



The Mansardian™

The Quarterly Publication of the Silver City Museum



Meal preparation takes center stage as the Diamond A Chuck Wagon cook works his butcher knife through a beef joint, surrounded by the tools of frontier cooking at this Whitewater stop along the Southern Pacific Railroad, circa 1890. Such scenes of cattle ranching life are brought to vivid detail in “Unpacking Silver City: Revealing the Rich Tapestry of a Historic Town.” (From the Silver City Museum Archive)

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Director's Desk

Well, it was an eventful summer with new exhibit openings, successful community events, and a restabilizing of the museum's



Bart Roselli

support. So stay tuned for even more offerings of local history and culture. The celebration marking the permanent installation of the "Nuestra Voz: The Chihuahua Hill Story" in a gallery on the second floor was attended by many. The 41st iteration of the famous Ice Cream Social was a hit — with a special honoring by the Big Ditch Crickets of an icon of local traditional music, Ken Keppeler, and his partner Jeanie McLerie. Up-and-coming MC and museum volunteer Paul Simon added sparkle to the day's event. Thank you to museum staff, volunteers,

vendors, and sponsors for making this a very popular community event.

This summer we took our show on the road and participated in celebrations in the Mining District, on WNMU's campus, and in Downtown Silver City.

Coming out this fall will be the release of a major publication, "Unpacking Silver City: Revealing the Rich Tapestry of a Historic Town." This 370-page book published by Mimbres Press is a collection of 10 outstanding chapters written by 10 outstanding historians. This was made possible thanks to a grant we received from the New Mexico Humanities Council in 2019, which underwrote the lecture series of the same name. It was a labor of love all around and will add much to the appreciation of the diverse history of our community.

I am also happy to announce that The Friends of the Silver City Museum, recently formed, has been incorporated as a nonprofit organization by the State of New Mexico and

has been adopted by the Gila Community Foundation to serve as The Friends' fiscal sponsor. If you have not become a member of The Friends, the only bona fide nonprofit support organization of the Silver City Museum, please see the membership information on the back of this edition of The Mansardian.

Also in the news about "new beginnings," Melody Collins, our dedicated and highly capable store manager, has recreated the Silver City Museum Store, which is now a fully operational part of the Town of Silver City. It was an astounding accomplishment and not a simple or easy one. Thank you, Melody. And thank you to Town Manager Alex Brown for helping to make this happen.

The Silver City Museum is on solid ground and continues to serve you, the members of our museum family. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Museum Director

Keeping it Real: Our Latest Chapter of Community Work

By: Brittany Beers,
Community Engagement Manager

Our commitment to transparency and community engagement drives every aspect of our work at the Silver City Museum. Whether we're celebrating successes or addressing unexpected challenges, transparency remains at the heart of our communication with you, our valued community.

In the previous issue of this newsletter, we shared exciting news about our survey initiative at Western New Mexico University, reporting that we had successfully reached more than 280 participants. Due to our publication schedule, we often project into the future when sharing updates. And while these participants had been confirmed, technological issues at WNMU have postponed the dissemination of this survey. It is a most unfortunate circumstance, but one we felt important to address openly with our readers.

Despite this setback, we celebrate a

tremendous success with our "Nuestra Voz: The Chihuahua Hill Story" marketing campaign. Through our partnership with SkyWest Media, we reached more than 50,000 individuals and witnessed a significant increase in online engagement, including substantial growth in both website traffic and social media platform activity. We also conducted a successful radio campaign, featured prominently on regional stations for six weeks. When generous funding and strategic partnership join forces, we accomplish great feats here at the museum.

We're also thrilled to announce that the first article in our three-part series collaboration with Dr. Kimberly Petrovic has been accepted for publication in The New Mexico Nurses magazine and will appear in their August 2025 issue. This marks a particularly special moment, as Deb Walker, Executive Director of the New Mexico Nurses Association, notes this is the first time the publication has focused singularly on nursing history — making our contribution part of a groundbreaking initiative

to capture New Mexico's vastly complex and distinctive nursing history.

We are deeply grateful to our Copper Level sponsors Food Basket and Freeport-McMoRan, as well as our Area sponsor the Silver City Daily Press. Their contributions play an integral role in supporting our events, programming, and marketing efforts.

