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THE LOST COLONY:

Texas Regionalist Paintings ~ Rediscovering an Artistic Past



Photos by Jim Bones

Clockwise from the top: "Kokernot Lodge," ca. 1930s, oil on canvas, Julius Woeltz, Museum of the Big Bend; "Davis Mountains," 1922, watercolor, Mabel Vandiver, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kan.; "Black Eagle Dance," ca. late 1920s, color etching, Elizabeth Keefer, collection of Judy and Stephen Alton; "Pioneers," ca. 1926, oil on canvas board, Anna Keener, collection of Bruce Covey.

by Mary Bones

Ninety years ago a department of drawing was established at Sul Ross Normal College. Within 30 years, Sul Ross had evolved into a state teachers' college, and the department of drawing had transformed into a full-fledged department of art offering courses to students seeking public-school teaching certificates, as well as those wanting careers as professional artists.

The early years of the art department at Sul Ross are now an overlooked story in the history of the university. Few know about the early artists who taught in the art department. Even fewer are aware that for over 15 years the school hosted an extremely successful summer art colony, with some of the best Texas artists conducting the classes.

Sul Ross Normal College opened its doors in the summer of 1920, and by the following summer a department of drawing was established. In 1922, it was reported that San Antonio native Beatrice Emiline Matthaei would teach five courses in both art history and drawing. Matthaei taught at Sul Ross for a single year, after which, due to illness, she was replaced by Mable Vandiver. After leaving Sul Ross, Matthaei continued her teaching career in the Houston public school system for more than 50 years.

Vandiver and her students produced numerous works of art to beautify the school, including batiks, screens and drawings. These first exhibits were held in the Girls' Rest Room, a room set aside for the female students to study, visit and rest. The students would produce tableaux of masterpiece paintings in costume, color and poise for student assemblies. After her time at Sul Ross, Vandiver spent more than 20 years, from 1933 to 1954, at Fort Hays State University, where she first taught at and then served as the head of the art department. She never stopped creating and began experimenting with oil crayons at the age of 99.

In 1925, Anna Elizabeth Keener replaced Vandiver. Keener commented that "in my opinion the Davis Mountains of Texas provide as promising material for the artist as any I have found." She introduced a course that emphasized *en plein air* or outdoor painting.

During the time that Keener was at Sul Ross, special courses in art were offered that could lead to a certificate, diploma or degree. Keener would later recall that President Horace W. Morelock would often appear in her art room on Friday afternoons and ask, "Where do you and your students want to go this weekend?" Once a destination had been chosen, Morelock's only requirement was "take Rudolph Mellard to drive the car, know the country and speak Spanish." Keener continued her teaching career at schools in New Mexico. She was one of the organizers of the New Mexico Arts Commission.

From 1926 through 1932, Houstonian Elizabeth Estella Keefer headed the newly formed art department. While at Sul Ross, she worked closely with the students in producing the school's yearbook, *The Brand*. She worked particularly closely with the future Chicago lithographer

James Swann. She, like the instructors before her, continued to produce the "living" masterpieces and to decorate the campus. Keener refined her skills as an etcher and invented a technique to produce color etchings. She was allowed access to the northern New Mexico reservations and became known as the "Etcher of Indians."

By 1932, Keefer had married Texas historian Mody Boatwright, and the couple moved to Austin. Keefer was replaced by Julius Woeltz of San Antonio, and that summer Woeltz implemented an art colony. He chose his former teacher and friend Xavier Gonzalez to conduct the art colony for the first summer session. Gonzalez was a natural choice to lead the colony as he had prior experience at an art colony at Christoval, Texas, and he

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Editor's Notes



Lots of good things happening in the Big Bend of Texas in the next few months.

To start, the Museum of the Big Bend has an exhibit of paintings and other art from the art colony that brightened the Sul Ross campus during the 30s and 40s and a bit into the 50s

and then, like Brigadoon, disappeared. Read Mary Bones' story and then head to the Museum on the SR campus to see the real thing.

Henry Beth Hogg has been a fixture in Sanderson since the late 40s. Dubbed "Henry the Riveter" by the Sanderson newspaper editor for her WWII factory work, Henry Beth has been a town legend for more than 60 years. Meet her in Barbara Novovitch's story.

Among our regular features – Jim Glendinning is back with "Voices of the Big Bend" after a summer in France writing his travel memoirs, Charlie Angell tests your cinema mettle in "Trivia," and Bob Miles recounts the many lives of the "City Building," an old adobe building in Alpine that has had more incarnations than you could wish for. Two poets you've read here before – George Bristol and W.K. Stratton – return with more poetry. Thanks, guys!

Another bright spot this spring will be the reopening of the border at Boquillas. Ron Payne, who spends summers in the park, tells us how the closing of the border has affected the region and gives us a preview of what the border might be like with the crossing restored.

Aviation came to Alpine in 1911 as the Alpine chamber celebration of the event tells us. Lonn Taylor starts there and comes forward as he

recounts the adventures of pilots and planes that have flown in and out of the Alpine airport over the last century.

And if planes aren't your thing, there are trains. While many parts of the country were settled around rivers and other bodies of water, the railroad was the lifeline in Texas that brought goods and settlement west. Historian Matt Walter shows and tells.

Several years ago, historian and museum director Larry Francell entertained local newspaper readers with his observations "from the porch." In this issue, Larry brings us his wry observations on book writing as he creates a book about his hometown, Fort Davis.

It's hard not to want to "keep" moments in the Big Bend – thus the photos and poems and stories that seem never to stop about this place. William Darby has another way of holding and remembering moments as he hikes and travels – an illustrated journal. Maybe it's the perfect way for you to keep a singular moment in your adventures in the Big Bend.


And Jim Work has captured six local dogs who ride in pickups – who will leave you laughing and looking at other dogs in pickups in a new way.

So in this year of freezing weather, heartbreaking fires, frazzling heat and ground as dry and the proverbial bone, be of good cheer – we're here and healthy! Thanks as always – and especially after all that – to our advertisers who keep *Cenizo* going and make this a great place to live – and visit! Y'all come, hear?



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Art, photographic and literary works may be e-mailed to the Editor.

For advertising rates or to place an ad, contact: advertising@cenizojournal.com

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Cover: William Lester ~ Known for "brilliant, pulsing color afire with life and sun," Lester painted "Girl's Head" in 1950. The painting is oil on Masonite, 17-by-12 inches and is in the collection of Charles M. Peveto of Austin.

Occasional Art: Candice Granger ~ Chihuahuan Desert Flowers

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Photo courtesy of Bill Smith

This photo, originally an ID for welder's school in Houston around 1942, was nicknamed "Henry the Riveter" by Jim Street, the Sanderson newspaper editor.

HENRY BETH HOGG

A Life Well-Lived

by *Barbara Novovitch*

Back in the 40s, she was "Rosie the Riveter," working at the Brown and Root shipyard in Houston as an electric welder. She even had a man's name – Henry, and some people still call her Hank. And in a thank-you letter to the editor of Sanderson's newspaper, after scores of the town's present and past citizens stopped by on the weekend of July 4th to celebrate her 90th birthday, Henry Beth Hogg wrote: "I'm shooting for a 100th to see what it will be like."

Henry Beth was named after both grandfathers (each named Henry) and both grandmothers, but as a child she couldn't pronounce Henry Laurenza Elizabeth Abbott, "so I shortened it to Henry Beth."

She's been honored by the Terrell County Historical Commission for her 10 years' work as its chairman – during which two Texas historical markers were placed just outside Sanderson, the first in 40 years – but her son says his mom was never particularly a

student of history in her younger days.

"She's been a maker of history – just a working lady trying to make ends meet," he said. For 60-plus years she has participated in, and often led, virtually all of Sanderson's community activities – Little League, PTA, American Legion Auxiliary, Eastern Star Auxiliary, chamber of commerce, girls' softball, the Rodeo Club, the annual July 4th barbecue... the list goes on and on, including the Prickly Pear Pachanga festival every October, which celebrates the town's recognition as Texas' Cactus Capital.

Her 90th birthday festivities were actually a bit early – her birthday was July 17 – but Henry Beth is a town legend, so her family decided to host the party so that many former Sanderson residents – who often return for the mid-summer holiday – could greet her on Saturday, July 2 at the Terrell County Community Center.

"We served the last cakes at 10:30 that night, and the build-

ing was full most of the time," she recalled happily. Her son, John Dalton Hogg, said probably 40 family members were there – and at least 100, perhaps more, came by from the community to offer congratulations.

It was a bit like when folks returning after moving away from Sanderson would come into Kerr's Mercantile to see Henry Beth when she was the cashier there for almost 40 years.

"Kids would come back to town, and she was still in Kerr's, faithful as ever," said John Dalton Hogg, who retired to Plano after 40 years as a locomotive engineer with Southern Pacific and Union Pacific.

When the railroad moved its crew shifts west to Alpine it was a big blow, he added, and when the mercantile company closed, it eliminated one-stop shopping.

"I love Sanderson," sprightly gray-haired Henry Beth said, explaining that she and her husband, Dalton Hogg, had moved there from Houston on Aug. 16, 1948.

"I remember the first time I

ever saw it, from up on the hill at night, and all the many stores and filling stations had their lights turned on. Dalton said, 'Mama, what do you think?' and I said it looked to me like a pretty good-sized town."

The newlyweds had met at the Houston shipyard, where both worked during the war years. Henry Beth, born in Stanton in 1921 and a graduate of Midland High School, had moved to Houston after her first husband left her and young Johnny.

Dalton Hogg, a machinist who turned to body work, had come to Sanderson on his own some 18 months earlier – after a spat with Henry Beth – when he was hired by McKnight Motor Co.

Dalton and Henry Beth resolved that early disagreement.

"We married on Aug. 11, 1948 in Houston and came to Sanderson on Aug. 16 – just five days later. I had a house in Houston, and my honeymoon was painting the house and putting it up for sale," she recalled, smiling. Dalton also adopted Henry Beth's son.

