by name in Hillsboro,” Tittmann responded. “He is just referred to as ‘it.’” Tittmann then read from an article that had appeared in the *Sierra County Advocate*, describing an event never before witnessed in the town. “It was the burning in effigy of two figures strung from a wire and over a pile of inflammable timber saturated in coal oil. One

figure was labeled ‘Bob Hopper, natural born fake.’ The other figure was labeled ‘Hon. (?) Julian Chavez, the buffoon of Sierra County.’ ... The burning in effigy of the two men was done in resentment of the passage of one of the most infamous bills that ever passed the legislature of New Mexico, and that is saying a great deal. Chavez, who has betrayed his constituents, introduced the Cutter county seat bill, which is believed to have been championed by Mr. R. H. Hopper who has



Postcard from George Miller to James H. Dissinger announcing change of county seat as “settled fact.”

interests at Cutter.” Although the hangings in effigy may have raised the committee members’ eyebrows, it showed how unpopular the proposed legislation had been.

Tittmann thought it wise to end his statement by reviewing the three bills before the committee. House Joint Resolution 117 concerned the new process by which New Mexico counties could petition to change their boundaries or county seats. That territorial law had no direct effect on Sierra County or Hillsboro, so was not objectionable in itself. H. J. Res. 118 addressed the plan to add a strip of desolate desert to Sierra County and charge the county \$25,000. H. J. Res. 119 addressed the plan to move the county seat from Hillsboro to Cutter. It was time for Tittmann to climb onto a soapbox. He closed his statement by saying, “We are a very small part of the United States; in fact, a very, very small part. We have only about 3,500 population; but these bills that have been passed by the territorial legislature of New Mexico are a great injustice. They violate a fundamental right; a fundamental right that even the people of a Territory ought to feel is inviolate. They have practically taken away from us the theory of self-government and home rule and have forced on us something that we do not want, something that we never asked for.”

As time ran out, the committee asked New Mexico’s territorial representative, Mr. Andrews, several questions. Finally a Mr. Lloyd from Missouri asked whether their colleague from New Mexico concurred with Tittmann’s position. When Andrews stated that he did, Lloyd stated that he was ready to act. After a few more questions, the committee voted its support of H. J. Res. 118 and 119 and adjourned at noon.

As Tittmann walked back to the Shoreham Hotel, he reminded himself that nonetheless, there was one more major hurdle. In two weeks he would again present his case, this time to a Senate committee. The weather was still very pleasant so he walked around the city, thinking about the upcoming presentation.

The next day—March 31—Chairman Hamilton sent two reports to the House Calendar. The first report was to accompany H.J. Res. 118 and stated, “The committee is unanimous in the belief that both acts of the legislative assembly are unjust and should not be enforced.” The second was to accompany H.J. Res. 119. After reviewing the various points that Tittmann had made, Hamilton stated, “In view of these conditions, your committee is satisfied that the territorial law, enacted without mature consideration and without proper regard for the views of the people of Sierra County,

would impose a hardship upon the people and ought not to be enforced. Your committee therefore unanimously recommend that it be annulled by the adoption of the joint resolution”.

On April 15, Tittmann appeared before the Senate Committee on Territories. The weather was still spring-like and again he enjoyed the walk to the Capitol, all the while gathering his thoughts. The committee meeting opened at 11:00 A.M. The committee chairman, Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, welcomed Tittmann, introduced the members of the committee and announced that the committee would consider Senate Joint Resolutions 92 and 93. He quickly turned the floor over to Tittmann and asked him to explain the contents of the two resolutions and why the committee should adopt them.

Tittmann again told how the acts were adopted by the territorial legislature in the dying hours of the session, ignoring the wishes of the people of Sierra County, and how arbitrarily the acts would change the county’s boundaries and its seat of government.

One committee member asked, “upon what ground did the Governor sign it?” Tittmann responded, “He did not give any grounds, he just signed it.” Tittmann supposed that the amendment allowing for a popular vote had secured the governor’s last-minute signature.

Tittmann then pointed out, to this new audience, that such a vote would cost \$500 to \$700 and would place on many voters the inconvenience of at least two days’ travel. And because New Mexico did not have a secret ballot, the vote could be manipulated. Tittmann disclosed that the mining promoters in Cutter were tying the change in county seats to jobs: large numbers of people would be hired to build new roads and a large bridge across the Rio Grande.

“Provided you vote for Cutter?” the Chairman interjected. Tittmann agreed that was the theory. Again Chairman Beveridge stopped Tittmann. “Just wait a moment,” the Congressman said. “I am interested in that. Do you have the Australian ballot there?” (Today’s system of secret ballots originated in that country.) Tittmann answered, “Oh, No.”

There followed a lengthy exchange between the Chairman and Tittmann about the style of voting in New Mexico. Tittmann explained that voters were handed a ballot at either the Republican or Democrat headquarters. He took the ballot, marked it at his leisure, walked it to the voting station, and placed it in a box. Between the time the voter received the ballot and the time he deposited it, anyone could attempt to influence his vote.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by saying, "That is the old method of election that prevailed about thirty years ago in our country."

In the next round of questions, the committee members openly expressed their amazement at the proposed choice for the new county seat: a village with a population of 24, in a remote area of the county.

Again, Tittmann described Hillsboro and its businesses, buildings (including the courthouse), and population. Like the members of the House, the Senators took great interest in Tittmann's photographs.

Senator Piles, from the state of Washington, then asked, "Mr. Chairman, is there any reason why we should take any more time on this matter?" To which Senator Beveridge responded, "Not a bit, in my opinion."

But Senator Kean, from New Jersey, asked if he could ask a few more questions. Kean was interested in the mining business in that part of the country, and after a short discussion with Tittmann about mining—including money made and lost—Kean asked, "This is not a fight between any two mining companies?"