As always, your continued support enables us to navigate challenges and celebrate victories as we work together to preserve and share the stories that define our community.

The Mansardian

Editor: Brittany Beers
Layout: Tom Oberg

The Mansardian™ newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Silver City Museum. It is named after the *mansard* roof, a hallmark of French Second Empire architecture, characterized by its four-sided gambrel design with steep lower slopes. Constructed in 1881 by H.B. Ailman, the Silver City Museum features this distinctive architectural design.

The Silver City Museum
312 West Broadway
Silver City, NM 88061
Hours: Tue – Fri: 9 am – 4:30 pm
Sat & Sun: 10 am – 4 pm
(575) 597-0221
silvercitymuseum.org

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The Myth of the West: The Slippery Slope between Fact and Fiction



The Myth of the West was reinforced by comics, plays, songs, and movies throughout the 20th century. "The Man from the West," also called "The Gentleman From New Mexico," was filmed in downtown Silver City in 1913. (From the Silver City Museum Archive)

By: Javier Marrufo, Curator

Opportunity, freedom, and rugged individualism. These words defined heroic American pioneers' taming of a wild and unforgiving western frontier. In a common view of American westward expansion, the "West" existed as a blank slate for American society and culture, a place where every settler was an immigrant seeking a better life, where class divisions were erased and where grit and ingenuity were rewarded above



Javier Marrufo

all else. Manifest Destiny, the United States' divine mandate to spread across the continent, was the epitome of progress. Where before there was nothing but endless expanses of natural landscapes, mining camps emerged, followed by towns and sprawling cities. With them came American values, institutions, and industry.

This nostalgic view of the American West has been passed down for generations, creating a lasting impact on our collective culture and identity. This view, however, is simplified and distilled into the values of the society that shaped it. Although the "Myth of the West" promotes themes of bravery, freedom, and opportunity, it also obscures violence, inequality, and complex and contradictory experiences of the past. Idealized versions of history entangle facts with fiction, making them indistinguishable from actual historical events and people. Collective memory, axes to grind, and the need for entertainment ensure that stories and hearsay continuously creep closer and closer to undeniable truth, the same way a fish caught last summer grows bigger every time the story is told. What are the implications of the Myth of the West for museums, and how can the examination of this myth help build a better understanding of the past?

The Stuff of Legends

Viewing the past through rose-colored glasses is not unique to the American West. Myth building is a natural part of shaping national, cultural, or social identity. These myths are created and reinforced in many ways, often beginning with a kernel of truth. Over time, those truths transform into representations of broader themes, rather than accurate reflections of specific events or individuals.

One of the most enduring themes of the American West is the classic "Cowboys and Indians." Today, the phrase evokes the general idea of conflict between the United States of America and its "wild frontier," but it is also a simplified shorthand that obscures the complex realities behind it. By the 1880s, cowboys were a vital part of life in Grant County. The ranching industry provided food, employment, and economic development, laying the foundations for many communities that still exist today. At the same time, the rise of the ranching industry also came at a significant cost. It displaced Indigenous populations, segregated workforces racially, and caused long-term environmental damage.

The expansion of ranching in southwestern New Mexico permanently reshaped its physical, social, and cultural landscape — a legacy often glossed over and reinforced throughout history. History is complex. It is in human nature to turn away from the negative parts of our collective past. The stories we collectively tell give us agency in the past. These accepted "truths" can, however, strip away the agency from those whose stories are excluded, omitted, or forgotten.

On the other hand, not all mythmaking seeks to simplify or ignore negative aspects of the past. Many figures ascend to myth simply because their story is entertaining. No figure better represents this than Billy the Kid. Over the past century, this young outlaw has fascinated Silver City citizens, tourists, and historians alike. Between 1881 and 1906, a dozen of dime

novels glamorized his exploits, transforming him from a typical desperado to a brave or romantic anti-hero. Today, his image graces shopfronts in Silver City. Homeowners all over town wonder whether Billy once lived in their house, or at the very least stayed there. He has become an integral part of our story, even though he only lived in Silver City for two to three years of his late childhood and all historical evidence of his time here can be counted on one hand. Sometimes, the stories are just more entertaining than the facts.