For several years in the 50s, she ran a cafe connected with McKnight Motor Co. "I loved it. I miss cafe work – you meet so many people. I had it during the Korean War when Jim Nance was sheriff, and Nance said if I was going to serve beer I was supposed to ask for identification. But I told Nance, if he's old enough to put on a uniform, he's old enough to drink beer if he wants it."

In the 60s she managed the girls' softball team and belonged to the Rodeo Club. "There was no concession stand for ropings, so the girls would run the stand, and we split the profits with the roping club – that's how we bought equipment."

Dalton Hogg was appointed the town's deputy sheriff in 1960, and in 1972 he became sheriff. He gained considerable fame as sheriff and was featured in the November 1984 edition of *Texas Monthly*. He was quoted as saying "I believe



Photo by Bill Smith
Henry Beth Hogg at home in 2011.

that for any good officer you can give his wife about 75 percent of the credit." Henry Beth remembers Dalton once told her he was hesitant to hire a deputy who wasn't married.

In the 1980s, Tony Lama boots used Dalton Hogg in their advertisements, along with rock star Richard Marks. John Hogg said his dad tried to persuade Henry Beth to go along with him to Dallas, when the company flew the sheriff there to wine and dine him and photograph the advertising campaign. She refused.

But she recalls when he got back he told her about signing in at the Embassy Suites Hotel, where the clerk said loudly, "Ah, Boss Hogg," and people in the lobby turned around to stare.

"He didn't even know who Boss Hogg was, 'cause he worked mostly nights and had not seen the popular TV show of the 1980s, *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Boss Hogg was the corrupt county commissioner who always wore a white suit. After Henry Beth urged him to watch, his comment was: 'Well, I'm fat like him and bald-headed – I need to get me a white suit.'"

As historical commission chairman, Henry Beth spurred the state to put two historical markers at sites near Sanderson that loom large in Terrell County history. Texas' last train robbery occurred at Baxter's Curve east of Sanderson on March 13, 1912. A former sidekick of Butch Cassidy and

the Sundance Kid, Ben Kilpatrick, and his accomplice Ole Hobek unhooked the baggage cars to search for valuables, but Wells Fargo express manager David Trousdale bludgeoned one with an ice mallet and killed the other with Kilpatrick's rifle. Kilpatrick and Hobek were buried in Sanderson, and Trousdale was awarded \$1,500 for his bravery.

The second marker calls attention to Terrell County's long involvement with aviation, which dates from a landing in Dryden just east of Sanderson on the first transcontinental flight across the United States in 1911 and includes an airfield just west of Sanderson, built for the 90th Aero Squadron in 1919. That site bears a Terrell County marker.

"We're still working on other Terrell County markers," Henry Beth said, noting that the Texas Historical Commission gave both Henry Beth and Alice Evans Downie, who edited the 1978 edition of *Terrell County Texas, Its Past and Its People*, certificates of appreciation for their work.

Henry Beth retired from the commission last year. "I was handicapped because I don't use computers," she said, but she still drives to Fort Stockton for meetings. And she is optimistic about Sanderson's resuming its population growth, since the town now has a sewer system and new arrivals from the Border Patrol.

Tourists who stop in Sanderson can see Henry Beth Hogg talking about the town in a new video at the Terrell County Museum (north on Second Avenue to 203 E. Mansfield from U.S. 90), or check out the Terrell County Museum Web site @terrellmuseum.org



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TRACKS ACROSS TEXAS

by Matt Walter

Before the Republic of Texas period, transportation in Texas was largely limited to coastal and river navigation and a few primitive wagon roads. That is why most all early Texas settlements, during both the Spanish and Mexican periods, were along the coast or up rivers.

In 1836, the Republic of Texas chartered the Texas Rail Road, Navigation and Banking Company to build the first railroad in Texas, but the company collapsed within two years without ever laying a mile of track.

A couple of subsequent charters also ended in failure, but following the annexation of Texas by the United States, the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway Company was chartered. By 1852, this company had laid 25 miles of track between Harrisburg (now Houston) and Stafford's Point and purchased its first locomotive. It was the first railroad in Texas and is the oldest component of the present Southern Pacific. In 1870, the name was changed to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway.

Three years later, the Galveston and Red River Railway Company was chartered. Shortly after laying its first tracks, the company's name was changed to the Houston and Texas Central Railway Company. In 1856, the city of Houston built its own 7-mile railroad, the Houston Tap, which linked the HTC with the BBBC. By 1860, there were nine railroad companies operating on some 470 miles of tracks in Texas, mostly centered around the Houston, Galveston and Brazoria area. The capital for building these railroads came primarily from state land grants and loans.

With the exception of the Texas and New Orleans Railroad Company, the Civil War (1861-1865) brought railroad construction to a virtual halt in Texas. Begun in 1857, the Texas and New Orleans Railroad Company had laid 80 miles of tracks between Houston and Beaumont when the war broke out. By 1862, soldiers had finished laying the rest of the 30 miles of tracks needed to link the two cities, and the railroad was used extensively as a Confederate supply line for the duration of the war. Despite the name, however, the Louisiana portion of the tracks would not be complet-

ed until 1880. A year later, this company would be purchased by C. P. Huntington and the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

During Reconstruction (1865-1877), various companies – along with occupying federal forces – laid tracks which linked Dallas and Austin with the rest of the state. In 1870, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad was incorporated, becoming the first railroad to enter Texas from the north. The “K-T,” or “the Katy,” as it was commonly called, eventually would link Kansas City and St. Louis with Dallas, Waco, Temple, Austin, San Antonio, Houston and Galveston. In 1872, the Houston and Texas Central Railway Company reached Denison, becoming the first Texas railroad to link up with the national railway system. The Houston and Great Northern Railroad and the International Railway Company, both operating in East Texas, combined in 1873 to form the Great Northern Railroad Company. Three years later, the only federally chartered railroad in Texas, the Texas and Pacific Railway Company, finished laying tracks that linked Texarkana and Fort Worth.

By the end of Reconstruction, the railway system in East Texas had

become well developed, but the western half of the state remained isolated. This changed in the early 1880s, however, as the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway (partly owned by Collis P. Huntington, owner of the Southern Pacific) and the Texas and Pacific Railway Company (owned by Jay Gould) both raced to lay tracks across West Texas. As the GH&SAR laid tracks westward from San Antonio, the T&P took a more northerly route out of Fort Worth. Meanwhile, Huntington and the Southern Pacific laid tracks eastward from Yuma, along a route which had been surveyed by Gould's men. Gould filed suit against Huntington for having used a route that had been surveyed by his company, but the dispute ended up being settled by a handshake between the two men. The “Gould-Huntington Agreement” of Nov. 26, 1881 resulted in both railroads joining in Sierra Blanca and then sharing operations along the single line west of there. Gould himself drove the silver spike at Sierra Blanca on Dec. 15, 1881.

It would be two more years, however, before travelers could actually make the journey directly between San Antonio and El Paso, due to the difficulties encountered with building a railway

across the Pecos River. The first crossing, constructed near the mouth of the Pecos as it empties into the Rio Grande, involved cutting two tunnels and the construction of a steep and winding rail known as the Loop Line. The first bridge across the Pecos River was completed in 1883, and the “Sunset Route,” as it was nicknamed, finally began carrying passengers between San Antonio and El Paso. Due to rock slides, however, the Loop Line was abandoned less than a decade later in favor of the construction of a bridge five miles further upriver, a route which also shortened the journey between San Antonio and El Paso by more than 10 miles. The Pecos High Bridge, which stood 321 feet above the river, was opened on March 30, 1892, becoming the highest railroad bridge in the country.

During the next two decades, the Texas railroad systems went through a series of consolidations, as larger railroads like the Southern Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company and the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company bought up numerous of the smaller railroads in the state. At times, bribes, favoritism, nepotism and secret monopolies were the order of the day, and thus in 1890 the Texas Railroad Commission was established with the goal of cleaning up the railroad companies who were violating the Texas Constitution.

As the 20th century began there were still major areas in Texas which were not reachable by railroad. Between 1900 and 1930, tracks were laid that joined the Rio Grande Valley and the Texas Panhandle with the rest of the state. By 1930, Texas had more railroad tracks than any other state in the country, a position it still holds today.

With the building of the interstate highway system, following the Second World War, passenger travel by rail decreased dramatically in Texas. In 1971, Amtrak took over the remaining passenger railroad services in Texas. However, the use of rail to ship freight continued to expand, with rail lines transporting everything from agricultural products to oil to cars across the country and the state. Consolidation of railroad companies also continued, to the point that today most all the tracks in Texas are operated either by the Union Pacific Corporation or the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad.

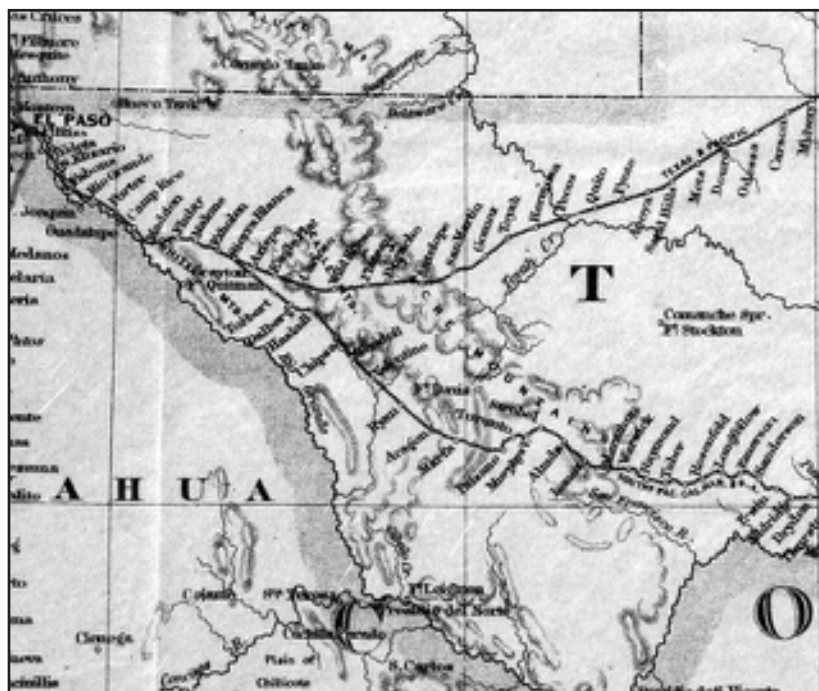


Photo courtesy the Yana and Marty Davis Map Collection, the Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine.