Tittmann answered "Oh, not at all—no, no; nothing of that kind."

The committee voted to report the two resolutions favorably, and adjourned. Like their counterparts in the House, the Senators were careful to wrap up their morning's work just as the lunch hour arrived. As Edward walked back to his hotel he must have felt a weight lifted from his shoulders.

A week after his appearance before the Senate committee, Tittmann received a letter from Hamilton. The chairman of the House Committee on Territories stated that he understood the "importance of getting the Sierra County resolutions through as soon as possible"—before the date set for the vote back in Sierra County.

Hamilton also discussed the path ahead. The House and Senate versions of the bills were slightly different, which needed to be resolved. The plan was to have the Senate approve its resolutions by unanimous consent, and send them to the House. The Speaker would then refer the Senate resolutions to Hamilton's committee, which would promptly report back the Senate ver-

sions without changes. As in the Senate, the bill would be passed by unanimous consent. In each chamber, a single objection would block the bills, probably until after the residents of Sierra County had voted. Hamilton's letter ended with the prediction that the resolutions were of such a character that no objection would be made.

On April 20, Tittmann watched and listened as the full Senate debated and voted on a series of resolutions. Finally the two Hillsboro bills were brought forward. After a brief discussion, they passed! On May 2, Hamilton defended the bills on the House floor. Tittmann was able to send a telegram to Hillsboro stating, "House passed Senate Resolutions." In both chambers of Congress, the bills had passed by unanimous consent.

That night Tittmann wrote his wife, "I am tired tonight but happy and although it is late I cannot let the day pass without sending you the good news." But there was some last minute duplicity to report. "The House passed our two Resolutions today in spite of the fact that Delegate Andrews made a quiet but desperate fight against it on the floor. He did not dare to come out in the open, but my friends on the floor assure me that he tried everything to stop the bill." As a non-voting territorial representative, Andrews could not object to passage by unanimous consent. And, apparently, he preferred to subvert the bills without openly opposing them. But he had failed to persuade even one of the almost 400 voting members of the House to object.

In additional telegrams Tittmann reported, "Speaker signed them Tuesday" (May 3), "Vice President Wednesday" (May 4), "Reached White House Thursday" (May 5), and "Hamilton arranged interview with President tomorrow morning" (May 6). Tittmann attended the meeting with President Taft, who signed the bills on May 10.

In the first week in June, Edward arrived back in Hillsboro and the newspaper announced, "Tittmann returns with certified copies of bills. Mr. Tittmann certainly rendered great services to the people of Sierra County and his labors are appreciated accordingly." David had slain Goliath.

Hillsboro Historical Society board normally meets on the second Sunday of each month at 2PM at the Black Range Museum, and HHS members are encouraged to attend. During the COVID19 shutdown, we have been meeting via conference calls. If any members have items that need to be addressed, please contact one of our board members. We will bring it to the board, or if needed, arrange for you to be included in the call.

Love in the Time of Coronavirus? And what would the world be like if we'd understood social isolation in 1918?

Harley Shaw

HHS President, Steve Dobrott and I have been thinking alike. In his column, he reflects over the 1918 flu epidemic. We are living through one that might have been as bad or worse. We don't yet know the outcome of Covid-19, but can safely say that modern medicine, science, and communications have restricted its impact.

As editor of this newsletter for some 12 years, I've puzzled over the lack of stories about Hillsboro during the 1918 flu—undoubtedly one of the most devastating events to hit our small town. We know there were many deaths, and legend makes Angels of Sadies Orchard's girls. There is purportedly a mass children's grave in the cemetery, surrounded by many more in "Children's Row." But we know next to nothing about life in town during that tragic event. And we'll never know what differences the loss of so many people made for the region's aftermath.

My grandfather died during the 1918 flu, when my father was four. Dad hit the rails when he was in his early teens, fleeing the poverty of post WWI Oklahoma and the struggles of a widowed mother with four kids. One outcome was that I grew up in Arizona rather than Oklahoma. Even now, I like to play out the "what ifs": where would I be and who would I be (or would I be?) had Dad grown up in a stable family with a working father? Foolish reveries, I admit, but such is the stuff of historic novels and science fiction.

Victims of tragedies are too taken up with survival to record events, even though such events might be among the most significant of their lives. So far, the impact of the coronavirus on Hillsboro has been comparatively minor, though noticeable and real. I suspect that our yearnings to return to "business as usual" once the virus subsides will amount to wishful thinking. Even without social or enforced legal changes, memories alone will leave us more tentative in our interactions and uneasy about the future. Like it or not, we're a beastie that is ecologically constrained.

Hillsboro has several published writers, and it has people who can write who haven't published. All will have stories about the pandemic and its aftermath. I wonder if we might bear some responsibility to leave posterity a few tales? Trite to say, I guess, but history is happening now, and history is what HHS is about.

Might a collection of stories be worthwhile? HHS has an established history of publication via the newsletter and three books. Could we make it happen?

And the history of the 1918 flu in Hillsboro and Kingston remains to be written. That will take a scholar with much time and patience. Details of the tragedy are gone; no one remains who lived here 102 years ago, so reconstructing it would require months, if not years of searching old newspapers and finding personal

accounts. I'll throw that project out as a challenge to someone who expects to be extant for a decade or two.



Children's row with humble, unmarked headstones and scattered rocks once hastily piled on shallow graves.

HILLSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership Application

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.



Name: _____ Date: _____

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(a) Individual or family membership \$25 \$ _____

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Please mail this completed Membership Form along with a check for your Total Contribution made payable to Hillsboro Historical Society to the following address:

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P. O. Box 461
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