Myths and Museums

A core value of the Silver City Museum is to present authentic and accurate history. What challenges does a one-sided, simplified, version of history present for institutions like ours? Preconceived versions of history create rifts between public expectations and exhibits or collections. Focusing on myth-driven interests limits the ability to explore deeper social and cultural history, narrowing our understanding of the past and discouraging challenging or complex histories.

The Silver City Museum is deeply rooted in place. Disentangling the Myth of the West from its historic reality helps people see themselves in the history. It allows the work we present to grow past nostalgia into an authentic historical understanding. Although the Myth of the West paints an inaccurate portrait of our history, our own view of the past is just as much a part of the story as the past itself. So, this myth should not be entirely discarded. It should be reexamined. One of the ways the Silver City Museum continues this examination is through its "Silver City 101" exhibit. The exhibit explores Silver City history from seven different, yet interconnected, vantage points. Each theme, in turn, reveals the complex web of history — a story, not only of Colt 45s and Levi's 501s, but of government policy, environmental change, personal impacts, and much more. The continued reexamination of the Myth of the West acts as a starting point for dialogue, education, and reconciliation.

100 Years of Midwifery in Grant County

By: Gail Stamler, Retired Midwife

Human childbirth can be painful, complicated, and dangerous. Many women and infants do not survive the event, even today. The



Gail Stamler

oldest healthcare providers on the planet are midwives, the women who help other women “get the baby out.”

New Mexico has a unique history in America with regard to how we care for pregnant women, the role of the midwife in community health, and the way midwives from

100 years ago helped shape our maternal and infant care today. This is a brief history of the midwives of New Mexico and Grant County.

In 1920, New Mexico was the fourth largest state geographically with a population of about 360,000. Sixty percent of the inhabitants were of Hispanic origin, descendants of the Spanish settlers who moved to New Mexico from Mexico in the 17th and early 18th centuries. These Hispanic communities developed methods of healing that incorporated their knowledge of herbal medicine, their religious beliefs, and a strong connection to Nature, along with incorporating the folk healing practices derived from the Aztec, Mayan, and Incan cultures with whom they shared land and blood. This style of healing was known as *curanderismo*, from the word *curar*, to cure. The women and men who learned these skills were known as *curanderos* and highly esteemed in their communities.

Many of the *curanderas* who practiced healing remedies for the sick and the injured also assumed the care of women during pregnancy and childbirth. These women were known as *parteras*, from the word *parto*, or birth. They usually learned their skills in apprenticeships to older midwives who had spent decades practicing their profession and then passed down what they knew when they saw that they were getting old and needed help. Aging midwives would typically choose a daughter or a niece or an unrelated but younger woman in the community who they considered to be trustworthy, intelligent, and strong, with the ability to learn the necessary skills and earn the trust of women. They chose women who were past childbearing themselves because midwives might be gone for days at a time. It was a great honor to be chosen to become a *partera*.

New Mexico is a predominantly rural state, and in the early 1920s there were limited transportation options. The few cities that existed were the only communities that had sanitation services. Even food was frequently scarce. Families lived on low incomes and had an average of 8 to 10 children. Many of the women were overworked and underfed, leading to poor nutritional status and compromised health. The number of women who died related to pregnancy in New Mexico in 1920 was 8.9 per 1,000 women, 20% higher than the national average of 7.1 per 1,000. The infant mortality rate was the highest in the nation with 140 infant deaths per 1,000, while the rest of the country had an infant death rate of 61 per 1,000. Most of these deaths were due to diarrhea and dysentery as a result of poor sanitation and poor nutrition.

Long distances and low funds to pay for healthcare providers meant there were few physicians or nurses in these rural communities. In 1929, Congress created the Sheppard-Towner

Maternal and Infancy Protection Act to provide funds to states to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. New Mexico used these funds to create a State Department of Public Welfare, a Bureau of Public Health, and a Bureau of Child Welfare. In 1935, New Mexico received funds to create the Division of Maternal and Child Health, and the Midwifery Consultant Program was established.

The public health officials from the newly formed Midwifery Consultant Program recognized the role that the *parteras* played in caring for New Mexico’s women and children and used the funds to expand the service of public health nurses and physicians and to provide advanced training for the *parteras*. Nurses and nurse-midwives traveled to villages and towns around the state to educate the local *parteras* in the physiology of labor and birth, aseptic technique, and the control of hemorrhage. They gave the *parteras* medications to prevent infection of the infants’ eyes and to treat hemorrhage. When the *parteras* completed their training, they were registered with the State and given professional bags with tools.