This 1886 map by George Cram, entitled simply “Texas,” shows the railroad along the western portion of the state along with the towns and watering holes

RAILROADS IN THE BIG BEND

Just as the coastline and rivers of East Texas created its town sites, so the railroad created a lifeline for Big Bend settlement. Prior to 1882, the only major settlements in the Big Bend region were the small village of Presidio, at La Junta, and the town of Fort Davis, which was protected by the soldiers stationed at the military post there. With the coming of the railroad, however, the towns of Sanderson, Marathon, Alpine, Marfa and Valentine all came into existence.

The town of Alpine can trace its origins to when the first railroad workers set up their tents in 1882 along the spring-fed creek which ran through the area. For a short time the tent settlement was named Osborne, after the railroad engineer on duty when the tracks were laid. However, the primary water source for the trains was on property owned by Daniel and Thomas Murphy, of Fort Davis, and later that year the railroad agreed to rename the settlement "Murphyville" in exchange for rights to Murphy's Spring. The town grew slowly but steadily and by 1888 had "a dozen houses, three saloons, a hotel and rooming house, a livery stable, a butcher shop and a drugstore, which also housed the post office" (Clifford B. Casey, *Handbook of Texas*). That same year, the residents petitioned the U.S. Postal Service and officially got the name of the town changed to Alpine. In 1920, Alpine changed dramatically with the opening of Sul Ross State Normal College, and today, with a population of around 6,000, it is the educational, banking, tourism, government and commercial center of the Big Bend.

The town of Marathon also began in 1882, when railroad track-layers reached the area and pitched a camp some four miles north of the Army post and mountain spring located at Camp Peña Colorado. Railroad surveyor Albion Shepard, who had previously been a sailor, bought land in the area and petitioned for a post office, which was built the following year. Shepard named the site Marathon because the terrain reminded him of Marathon, Greece. The windmill in town was the first jail — drunks and other minor wrongdoers were shackled to one of its legs, while more serious criminals were taken to Alpine. Marathon quickly became the principal cattle- and ore-shipping point in the region. As the primary "gateway" to the Big Bend National Park, tourism is now an

important addition to the economy of Marathon.

The town of Marfa was established as a water and freight stop for the GH&SA Railroad in 1882. According to local tradition, the wife of a railroad executive was reading *The Brothers Karamazov* and suggested the name Marfa from a character (Marfa Ignatyevna) in the Dostoyevsky novel. The post office bearing that name was established the following year. In 1885, a local land developer built a magnificent three-story Renaissance-style courthouse to attract settlers, and the seat of Presidio county was moved from Fort Davis to Marfa that same year. In 1911, the U.S. Army established Camp Marfa, which in 1930 became Fort D. A. Russell. During World War II, Marfa Army Air Field was built to train pilots and Fort D. A. Russell was enlarged to house German prisoners of war. Due to the presence of the military, Marfa's population peaked at around 5,000 in 1945. The population dropped dramatically when the military closed the bases the following year. Since then, however, Marfa has rebounded due to tourism and the establishment of a major Border Patrol center there and has a population of around 2,000.

The town of Valentine was established in 1882 and was named for the day that the railroad crews arrived there — Feb. 14, Valentine's Day. The post office was established in 1886. The population peaked at around 600 in the 1920s, but on Aug. 16, 1931, the town was severely damaged by 6.0 magnitude earthquake, the strongest earthquake ever recorded in Texas. No one was killed, but every building in town was damaged to some extent. The town continues to be a cattle-shipping point for local ranchers and presently has a population of around 200.

The town of Sanderson came into existence when railroad workers arrived and built a roundhouse there in 1882. Originally named Strobridge, it was renamed Sanderson the following year in honor of Thomas P. Sanderson, the engineer in charge of building that portion of the railroad. The post office of Sanderson was established that same year. In 1905, the Texas legislature created Terrell County and designated Sanderson as the new county seat.



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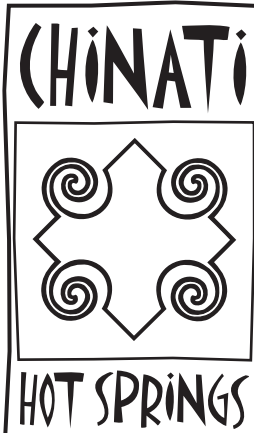
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Exploring with Journaling

by William H. Darby III

I've never kept a journal. That is, a single book of entries that progressively details my experiences with the wider world. That would be impossible, since I seldom operate in a singular or progressive fashion. However, I have been journaling for years. I always grab a random notebook or sketchpad to take along when I travel, and I record random things in random fashion.

Most people are reluctant to

begin a journal because they feel that it will be too much of a burden. They worry that they won't add to it regularly enough or that it won't be "good" enough. Most people mislead themselves. Journaling isn't done for others – it's done for oneself. A journal should be as chaotic or crisp, full or sparse, detailed or general, as its keeper. The glorious volume that we all wish we could produce, where every entry is insightful (and quotable) and

every sketch is museum-worthy, is unrealistic. Journaling isn't about the final product, it's about the process.

I have a terrible memory, so I rely on journaling primarily to help me remember things I've seen and done. I don't carry a camera when I travel, so I record sights and thoughts on paper with pen or pencil. Not only does journaling help me to remember what I've seen, it helps me to more fully grasp the present – to partici-



pate in it, taking the time to capture it in sketches and words.

Journaling gives me a sense of accomplishment. It's more than just snapping a photo of a landscape or a bug. It allows me to interact with the world in real time, beyond just observing it. It deepens the experience and makes it more personal. And although it's probably not as pretty as a picture, it is more authentic.

Journaling helps me to con-

template and question what I've seen and done. I often return to my journals not just for reference, but to add more facts or thoughts to my notes and details and color to my sketches. Returning to these pages takes me back to places and times of pleasure again and again. My journals are never retired; they remain accessible and are well-used.

Even though you're seeing some of them now, my journal pages are primarily for me.

Journaling my experiences helps me to discover and better understand the world – and myself, too. I hope seeing some of my random notes and questionable sketches will inspire curious persons to do some journaling for themselves.



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Photo Essay

Pickup Dogs

by *Jim Work*

My heart has always been drawn to both cameras and dogs. My journey has never wandered far from either of these things. They have been a constant in my life.

I am always looking for the perfect photographic project. My problem is actually finding one I'll finish. It took

me a while to realize that the only perfect project is the one you're working on right now.

My "Pickup Dog" project has been a work-in-progress since I photographed my first dog while on vacation in Silver City, N.M. in June of 2005. Over the years I have "shot" a 100 or so wind-blown dogs.

I love to watch them as they surf the wind. Their ability to balance and share their space with tools, tires, groceries and other junk is mind-blowing. Some bark, pace and howl; others ride in quiet contentment. They come in all sizes and breeds, all colors and personalities. Out here in the Southwest the heelers and the shepherds are often

seen. I suspect that has to do with cattle work and the fact that the pickup is the preferred commute vehicle for both owner and dog.

Whenever I ask an owner if I may photograph their dog, I almost always get asked "why?" I have a hard time giving an answer other than that I just feel the need.



Hooch was at the vet's at the same time I was taking my dogs there. How could you pass up such a face? He looked at me with a very old soul. As most dogs are, he was very happy in his skin – and he had a lot of skin.



I think the name of the boxer is Roxie. Although that might have been the name of her owner. Either way, she was a great subject and also was very proud of her wrinkles. A lot of love delivered in the form of slobber.



The two howling dogs are named Little Boy and Annabelle. I followed them down Holland Avenue, laughing at their antics. I pulled into the same convenience store with them, and they were like a couple of little kids – just loved to show off for the camera.



The border collie I encountered on a walk in my neighborhood. She was sleeping on top of the cab of the truck when I first saw her. I grabbed a couple of frames, and then she was like a little kid – started posing for the camera with her Frisbee. As I was taking her photo, this West Texas accent yelled out from a window of the house what was I doing? “I’m taking a photo of your dog. What are you doing?” “I’m getting a massage.” And he was. We knew the woman who lived there, and she was a medically trained masseuse.



I followed this dog from Holland Avenue, out 118 south and then down Cemetery Road until the driver pulled into a welding shop. I asked the older gentleman if I could make a photo of his dog. He replied “What for? He’s just an old pickup dog.” “Ah, that’s the reason,” I replied. He just shook his head at me.

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Photo by Cindy McIntyre

Boquillas, Mexico from the Texas side of the Rio Grande.

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¡Viva Boquillas!

by *Ron Payne*

Next spring a wall that has laid siege across la Frontera will be breached. The crossing at Boquillas del Carmen, Mexico into the United States, on the far east side of Big Bend National Park, will be reopened.

In the atmosphere of fear and suspicion following Sept. 11, 2001, informal crossings of the Rio Grande into Mexico were closed at Lajitas, Texas and in the national park at Castolon/ Santa Elena and Rio Grande Village/ Boquillas del Carmen on May 10, 2002. The Sierra Ponce, a sheer escarpment extending from Texas into the Mexican state of Coahuila, forms a natural wall, created millions of years ago by a tectonic plate shift of the earth's crust. This shift raised the Chihuahuan Desert plateau on the Mexican side by 1,200 to 1,500 feet, almost defining the Texas/Mexico border, making it unnecessary in 2002 to build a cement wall.

Our homeland was secured by erecting the legal barrier that sealed-off the border. A Border Patrol station within Big Bend National Park enforces the closure. So immediate and secure was the closing that residents on the Mexican side who had cars parked as usual in a lot in the park could not readily retrieve them. Mexican employees of the park found it a very long way back home at the end of a shift. The nearest legal crossing was now 100 miles to the west at Presidio/Ojinaga.