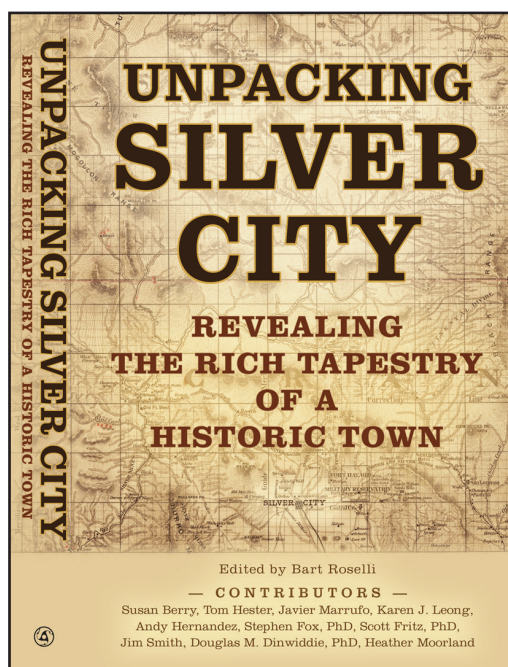
By 1938 there were 800-900 registered *parteras* in New Mexico. They were instrumental in improving the maternal and infant mortality rates as they integrated their acquired medical knowledge into the traditional healing methods that were known and trusted in their communities. By 1940, in 5 years, the infant mortality rate dropped from 140 per 1,000 infants to 100 per 1,000 and continued to drop until 1995 when the rate was lower than the national average at 6.5%. In 1930, there were 19,996 births recorded in New Mexico with 107 maternal deaths. By 1955, out of 25,723 births, only 18 mothers died. The decline in both maternal and infant mortality

“Unpacking Silver City: An Exploration of Silver City’s Story”

Silver City has a new chapter in its written history. “Unpacking Silver City: Revealing the Rich Tapestry of a Historic Town,” conceived and edited by Museum Director Bart Roselli, brings together 10 distinguished historians to explore the multifaceted story of our remarkable community.

The inspiration for this project began in 2019 with a grant from the New Mexico Humanities Council, prompting seven scholars to conduct extensive research and create public lectures sharing their findings. An additional three scholars were contacted to form the 10 chapters of the book. Now, that research has evolved into Silver City’s first comprehensive historical work in 30 years, since former Museum Director Susan Berry published “Built to Last: An Architectural History of Silver City, New Mexico.”

This collection does not simply recount dates and events; it illuminates the complex forces that shaped Silver City into the distinctive place we know today. The architectural treasures that define our streetscapes, the communities that called Chihuahua Hill home – each chapter



reveals another layer of our collective story. The book examines how Chinese settlers, Indigenous peoples, captives, and cattle ranchers all contributed to our region’s development, creating a narrative that honors the full spectrum of Silver City’s past.

What makes this work particularly valuable is its accessibility. While grounded in rigorous historical research, the stories that unfold are approachable for long-time residents, newcomers seeking to understand their adopted home, and visitors drawn to our community’s eclectic character. The authors tackle compelling topics like Billy the Kid’s enduring legend, the evolution of local business, Grant County’s governmental development, and how health care transformed over generations.

“Unpacking Silver City” serves as both historical record and community resource. It will deepen residents’ connection to their hometown while offering newcomers insight into the complex story they’ve joined. This work ensures that Silver City’s multifaceted, fascinating history will be preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

The book will be available for purchase at the Silver City Museum Store and at a book signing event in the Silver City Museum Courtyard on November 15, 2025.

rates was attributed to the improved care provided by the parteras.

Here in Grant County, Candelaria Mesa was one of the parteras who completed the training program and was registered in the 1930s. Born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1898, 17-year-old Candelaria traveled to the United States in 1916 with her husband and sister. Her husband, José Brambia Mesa, worked for the Santa Fe Railroad. After 10 years of living in railroad camps in Arizona and California, they settled in Silver City in 1927. Families initially came to Candelaria with minor injuries and illnesses, but very quickly the women requested that she attend them in childbirth. Candelaria asked for help from Dr. Frazin, a physician who had lived and worked in Mexico before settling in Silver City. He was instrumental in Candelaria Mesa's training, giving her medications to control hemorrhage and protect the newborn's eyes from infection. She attended the classes offered by the traveling public health nurses in the basement of the Grant County Court House and became one of Silver City's busiest midwives.

In an interview in the late 1980s, Candelaria Mesa's son recalled that his mother had delivered approximately 4,000 babies in Grant County, traveling as far as the Mimbres and Gila Valleys. Greg Mesa described how people would show up at their home at all hours requesting the service of la partera. In the 1930s, he was sent to the homes of families to collect the \$5 fee for her services. People were poor and Greg remembered how people often

paid with bartered items like sacks of flour, sugar, or salt, or nothing at all if a family was too poor to pay. He described how his mother saved all of her flour sacks and other rags to make diapers for the mothers. Candelaria delivered babies all around Grant County for forty years, yet when she died in 1977, her obituary stated only her name and dates of birth and death. It made no mention of her years of devoted service to the community. This lack of acknowledgement was frequently true for the contributions and achievements of women and, in particular, Hispanic women, many of whom did not speak English and did not read or write.

On the front cover of the 1955 "Health Department Manual for Midwives" was a photograph of a registered New Mexico partera, holding the bag that was issued when the parteras had completed their training. Written in English and Spanish, the booklet described the importance of handwashing, proper disposal of the placenta, how to make a bassinet for the newborn out of an orange crate padded with newspaper and lined with a blanket, and other instructive material. Hand-drawn images showed a wood cook stove with water boiling and two oil lamps by the bed, the midwife's eyes trained on the mother who is about to deliver. The images portrayed in this booklet match the stories told by women in the more rural areas of Grant County.

I had the honor to interview two of these women in the 1980s. In the farming and ranching community of Gila, 27 miles from

Silver City, Mariana Placencio and Avelina Polanco described their home births with the midwives of the area. Señora Polanco's nine children were all born at home with the help of the parteras. Señora Placencio had eight children, six of whom were born at home, back when the floors of her two-room adobe house were made of packed earth. One of her babies was delivered in the hospital when her midwife recognized that the baby was breech and that she was at higher risk for complications. Together these women recalled the names of some of the midwives that attended them in labor: Ynez Polanco, Pomposa Cadena, Nieves Ponce, and Maria Chavez. They described the comfort and trust that they had in their midwives and that delivering at home with a midwife was their first choice. These women and the parteras who attended them in labor paved the way for the prominent presence of midwives in New Mexico today.

Thirty percent of all deliveries in New Mexico are currently attended by midwives, about three times the average for the rest of the country. Midwife-attended deliveries have lower rates of complications and intervention, and midwives now attend women in the hospital, in birth centers, and at home. Keeping care culturally appropriate, recognizing the social needs of families during pregnancy and child-rearing, and listening to women—these are the hallmarks of how midwives address the needs of pregnant women and their infants. More women in New Mexico have access to midwifery care today thanks to the parteras of yesterday.

Acknowledgments:

Much of the information in this article came from an article written by Felina Mychelle Ortiz, CNM, MSN. Ms. Ortiz has practiced midwifery for more than 20 years. History of Midwifery in New Mexico: Partnership Between Curandera-Parteras and the New Mexico Department of Health; *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*, Volume 50, Issue 5, September 2005, pages 361-450.

Thanks to Dr. Gilbert Arizaga, M.D., who shared information about relatives in Grant County who practiced as curandera-parteras. He is related to the above-mentioned Avelina and Inez Polanco and shared stories about these women. He recalled that Dr. Frazin delivered his brother and described family members who were curandera-parteras, including Tulita Jaurequi from Hurley, N.M. His knowledge would add significantly to a more in-depth presentation of this topic.

Gail Stamler served as a midwife in Grant County for 40 years before retiring in 2022. In the early days of her career, Stamler was a licensed midwife, helping women reclaim the birth process and deliver their babies at home. She then completed her nursing degree at WNMU and became a certified nurse-midwife at San Jose State University. Stamler is also a certified menopause practitioner and is a member of the Gila Regional Medical Center Board of Trustees, where she advocates for improved community healthcare policies and access to care.