The park's chief river ranger, in a Nov. 23, 2007 interview on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," summed up the opinions of many when he told John Burnett: "What we have done is created a hardship for those folks who have legitimate reasons to be coming back and forth across here or that have been part of the community and the area here for a long time. Those are the folks that we've impacted the most.

We haven't slowed the bad guys beyond at all."

Perhaps authorities at the time agreed with Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" that "good fences make good neighbors." They failed, though, to ask the question Frost raised about walls and fences.

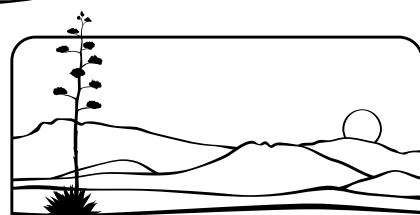
*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offense.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down.*

What had been walled-out was a Mexican rural-village culture that began along both sides of Rio Bravo del Norte in the late 19th century. By then the despoblado, the uninhabited land, emptied of inhabitants by regular raids by Native Americans down the Comanche Trail, had begun welcoming settlers.

When Anglo miners and ranchers moved into southern Brewster County in the early 20th century, families with names like Acosta, Solis, Villalbas, Garcia, Gonzales and Ybarra were already registered landowners on both sides of the river border. As early as 1894 merchants like Cipriano Hernandez were operating small stores, on the U.S. side of the river, keeping the early settlers supplied with necessities, trading furs and perhaps assisting in smuggling candelilla wax, the export of which was strictly controlled by the Mexican government.

Soon, on the U.S. side, settlements such as La Coyota, Ojito, Castolon and Terlingua Abajo stood opposite the Mexican towns Santa Elena, San Vicente and Boquillas del Carmen. Traversing the river border was an everyday event for people on both sides, like walking across a street to trade with a merchant on the other side or to visit neighbors.

Boquillas del Carmen had grown to a couple



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of thousand inhabitants by the early 20th century. Mining for silver and lead had made it a river boom town. When the mines were exhausted, Boquillas suffered for decades, like a "rust belt" community when the factories close.

After the threat to the United States from the Mexican Revolution ended, the 1920s and 1930s saw tourists bringing life and hope to the little river community. Visitors to the area discovered the hot springs, in what was to become first a Texas state park and then Big Bend National Park, and they waded across the river or took a boat to sample a bit of old Mexico.

The remoteness of the national park and isolation from central Mexican authority made it possible for Boquillas to remain a kind of Old West frontier town into the 21st century. Having a couple of beers, a few games at the pool table for 50 cents a game and a taco at the park bar with its collection of baseball caps became a highlight for newcomers to the national park and a regular ritual for frequent visitors. Several hundred visitors a day would spend time in Boquillas, and many remained overnight at the Smuggler's Inn, the town's only bed and breakfast. Burro and pony rides for adults and children along with handcrafted souvenirs meant that countless individuals and families took back into the States both fond memories and trinkets from their trip into Mexico. The tourist economy in Boquillas was strong enough that Boquillas residents did not need to pressure tourists. Visitors remember feeling laid-back rather than pestered by peddlers.

A first-hand account, found in an unpublished memoir by the national park's first superintendent, discloses a secret about just how relaxed was life on la Frontera in the mid-20th century. Needing to get away from the administrative hassle from time to time, Supt. Ross Maxwell would hide out a day or two at Maggie Smith's store on the park's far east side. One night Maggie awakened him, in the room she provided for

his overnight stays, to say that her driver was unavailable and that she needed Maxwell's help. He drove Maggie's truck to the river following her instructions. There at the river's edge, a Mexican national in charge of the unloading/loading operation going on in the middle of the night greeted him with the words: "I did not expect to see you here, Commandante!" When the candelilla wax was stowed onto Maggie's truck, the superintendent drove it back to Maggie's place. At Maggie's instruction, he parked the truck out of sight, so that it could await the regular driver to take it to Alpine for sale of its wax hoard the next day.

Visitors had experienced a "laid-back" Boquillas, but when the border was closed, it was soon laid-out like a corpse. Someone forgot to ask "just who was being walled out and who walled in."

Within months of the border closing, Boquillas' 1990s population of about 300 had dried up, as people left to find a way to support their families. A mere handful of families live today in Boquillas and even fewer in Santa Elena. The only regular income for the remaining isolated families has been Los Diablos, the well-trained and well-equipped firefighters who, beginning about a quarter century ago, have been allowed to cross the river to our side because they are essential to helping control the frequent wildfires in Texas and surrounding states.

The fire crew members can make nearly the equivalent of a year's income for the average villager on a single firefighting engagement. Visitors no longer venture to Boquillas from the United States today, to avoid incurring severe federal penalties. Some of today's Boquillas residents eke out a living by risking arrest to lay out, on our side of the river, walking sticks, jewelry and desert-creature figurines fashioned by winding fine copper. If you find their caches on the boulders in the park, you can take a souvenir and put your dollars into the

can or glass jar beside the hand-lettered sign that indicates proceeds are for the San Vicente School. You are not supposed to buy this illegal contraband, and it can be confiscated from you, but compassion is the offspring of conscience not law codes.

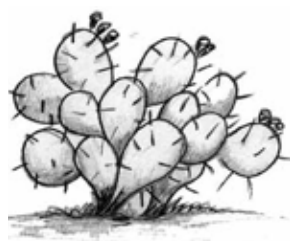
Now it appears that happier times are ahead. By late spring 2012, a new class B border crossing facility, the construction of which has already begun, will allow us, once again, to cross the river for a beer and a couple of tacos. We should not expect that Boquillas will be restored to its former congenial uniqueness in short order. We can help to shape the future of la Frontera. We can expect that if we come, they will build it.

Who knows, an international park, a long-time dream, may even be a possibility.

In the 1990s, the villagers of Santa Elena, Mexico, spent weekends helping the National Park Service restore the oldest adobe building in the park, the Alvino House at Castolon. They did so because they recognized that although two countries were separated by the Rio Grande/ Rio Bravo in Brewster County, there was a single culture.

Restoration of that two-country-one-river culture can reverse the decision to wall out and wall in a handful of rural communities. We can now apply for one of the new credit-card-like passports that can be magnetically swiped or bar-code scanned. This new type of passport will likely be required to access the remotely monitored border crossing. It's time to brush up on our conversational Spanish, visit Boquillas and help make hospitality the twin of security.

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down."



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Creating Fort Davis

by Larry Francell

One of my favorite places in West Texas is also one of the most desolate. Fort Lancaster, now Fort Lancaster State Park, is off the beaten path west of Ozona and east of Sheffield. If one comes to the park from the east down Government Hill, the view out over the valley of Live Oak Creek and the Pecos River is alone worth the trip.

I came to appreciate Fort Lancaster when in graduate school at the University of Texas in 1968. I worked as a historic researcher in the parks office of Texas Parks and Wildlife at a time when the administrative parks staff was quite small and inhabited the old American Legion building north of the capitol in Austin. I was assigned to write the historic survey of Fort Lancaster, newly acquired by Parks and Wildlife.

I soon developed a deep fascination with this old Army post. Essentially nothing happened there, making the story one of basic survival. Manned by infantry, one or two companies that seldom averaged over 100 men, no civilian settlement established itself there. A stage station, sutler's store and a few laundresses made up the minute civilian population, and while there were minor occasional encounters with the Apaches and the camels passed through, in essence, life at Fort Lancaster was one of day-to-day endurance.

The fascination with Fort Lancaster continued, and I would occasionally find a new reference or an interesting fact, and over time I developed a decent manuscript. My friend, Dr. Ron Tyler, the director of the Texas State Historical

Association, offered to consider publishing the work if I ever finished it. After 30 years of leisurely work *Fort Lancaster: Texas Frontier Sentinel* was published in 2000. Very cool – this book writing isn't so hard.

I was familiar with Arcadia Publishing through the museum business. They come as exhibitors to most of our meetings and were known as good folks who would work with a community or organization to produce a quality photographic history. Recently Arcadia had published *Marfa* by Louise O'Connor and Cecilia Thompson, and I knew David Keller was working on *Alpine*. Accordingly, I thought there should be a book on Fort Davis and, being on the verge of retirement, decided why not ask.

The staff of Arcadia Publishing said yes, and we struck a deal in April 2010. By contract I had 10 months to produce a draft – an eternity, no problem; babies take longer than that. Let's see: 10 months with more than four to retirement, still leaves more than five to deadline. That works. And as a consequence I finished my time at the Museum of the Big Bend thinking don't worry, be happy.

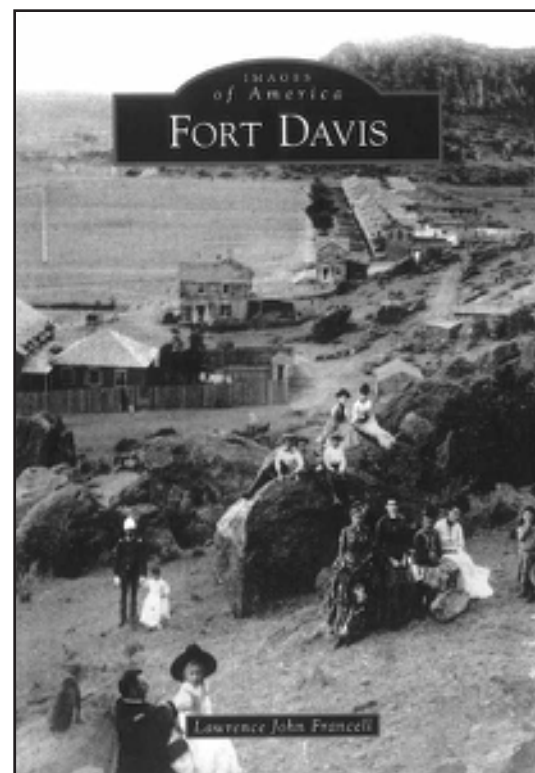
The Monday after retirement we began a major remodeling project at our house anticipating to take a month and requiring that all the furniture and all the books downstairs be moved, often several times. I was immediately designated "unskilled" labor and put to work at those tasks. And here I thought I would be out in my little office with my reference books working away at my manuscript. Silly me.