Programs and Events

"Trends in Herbalism from Ancient Times to the Present"

presented by **Monica Rude**

Wednesday September 10 | 12:00pm – 1:00pm
WNMU Global Resource Center, ABC Room

Explore the complex history and practice of using plants as medicine with local herbalist Monica Rude, founder of Desert Woman Botanicals. Monica brings more than 30 years of expertise in the healing properties of medicinal plants.

Exhibit Opening

"Gila Wilderness by Foot"

Photography by Jay Hemphill

Saturday September 27 | 2:00pm – 4:00pm
Silver City Museum

We invite the community to the opening reception of a stunning photography exhibition by local artist Jay Hemphill. Join us for light refreshments, conversation, and awe-inspiring art.

"Living Art Studio: Women's Health and Healing at Every Stage and Age" presented by **Kaya Lazzell and Juniper Bowers**

Wednesday October 8 | 12:00pm – 1:00pm

WNMU Global Resource Center, ABC Room

This community conversation explores the challenges women face in prioritizing their own well-being, while also covering resilience, self-discovery, and the ongoing work of caring for family, self, and community. Also learn the story behind Living Arts Studio and its mission to support women at every life stage.

Southwest Print Fiesta

Saturday October 11 | 10:00am – 4:00pm

Main Street Plaza

Join Event Manager Ana Trinidad and museum volunteers to create your own personalized collagraph!

"The Challenges Faced Exploring Women's History: A Two-Part Class"

Monday November 3 & Tuesday November 4 | 10:00am – 11:30am

Join Museum Director Bart Roselli and Curator Javier Marrufo for this Western Institute for Lifelong Learning (WILL) course as they discuss the unique challenges of researching women's history and walk you through the fascinating process of how the "Healers and Heroines" exhibit was developed. Available to WILL members only. Visit www.will.community to become a member.

"Expanding Outpatient Mental Health in Grant County" presented by **Robert Whitaker**

Wednesday November 12 | 12:00pm – 1:00pm
WNMU Global Resource Center, ABC Room

Robert Whitaker, CEO of Gila Regional Medical Center, will share important updates on the development of the new mental health facility and the hiring of Dr. Teresa Arizaga. This is a great opportunity to learn about the progress and challenges involved in expanding mental health services for our community.

Book Launch

Saturday November 15 | 3:00pm – 6:00pm
Silver City Museum

Come and celebrate of the official publication of "Unpacking Silver City: Revealing the Rich Tapestry of a Historic Town." Edited by Museum Director Bart Roselli, this book serves as a historical record and community resource. Light refreshments, books available for sale, book signing, and presentations by select contributing authors.

Member Appreciation Holiday Shopping

November 15 – December 31

Silver City Museum Store

Starting November 15, our valued members can enjoy a 20% discount throughout the holiday season!

Education Update

From Huachas to History: Education Program Highlights

By: Deb James,
Education Programs Manager

Whew! After a whirlwind of spring school visits, the education program has taken a breath!

Our Exhibitions Project Manager Tom Oberg made us some *huachas* boards, designed with kids in mind, for a special game day for a group of first graders who visited in April. Those boards have already gone into regular use. For those unfamiliar, *huachas* is the word in Spanish for what in English are called “washers.” Traditionally in our region, players toss huachas toward cups or tuna cans in a game similar to horseshoes. In our case, the targets are embedded into a board placed on the ground. In adult games, the scoring is fairly complicated. We’ve simplified the scoring for children. We provided huachas tournaments

at WNMU’s Fiesta Latina in early June. The delightful part of these tournaments was that seasoned adult players passing by stopped to coach the young players in the best tossing techniques!

On the Fourth of July at the annual Ice Cream Social, huachas was just one of several activities available to kids. We offered cornhole, wonderful region-specific children’s books at our reading table, chalk art, face-painting, sand art, jewelry making, jump roping and bubble making. We aimed for good, old-fashioned fun, some based on activities that children would have played in Grant County’s early days.

Beyond these community events, the education program continues to connect generations through our ongoing projects. For our eighth-grade oral historians, we have partnered with

the area’s senior centers and assisted living dwellings, inviting seniors to share their stories with students in the program. If you or anyone you know has a life story they are willing to share with an eighth-grade student, please contact education@silvercitymuseum.org. We are especially interested in focusing on descendants of immigrant parents and/or grandparents for this year’s oral history projects.