Eventually reality set in, and I realized that I must go to

work. The Arcadia model requires an average of 200 photographs or other images, with the story told through captions with a limited word count. The first step was to identify sources and begin to acquire the images. Since the pre-Civil War Fort Davis had been active on an isolated frontier in the days before photography became common, I immediately ran up against the problem of how to interpret this period. First problem – which was solved by tracking down non-photographic images from far and wide.

I knew that there was a wealth of historic photographs in the community, but two of the major collections, due to circumstances beyond the control of anyone, were no longer available. Problem two – which was solved by Mary Williams and the staff at Fort Davis National Historic Site who generously opened their photo archive to me. Daisy McCutcheon, president of the Fort Davis Historical Society, did the same. With Wid McCutcheon telling stories and helping to identify many of these images, the task went smoothly. Luckily Dave Jacobson, who helped compile the Jeff Davis County history book, had saved digital images – also a great help.

Then came problem three, the big one. I am not a computer person, and the Arcadia requirements for image reproduction are quite precise and technical. Big trouble. I can identify the difference between an etching and a lithograph, but have no idea what a .jpeg or .tiff file are. It looked like the wheels were beginning to come off the project.



After explaining my dilemma to Jennifer Turner, who actually knows how the little gremlins in computers think and operate, she volunteered to do all the scanning and copying. Crisis averted. Jennifer and Scott Turner own the Mountain Trails Lodge, and she certainly had more to do than help me, but she did.

Finally, and to a lesser extent, I found that I had images and photographs of poor quality that required someone who could provide quality copy work and restoration as needed. In years hence when someone else comes to write a history of Fort Davis and is seeking a photographic archive they will, without hesitation, turn to the work of Max Kandler. In recent years Max has thoroughly documented the life and activities of our community. Not only that, but he knows how to make a poor photograph look great.

After all this procrastinating, the time came that I finally had to go to work. The Arcadia template is exact: Each photograph must have a caption with a precise number of words. This, I think, might be limiting for many authors but was actu-

ally a blessing for me. Exhibits are the heart and soul of the museum racket, and we use artifacts to tell the stories within the exhibit, what we call interpretation. Artifact is just a fancy word for stuff, and most museums have plenty of stuff. The problem we face with telling stories with stuff is that when we do not have an artifact to tell the story the story cannot be told. It was much the same with the Fort Davis book. There were many other stories to tell, but I had no photograph to provide illustration.

In an exhibit we interpret, our other fancy word for telling a story about the artifact by creating labels. These are particular documents that must provide interpretation and clarity with limited words. For instance, a label should not be long and wordy; it should be focused and not ramble and the words of the label and the associated image or artifact must be meaningful if they are to be memorable. That is what we attempt to achieve in the museum world, and by happenstance, the Arcadia book template fit well with that mold. Finally something with which I was familiar.

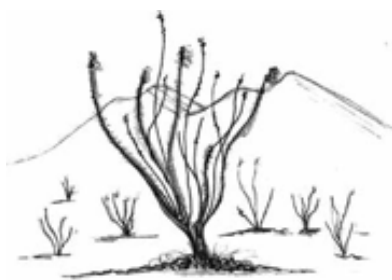
As the end of January deadline was quickly approaching, and I knew this because I would receive an email every other day from my Arcadia editor writing that the deadline was quickly approaching, I was greatly assisted in my endeavor by the unusually cold winter. My office is in our old bath house, a small adobe structure with a highly efficient heater, just the place to spend a winter's day.

I have to say that the staff of Arcadia Publishing was excellent. I expected a number of suggested edits when I submitted the first draft, but was pleasantly surprised. However, the editing was an interesting process. My editor would make suggestions that seemed odd to me, but ultimately clarified what I wanted to say. This most often resulted from her perspective as someone unfamiliar with the subject who wanted to ensure that others like her would understand the subject, while I went blithely along assuming everyone was familiar with Fort Davis. We did stay friends.

Being a Texan to the core, I did suggest that the title ought to be Fort Davis, Texas, but my editor pointed out that adding the state to the title was not Arcadia's policy, and, besides, they could

only find one Fort Davis in the United States. Checking my atlas I discovered this to be true, only one Fort Davis and one Marfa, but five Alpines.

Like most complicated projects, there were many folks who helped. Photographs came from far and wide. Both the Fort Davis Historical Society and Fort Davis National Historic Site were most helpful, allowing me free access to their photo archives. Lucy Jacobson, who wrote the official Jeff Davis County history, answered many odd questions at weird times of the day. Without the photo work of Max Kandler and Jennifer Turner I would still be muddling about in computer hell, and while I often frustrated my wife Beth, she kept the project grounded. As it turned out it was both more fun and more difficult than I anticipated.



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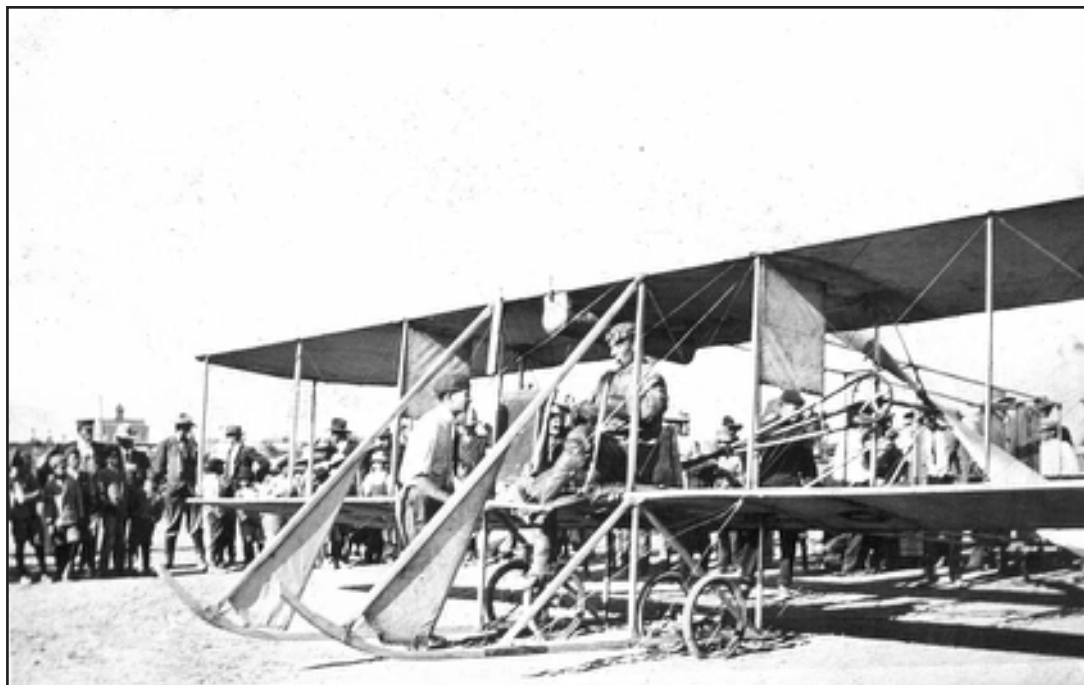


Photo by Bill Hubbard, Tucson, Ariz.

Calbraith Rogers and his Vin-Fiz Flyer on the ground in Marfa on Oct. 28, 1911, photographed by rancher W.W. Bogel.

A CENTURY OF AVIATION IN ALPINE

by Lonn Taylor

The Air Age came to Alpine in the early afternoon of Oct. 28, 1911, when Calbraith Perry Rodgers landed his Vin-Fiz Flyer just north of the public school grounds and remained on the ground for half an hour before flying on to Marfa and Sierra Blanca. The entire population of Alpine turned out to see the aviator and his airplane, which looked like a marriage between a box kite and a bicycle, with four wings, four wire wheels and two propellers linked by chains and sprockets to a single engine. It was the first airplane and the first aviator anyone in Alpine had ever seen.

The aviator was a big man, 6-feet-4, who flew sitting on the lower wing dressed in a business suit and tie, hunched over the control levers with his back against the gasoline tank and the engine banging away beside him. His only protection from the weather was a leather motorcyclist's vest pulled on over his suit coat. On really cold flying days he stuffed newspapers under the vest.

When he landed in Alpine, Rodgers was nearing the end of the first transcontinental flight ever across the United States, a 49-day journey that he made in hops of 50 to 100 miles from

Sheepshead Bay, New York to Pasadena, Calif. He was in the air for only 24 of those 49 days. The other 25 were spent repairing his plane, which was wrecked 16 times on take-offs and landings. Rodgers used spare parts carried on a special train that followed him across the country, paid for by his sponsor, a grape-flavored soft drink called Vin-Fiz. He navigated by flying along the railroad tracks, which was what brought him to Alpine. Rodgers later told reporters that the stretch over the Big Bend from Del Rio to El Paso was the most difficult part of his entire trip, because the country was broken up by canyons and mountains that created strange air currents and provided few emergency landing places.

Although Alpine did not get a proper airport until 1940, when Mayor Louis Starns persuaded the city council to purchase the old rodeo grounds north of town and bulldoze four runways onto it, the Alpine Chamber of Commerce has decided that Cal Rodgers' brief visit marks the beginning of aviation in Alpine and has organized a centennial celebration of aviation history here this month. On Oct. 15 there will be displays of historic aircraft and other avia-

tion material at the airport all day and an evening banquet at the Granada Theatre.

Most of the aviation activities in the Big Bend between Rodgers' 1911 visit and the construction of Starns Field in Alpine in 1940 took place somewhere besides Alpine. In the 1920s the U.S. Army Air Corps patrolled the border from flying fields at Marfa, Sanderson and Johnson's Ranch, now in Big Bend National Park. Army and civilian planes occasionally landed on Alpine's rodeo grounds, but it was the absence of defined runways there that caused the Army to put Alpine on a "flying blacklist" in 1933. That action led to the civic push that culminated in Mayor Starns' building a proper flying field in 1940.

The decision to build that field coincided with the arrival in Alpine of John Othello Casparis, who became one of the legendary figures of Big Bend aviation. Casparis was born in Round Mountain, Texas in 1899. He took flying lessons at San Antonio's Stinson Field in the 1920s and got his pilot's license in 1927, while he was running a tourist court and filling station on U.S. 80 near Kent. He claimed to have racked up 40,000 flying hours during his

career, which ended shortly before his death at the age of 85. Casparis came to Alpine from Dallas in 1940 as a flight instructor in Sul Ross' newly created Navy V-5 Aviation Training Program. Years later an interviewer asked his widow why he took the job. "We had a starve-out grocery store in Oak Cliff," she said. "We couldn't make a living." He helped lay out the runways at the new airport and was soon installed as unpaid manager there.

In December 1941, a local rancher, Willis McCutcheon, asked Casparis if he could take McCutcheon up in his plane so that he could shoot the Mexican golden eagles that were preying on his lamb crop. Casparis had never heard of hunting anything from an airplane but he agreed to try, and McCutcheon, shooting from the cockpit, bagged nine eagles on the wing. Other ranchers approached Casparis, as well as game warden Ray Williams, who in one month brought down 111 eagles from Casparis' plane.

Casparis soon went into the eagle-hunting business on his own. He removed the windows from his Aeronica Chief and bought a shotgun, and in June 1942 he persuaded the ranchers to



Photo courtesy Archives of the Big Bend, Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

John O. Casparis in his cockpit, preparing to hunt eagles.

form an Eagle Club to support his activities. Members put in \$60 a year for every 2,000 sheep they owned. Between May 1944 and March 1945 Casparis killed 806 eagles, 161 coyotes, four bobcats, two panthers and a bear for the Eagle Club, which paid him \$5,739 that year. He told the *Alpine Avalanche* that he killed most of the eagles at below 500 feet, flying at 120 miles per hour with no hands. The tricky part, he said, was that he had to get above them, dive down on them, pull the trigger and then put down his shotgun and pull out of the dive before hitting the ground.

Casparis continued his eagle-hunting business through the 1950s and was written up in a number of national magazines. By 1960 he had killed more than 10,000 eagles and had crashed four times, suffering severe burns. He also ran a charter service from Starns Field. Helmut Abt, a McDonald Observatory astronomer, recalled retaining Casparis to fly him and a colleague to southern Arizona to examine the site of Kitt Peak Observatory from the air. They got back to Alpine after dark, and Abt claims that Casparis circled over the town turning his engine on and off to alert someone to drive out to the airport and turn the landing strip lights on. When

Casparis died in 1984 the name of the airport was changed to honor him.

Alpine did not get on the commercial air service map until 1946, when Trans-Texas Airways initiated a route from Fort Stockton to Pecos, Alpine, Marfa and El Paso, with connections eastward to Austin and San Antonio. TTA's 26-passenger, twin-engine DC-3s did not utilize Starns Field but landed and took off from the former Marfa Army Air Field on U.S. 90 between Marfa and Alpine; their timetables described the stop as Alpine-Marfa. The flights over the Big Bend were famously bumpy (as Cal Rodgers had discovered in 1911), and on one memorable occasion a technician inadvertently filled a tank designed to hold water for the plane's steam heating system with carbon tetrachloride. When the heat was turned on over the Big Bend the passengers were nearly asphyxiated. The pilot and the co-pilot were able to open the cockpit windows and gulp fresh air, but the passengers and the stewardess had to be rushed to the Fort Stockton hospital to be revived.

The Trans-Texas stewardesses on the Big Bend route were dressed in costumes that were a departure from the semi-military uniforms of most stewardesses of that period.

They wore long Western skirts, silk blouses, bolero jackets, bandannas, Navy blue Western hats and cowboy boots. Service was in keeping with the informality of the Big Bend; there are stories about planes turning around in mid-flight and returning to Alpine-Marfa to deliver items accidentally left on board by passengers and about planes waiting at the airport for passengers who had trouble getting away from their remote ranches on time.

Unfortunately the Trans-Texas Big Bend flights never carried enough passengers to be profitable – six passengers were considered a good load – and in 1960 Trans-Texas terminated the route. Since then several small airlines have attempted to provide scheduled passenger service to Alpine. The longest-lived was Lone Star Airlines, which ferried travelers from Alpine to the Dallas-Fort Worth airport between 1992 and 1995. Dallas Express Airways, Solar Airways and Big Bend Airways have also tried to make a go of it. All found that there were simply not enough passengers to keep them in business.

Today the Alpine-Casparis Municipal Airport is a busy place. According to airport director Johnny Galvan, about six private planes a day take off and land on the airport's two runways, including the daily UPS delivery plane that brings packages for the entire Big Bend. Department of Public Safety and Customs and Border Protection helicopters are also based there, as well as a Medevac helicopter and, in fire season, the big twin-rotor helicopters that dump water on wildfires. On Saturday, Oct. 15, the runways will be crowded with airborne ghosts from the past.



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Apology

My old man steps over to this worn-out
Datsun pickup I'm working on,
leans an arm onto the windshield, says:
It was how Dad done us: He was tough.

I look up. The old man's a battler. Scarred bald
head, result of an fuel tank fire; blind in one eye,
crippled by arthritis; high blood pressure flush.
A battler struggling to hang on.

He continues:

He used to be real hard on us, call you
every name in the book, make fun of you,
make you feel like you was stupid,
not worth anything.

So I never learned how to teach you boys
the right way. I couldn't –

He shakes his head, steps away.

On the glass:
oil smudge where his hand died.

W.K. Stratton

Now Thinking Like a Mountain, I Sense

there's a storm somewhere.
The air reeks
of ozone and the mountains
vibrate as if they're at war
with the invading clouds.
Enough to scatter
the wall-and-stone critters
as well as the winter-preparing ants
who've hurried their dry seeds
across the patio since dawn.
Only an old praying mantis remains
hanging onto the window screen,
twisting one broken antennae,
like a B-movie alien who's
hoping to pick up
a rescuing signal,
before he makes his next move.
The incoming raindrops explode,
shattering the ant trail
while the mantis shakes
then inches under a honeysuckle.

The storm subsides; the desert mountain quiets.
Later I go out into the night sky
filled with stars I haven't seen since childhood
when they competed only with fireflies
before they began to die from too much light.

George Bristol



City Building

by Bob Miles

The old building at 205 E. Sul Ross Ave. in Alpine has seen many changes in its long life. Built in 1893, it replaced the original two-room public school that had been constructed at North Fourth and Avenue E in 1888.

Student enrollment had outgrown the original school, and this new, larger adobe brick building was constructed for \$7,000. Although records don't reveal particulars about the construction, existing photographs show the same building that stands today minus the bell tower. The first school teacher was Wigfall Van Sickle, who had been teaching in Uvalde. He was paid \$75 a month. The increasing enrollment soon led to the need for a second teacher, and Miss Millie Harmon was hired at \$37.50 a month. This school served to educate Alpine's children until the castle-like Central Ward School was constructed in 1910; the Central Ward School was razed in 1970 to make way for the present elementary school.

The old school building then served for a few years as a clubhouse for a citizens' organization known as the Mountaineers' Club, a purely social club for men organized around 1909. It was considered the most select social club in all of West Texas, and membership was considered an honor. When the original Mountaineers' clubhouse burned in the big Alpine fire of May 10, 1911, the members contracted with C.A. Brown to rent the old school, which Brown had purchased from the school system. Although the details have been lost, the structure was said to have been remodeled into one of the finest club rooms in West Texas. With the approach of World War I, the Mountaineers' Club faded

City Building

Erected in 1893. Oldest public school building standing in Alpine. Abandoned as school in 1910. Later served as a hospital, college dormitory, Border Patrol station and U.S. Soil and Conservation Service.

Recorded Texas Historical Landmark - 1965

away and was never revived.

Though details are sketchy, it is known that the building was used as the St. Charles Hotel from about 1915 until 1916.

The structure was "adequately fitted up for hospital work" and opened as the Alpine Hospital on Jan. 10, 1917. The *Alpine Avalanche* reported "the present capacity is 20 patients; seven of these

are strictly private." Dr. J. Frank Clark was the physician in charge. Other records indicate that Dr. J.R. Middlebrook was also connected with the hospital.

"When Sul Ross was established, the Board of Regents of the state teachers' college required the citizens of Alpine to furnish a girls' dormitory," reported the *Alpine Avalanche*. Sen. B.F. Berkeley was named to the chairmanship of a committee to raise funds for the dormitory, and in 1920, the city of Alpine purchased the City Building. A small nearby residence and a warehouse that had been used for the Mitchell-Gillett store after the store had burned down were also purchased and moved to the property. The three buildings were combined into one structure to serve as a girls' dormitory named for Berkeley.

A 1924 Sul Ross bulletin promoted the facility. "Berkeley Hall, the dormitory for girls, is under the direct supervision of Professor C.A. Gilley and his wife. This hall has been thoroughly remodeled and is convenient and comfortable in all its appointments; it is steam heated and is located at a convenient distance to the college

continued on page 27

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Voices of the BIG BEND

Jim Glendinning continues the tradition of his popular radio interviews from “Voices of the Big Bend,” an original production of KRTS, Marfa Public Radio. The program continues to be broadcast occasionally throughout the region at 93.5 FM.

by Jim Glendinning

IRIS KORUS

Iris Korus was born in 1955 in Stockdale, Texas, near Seguin, 30 miles east of San Antonio. She was the only child of Andrew and Ruth Korus. Her dad, a disabled veteran of World War II, farmed. Iris's early memories were of hunting for arrowheads, finding out about plants and riding the bus into town. “School was my lick,” she says. After school in Stockdale, she continued to Texas Lutheran College in Seguin in 1972, only to quit a year later. The reason: She fell in love. But no marriage ensued.

Her first job was with a dentist in San Antonio, whom she knew as a neighbor, and she loved it. She enrolled in the San Antonio College dental school the following year and continued at the University of Texas at San Antonio, graduating in 1979. She worked at UTSA for the next two years. During these years, she married a classmate, William Evans Dean III, but the marriage ended in 1980. She opened her own dental practice in Stockdale in 1981, and it flourished.