The Silver Schools send their fourth-grade students to the museum in the spring of each year to meet the requirement to study local history. We also invite fourth-grade classes from the Cobre district, the Montessori School, and homeschool groups to reserve a spot to visit next spring by visiting the “For Teachers” section at silvercitymuseum.org. We look forward to welcoming your students!

Partners

Knowledge to Share: Become a WILL Facilitator

The Western Institute of Lifelong Learning (WILL) is a nonprofit organization under the auspices of Western New Mexico University.

WILL is an intentional, inclusive community that challenges the mind, body and spirit, fosters friendships, and promotes creativity and self-expression. With a membership of more than 325, we offer courses, workshops, excursions, enthusiast groups, and other activities in synchronicity with the university’s three semesters. In 2026, we will celebrate our 20th anniversary!

In a typical semester, the curriculum covers a broad range of disciplines in the arts, sciences, humanities, and beyond (check out the courses page on the WILL website to see the breadth of programs offered this semester). Courses

are presented by volunteer facilitators, who are supported by an extensive team of WILL’s professional staff, its Advisory Board, and volunteer committees that work in partnership to provide exciting and inspiring learning opportunities for members.

Are you passionate about a subject that you’d like to share with others? WILL members are always hungry for new perspectives. You do not need teaching experience or specialized expertise, just passion and enthusiasm for your subject. Facilitators do not even need to be a member of WILL. Although we do hope you will join once you get involved.

If you are interested in proposing a course or program through WILL, scan the QR code to access our Facilitators FAQ

page. There you will find information, forms, and resources to guide you through the process. Course proposals for the Spring 2026 semester are due on October 17, 2025. Proposals for the Fall 2026 semester are due on March 20, 2026.

We hope you will join us in our continuing adventure of lifelong learning.