Dr. Iris Korus loved dentistry, but was also interested in horses and real estate. In 1986, she sold the dental practice, built a horse barn and started buying and selling horses. Later, since she had a keen eye for land prices, she also bought land in Kansas – a new adventure. By the early 90s she had gotten rid of most of her horses and was ready to get back into dental practice on her dad's farm.

Still restless for something else, she started looking for land in West Texas. She was impressed by the vast space, the plant life and the history of the Big Bend region and visited three times in 2000.

Indian sites, fossil remains and geolo-



Photo by Jim Glendinning

IRIS KORUS Valentine

gy all fascinated her. She was gripped. She had money in the bank from the horse farm sale, and her dental practice paid well, but she was determined to buy carefully. She knew the ranch would not produce income, but she wanted access to land which would give her a lot of satisfaction – her own laboratory of the natural world.

She bought the 96 Ranch, on the Chispa Road west of Valentine, and took a job in Marfa practicing at the Marfa Clinic. But the driving distance was too much, so she started her own dental clinic in Valentine. Despite the unusual location, her dental skills soon became known, and she attracted clients from as far away as Fort Stockton and Panther Junction in Big Bend National

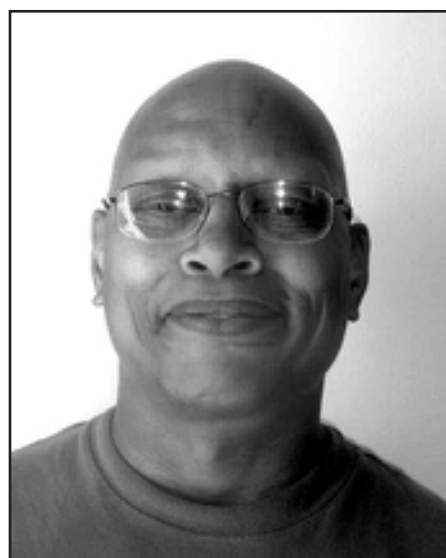


Photo by Jim Glendinning

CLARENCE RUSSEAU Alpine

Park.

She put equally hard work into the ranch land, which was severely degraded. Now, after 10 years, water lines and roads are maintained and grass is growing again. All over the ranch she has made discoveries about the life of former occupants and of the nature that surrounds her. Volumes of books in the ranch house speak to her collector's interests. She is a new breed of recreational ranch owner. “Very blessed and very lucky” is how she describes herself.

CLARENCE RUSSEAU

The Big Bend landscape, night sky and frontier culture have influenced many people, perhaps none more so



Photo by Jim Glendinning

STERRY BUTCHER Marfa

than Clarence Rousseau, who changed from a lost soul in the big city to one who has found his true purpose in the small town, speaking forcefully for those who have been victimized. The confident 50-year-old emits frequent bursts of laughter as he describes a life story that is anything but light.

He was born in Dallas in June 1960, the adopted child of Clarence and Odette Rousseau, who were both teachers. Nicknamed Kojak, his hairless head caused him relentless teasing from elementary school through Skyline High School. To compensate he rebelled against school regulations and fought against his tormenters. He wanted to be liked, wanted to help those in need, but in fact had only one friend in high

school. He drank and later drugged and at school learned, in his words, "nothing."

Continuing to Brookhaven Junior College, his drinking increased and his grades were straight Fs. The one significant exception to this downward spiral was a biology field trip in 1981 to Big Bend. The group camped out, and Clarence found that the beauty and immensity of the night sky had a calming effect on him. He was at peace with himself. The trip was a turning point, although his lifestyle had yet to improve. His paper on the trip earned him an "A."

In 1982 he joined the Army and thrived. Over 17 years, he served in Bosnia, Germany and the first Gulf War, ending as sergeant first class. He married Alissa Torres Jones just before the Gulf War, and they had a baby girl. The marriage ended five years later in divorce, and his Army career ended in a general discharge 1999. Today he sees this as a blessing in disguise.

He got a job at Subway and enrolled at Dallas' El Centro College, from which he graduated with a B.A. in general studies in 2006. He also joined Narcotics Anonymous. In 2006, remembering the uplifting Big Bend experience in 1981, he boarded a Greyhound bus and arrived in Alpine to enroll at Sul Ross State University.

He describes this period as when he grew up. He joined the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend as a volunteer counselor. The work of this vital agency, which deals with domestic violence and sexual assault, was a natural fit for someone who had always wanted to help others. He thrives in the job. He also allows that he sometimes acts as a troublemaker and is perhaps too loud. The director, Lovika de Koninck, describes him as someone who will always go the extra mile for clients, in an agency whose workload has almost doubled in recent years to 1,100 cases annually.

Rousseau is now employed at

the Crisis Center as community educator. He also works with the Boy Scouts, ran for mayor and lost and was president of the board of the Alpine Community Center. He is currently on the board of the chamber of commerce.

Nourished by the skies of Big Bend and small-town values of Alpine, Clarence Rousseau has learned how to contribute to society.

STERRY BUTCHER

Sterry Butcher was born in San Marcos, Texas on Sept. 10, 1967, the second child of Allan and Sue Butcher. When she was 3, the family moved to Fort Worth. Her father taught political science at Texas State University (now the University of Texas at Arlington) as well as practicing as a criminal defense attorney.

Childhood years in green, leafy Fort Worth are a pleasant memory today. From kindergarten through 12th grade she was enrolled at private Forth Worth Country Day School, taking riding lessons at age 5. At home she read voraciously.

Her parents allowed her to choose her college, and she chose small, liberal arts Reed College in Portland, Ore. From 1985 to 1990 she followed the Reed College tutorial-type system, graduated with a B.A. in English ("was good at it") and made some long-lasting friends. This challenging, independent place was right for her.

She missed, however, the wildness and roughness of Texas. So in 1991 she went to Austin and took a job at the Dispute Resolution Center. She felt useful and stayed two years. But she still felt adrift. She sensed there was something else "out there" for her. The family went every Thanksgiving to Indian Lodge at Davis Mountains State Park. On one visit in 1992, the family visited the Chinati Foundation and were guided by a young man, Michael Roch.

Sterry was attracted to barebones Marfa and to the tour guide. She took a room above the thrift store. She got a job

with Marfa's newspaper, the *Big Bend Sentinel*, staff of four. She also got engaged to Michael in 1993. The couple wanted a break and moved to Seattle. They married there in 1994, found jobs and stayed until 1996 before moving back to Texas for graduate study – Michael studying studio art at Texas Christian University, Sterry English at the University of North Texas.

In 1996 they bought a shell of a house on West Texas Street in Marfa and rebuilt it. Sterry returned to the *Big Bend Sentinel* and over 14 years has become the paper's senior reporter. In 2001 they adopted a Guatemalan boy whom they named Huck, today a curly haired 10-year-old who loves books and the outdoors. Mike sculpts and paints and teaches at Marfa Elementary School.

In 2004, Sterry was awarded a Knight Fellowship at Stanford. This one-year course attracts internationally known journalists including Pulitzer Prize winners. Unusually, in Sterry's case, the award went to a writer at a small-town newspaper, circulation 2,600. In 2007, *Texas Monthly* did a feature on her.

Sterry Butcher contributes up to 3,000 words and eight articles weekly to the *Big Bend Sentinel*. While sometimes, as with her story on contentious local water issues, the material is groundbreaking, more often the topics are routine and local. Whatever the subject, her rule is: Getting facts wrong is not an option. This professionalism shows and is a big reason why the *Big Bend Sentinel* regularly wins Texas Press Association awards, including, in 2010, a first prize in feature writing.



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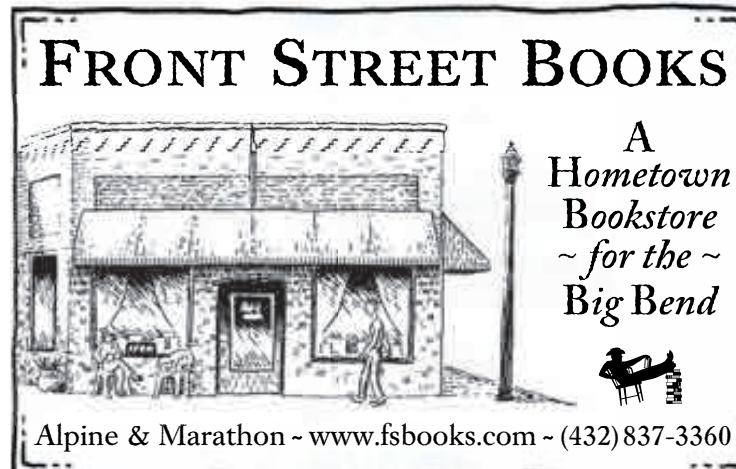
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Colony, cont'd from page 4

was "well acquainted with the Davis Mountains as he (had) walked over a greater part of them."

This initial art colony set the template for all to come. The teaching emphasis was on composition, landscape, figure and design. Coursework for students emphasized the art and techniques of outdoor painting with trips into the Davis Mountains, the Big Bend country and the surrounding areas. The course included private instruction and criticism with Gonzalez. At the conclusion of the six-week art colony a certificate indicating the quality and quantity of work done was awarded to those students who successfully completed their work. The certificate was signed by Gonzalez and the president of the college, Horace W. Morelock.

For four years Gonzalez and Woeltz taught one summer session of the art colony each. However, in 1933 Gonzalez talked his friend Paul Ninas of New Orleans into leading an art colony session. Ninas said that his students were soon "realizing that there can be new shadows under the sun and only five hours painting in the afternoon seems not enough." Ninas later became known as the "dean of New Orleans artists."

Woeltz resigned from Sul Ross in 1936, and Sarah Miltia Hill of Eldorado, Texas became the head of the art department and continued in this capacity until her retirement in 1961.

After leaving Sul Ross, Woeltz taught at the University of Texas at Austin from 1942 through 1953, though he took time away while he served in the military during World War II. According to Woeltz's sister Evelyn Reveley, "I just remember how happy Julius and Xavier were with every summer class. They always found students with promising talent, which made the art classes a joy to teach."

Gonzalez and Ethel Edwards were married in Alpine on Aug. 24, 1935 at the Brown Ranch. During his 1937 art colony, Gonzalez and his students

formed the Rio Grande Group of artists and painters. The goal of the group was "to give students the opportunity to exhibit their work in museums and galleries in different parts of the country, and to foster the arts in the Southwest." Gonzalez led the art colony through 1939, when he and his wife, a former student and artist in her own right, moved to New York City. On the East Coast, they established a summer art school at Wellfleet, Mass.

During the 1939 summer session Coreen Mary Spellman of Dallas worked with Sarah Hill teaching the regular art courses. Spellman taught at her alma mater, Texas Women's University, from 1925 until her retirement in 1974.

Hill continued the tradition of a summer art colony begun by Woeltz and found outstanding instructors to bring in to lead the art colony, in addition to conducting one herself.

For the 1940 and 1941 art colony, Harry Anthony De Young was selected. When asked to speak at the Fort Davis Men's Mile High Club supper on how to judge a picture he offered this advice, "A picture is good if you like it. That's a good rule to go by."

In 1943, Beatrice Cuming of New London, Conn. conducted the colony. When asked why she was in Alpine she replied, "I'm not really sure, but back in the East, everyone thinks that the



Photo courtesy Archives of the Big Bend, Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

Dr. Horace W. Morelock, 1933, conte crayon on paper, Xavier Gonzalez.

Southwest is a very special place, that every painter should go there." Field trips were essential, and according to one reporter they could be rather strenuous: "The sun is always at an odd angle so that you get blistered only on one side, the only place soft enough to sit down in is an ant bed (just ignore the ants and keep painting)..."

In the late 1940s, Otis Dozier conducted the 1947 art colony, and William Lester from the University of Texas at Austin helmed the 1949-1950 sessions. The Big Bend country was a natural for Lester as according to *Art Digest*, "Lester's world is one of brilliant, pulsing color afire with life and sun."

The art colonies held during this 10-year period offered students the same opportunities as those that had been conducted by Gonzalez and Woeltz. Painting outdoors remained the emphasis, and field trips were still an important aspect for instruction. Students were encouraged to try a variety of media such as watercolor, oil, pastel and scratch-board.

It is unclear why the art colony ceased to exist after 1950. Intermittently thereafter, starting in 1955, three-week workshops were held in lieu of the colony. Students could still receive either undergraduate or graduate course credit as was offered in



Photo by Jim Bones

"Sun Dancers San Idelfonso," no date, color etching, Elizabeth Keefer, Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

prior art colonies. However, the six-week sessions that included the important field trips quickly became a thing of the past. Soon the story of the art colony faded away as well.

It is amazing that a fledgling department in a newly created normal school advanced as rapidly as it did, in a span of just 30 years. Equally outstanding is the creation of the summer art colony, which proved to be a successful 18-year program at Sul Ross. And what made these two so successful were the incredible

men and women artists who chose to come to such a remote region to teach and the students who wished to learn from them. The impact of these first 30 years is reflected today in the dynamic and vibrant art department at Sul Ross State University.

To learn more about the art department and the art colony, visit The Lost Colony: Texas Regionalist Paintings at the Museum of the Big Bend for an exhibit that opens on Sept. 10 and runs through Jan. 29, 2012. Museum hours are Tuesdays through

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City, cont'd from page 23

campus." Room and board was \$30 a month.

When more modern dorm facilities became available for the young women, the building was used for a time as an athletic dorm for the college.

The sub-district headquarters of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (Border Patrol) had moved from Marfa to Alpine in 1935. The agency moved into the main front portion of the former Berkeley Hall.

In 1949, after the Border Patrol offices had moved back to Marfa, the U.S. Boundary Commission and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service moved into the building, which had been modernized to the tune of \$20,000 by the city, which owned the structure. The *Avalanche* reported, "Ceilings are being lowered, walls replastered, partitions being removed, new windows installed and a new entrance being built. New oak floors will be laid where needed and the building generally modernized and renovated." A new roof was also installed on the building. The Boundary Commission occupied the front part of the building and the Soil Conservation Service the rear portion.

In January of 1977, the building became the Sunshine House, a non-profit organization that provides nutritional and social activities to Alpine's senior

citizen. The Sunshine House is dedicated to "promoting opportunities for senior citizens..."

The Sunshine House provides nutritional meals to some 60 Alpine seniors at the center and prepares and delivers Meals on Wheels to 110 homebound seniors, according to Rocio Aguado, the executive director. It also offers educational programs, a gift shop, quilting, socials, transportation, daily telephone checks for individuals who need monitoring, a library, table games, a Senior Citizens Club, a meeting place, a place for socializing and a computer room. It serves about 150 seniors daily.

In the three years Ms. Aguado has been executive director, she has gotten several grants to help make repairs and improvements on the Sunshine House but hopes a new building can be obtained due to the age of the old school building. The old warehouse structure, which is part of the Sunshine House complex, can no longer be used due to the presence of asbestos. With all the repairs, additions and renovations, it is difficult to tell what the interior of the original structure looked like, but the side that faces Sul Ross Avenue is still recognizable from early photographs.

The old building, known as the City Building on the historical landmark plaque, seems to have come full circle, serving the children of Alpine in the beginning – and the community's senior citizens today.



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Trans-Pecos Trivia by Charles Angell

Cinema in the Big Bend Region

- 1) The 2007 movie *There Will Be Blood*, which was largely filmed in the Trans-Pecos, won two Oscars. Daniel Day-Lewis received the best actor award. Who won the other Oscar and for what?
A) Mark Bridges, costume design
B) Robert Elswit, cinematography
C) Paul Thomas Anderson, screenplay
D) Upton Sinclair, script
- 2) Most know that the movie *Giant* was filmed near Marfa and that the cast lived in the Paisano Hotel during filming. Many of the cast rode into town by train, and at one point during this ride Elizabeth Taylor requested that the train pull over so she could pick what type of flower?
A) Bluebonnet C) Claret cup
B) Yellow bell D) Yucca
- 3) Many scenes for the movie with a catchy title, *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, were filmed along the Rio Grande. The scenes that took place in Mexico at the cantina and at the curandera's house were actually filmed in which north-of-the-border town?
A) Redford C) Ruidosa
B) Candelaria D) Presidio
- 4) *In No Country For Old Men*, which actor, when asked how dangerous the character Anton Chigurh is, responds "Compared to what? Bubonic Plague?"
A) Tommy Lee Jones C) Woody Harrelson
B) Josh Brolin D) Chip Love
- 5) The 1971 movie *The Andromeda Strain* was set in New Mexico, but many scenes were filmed in the town of Shafter, between Presidio and Marfa. Who wrote the story that the movie was based on?
A) Ray Bradbury C) Aldous Huxley
B) Michael Crichton D) Elmore Leonard

Bonus: Which person mentioned above wrote the book *Oil!*, which *There Will Be Blood* was based on?

Answers: 1-b, 2-d, 3-a, 4-c, 5-b, Bonus: Upton Sinclair



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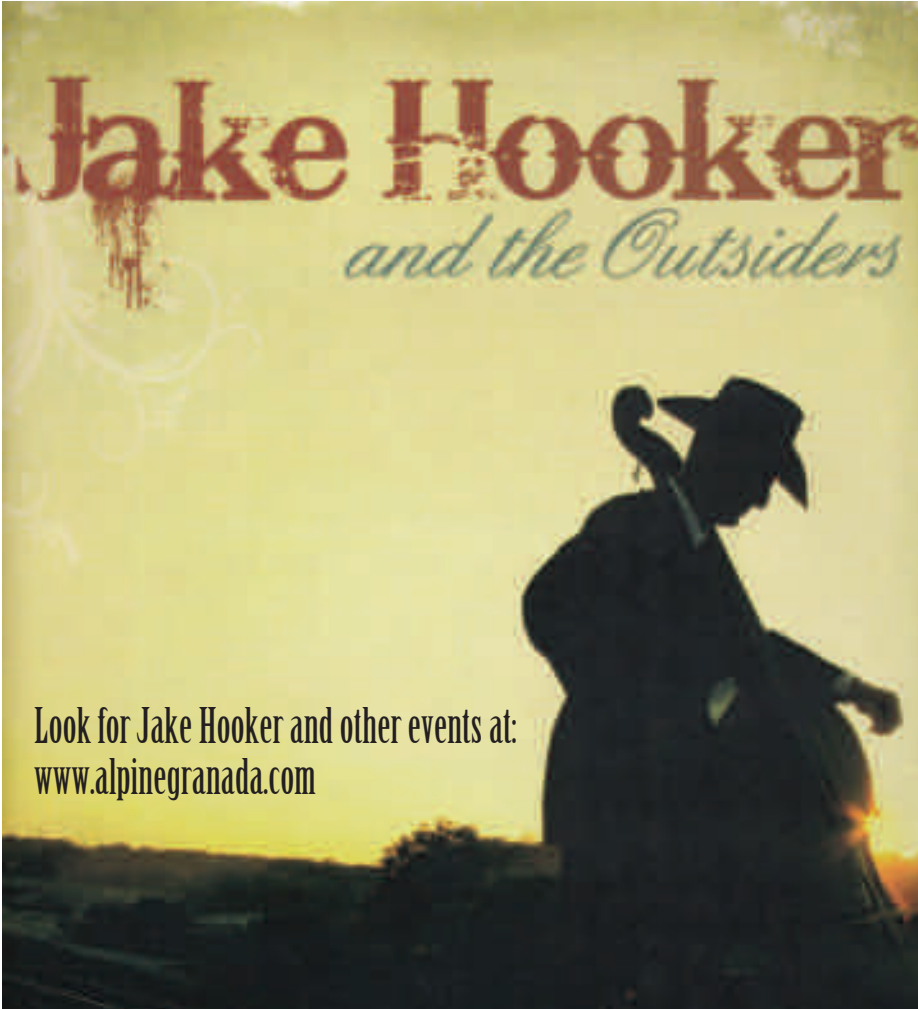


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