Volunteer View

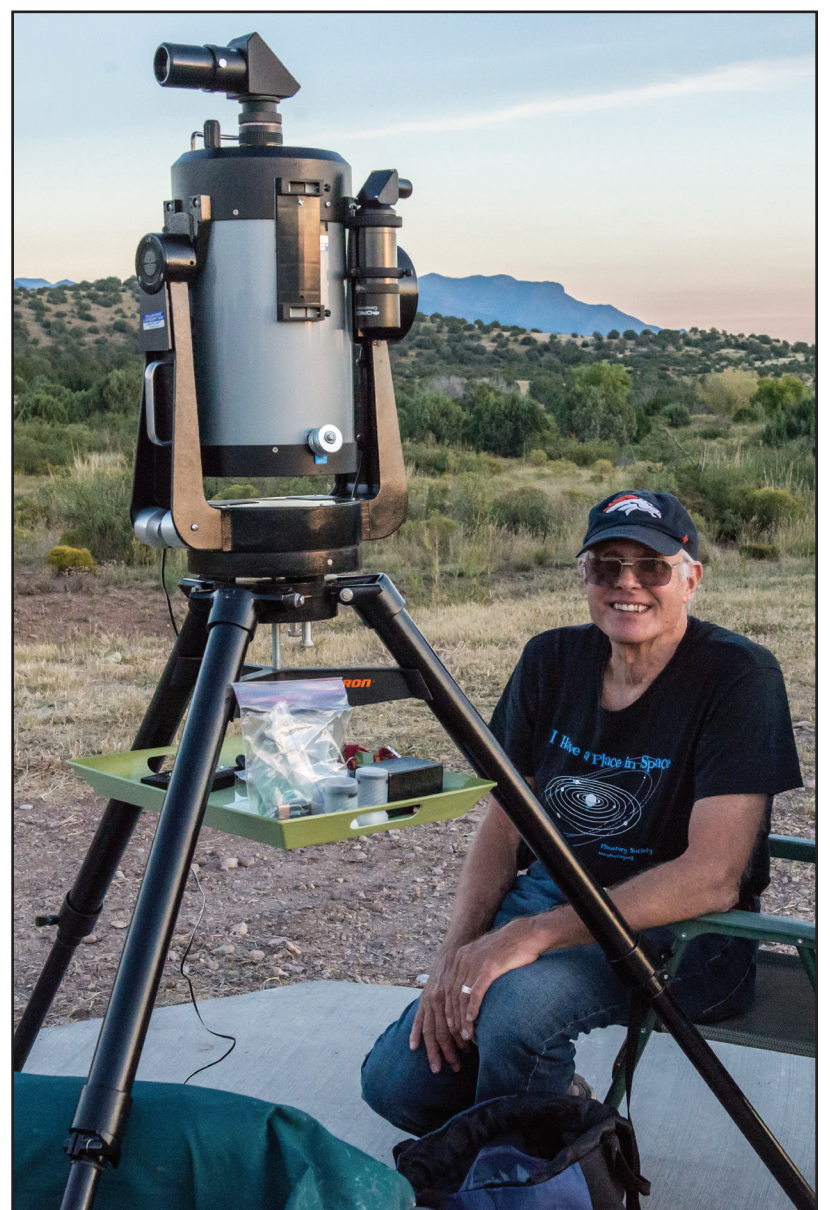
By: Mary Stone, Volunteer Manager

As summer comes to a close, I want to thank all of you who made it such a successful season. From greeting visitors and helping at the Ice Cream Social to supporting events like Fiesta Latina and CLAY Fest, your energy and enthusiasm helped create a welcoming, joyful museum experience for everyone!

This fall, we’re looking forward to school tours, more community events, and preparing for the holiday season, including our annual Victorian Christmas and More! Whether you’ve helped on the floor, behind the scenes, or just started volunteering, your time truly makes a difference!

Fall is also a great time to reconnect and get more involved. We always welcome helping hands for events, visitor services, or collections. However you choose to participate, we’re grateful to have you as part of the team!

Thank you for all you do to keep the Silver City Museum lively and welcoming!



Al Grauer, astrophysicist, leading a night of sky viewing at the Cosmic Campground in October 2015. Photo taken by Bruce Bloy.

Collections

Making Collections Accessible: New Finding Aids Published

**By: Ashley Smith,
Registrar & Collections Manager**

In this year's spring edition of *The Mansardian*, volunteer Erin McDanal and I presented the completion of the Blumenthal collection and touched upon the importance of the finding aid, which was the final step in processing this collection. That finding aid is one of six created over the past few years as we've reassessed the archive, reprocessed existing collections, completed half-finished work, and processed newly accepted materials.

The publication of the finding aids on the Silver City Museum's website in August is part of the museum's mission to make the collections more accessible and bring the archive into alignment with best practices and professional standards. It also works toward a goal set out in our original Strategic Plan during reaccreditation in 2019. This goal was accomplished in 2021 when we contracted Rachael Woody, a professional archivist whose company helps museums organize their collections more effectively. During this process, Woody identified several collections in need of reprocessing and completion.

Among these were the Blumenthal and Silsby collections as candidates for reprocessing. This work ultimately resulted in the creation of a finding aid for both collections.

These six finding aids are the final product of hundreds of hours of work by volunteers and staff. The work to reprocess these collections and write the finding aids has made accessible a treasure trove of personal and business correspondence, diaries, journals, and photographs that had been mixed together. Much of this material was inaccessible until now because the content within these collections was unknown – it was only revealed through the processing and writing of the finding aids.

Since their creation, materials have already been accessed by researchers, including a University of Texas at El Paso PhD student who utilized some of the Blumenthal Collection in their doctoral dissertation on mining in New Mexico. The other finding aids include the Lime Family Collections, the Philip Fleming Collection, the Fred Ramsey Collections, and the New La Capilla Master Plan. All these finding aids contain unique

stories and correspondence that touch upon important pieces of Silver City and Grant County history. For those interested in what these various collections include, please visit "The Collections" section at silvercitymuseum.org.

Along with these six finding aids, we will also be publishing 27 transcribed oral histories from the Chihuahua Hill Oral History Project along with the MP3 audio files. These transcripts are the product of even more hundreds of hours of work by dedicated volunteers who have brought these community voices back to life. The creation, transcription, and editing of those transcriptions has added an incredibly rich collection of personal stories to the archive. In total there are 67 oral histories; these are the completed files that have been checked against the transcription AI program, Otter. More will be added to the website as they are completed. As this work requires special training and can be time consuming, the new transcriptions will be available in 2026. If you would like to help uncover more of these community stories, please fill out a volunteer application at silvercitymuseum.org.

Exhibits

Looking Forward to a Busy Exhibition Season

**By: Tom Oberg,
Exhibitions Projects Manager**

Local artist Jesse Ochoa's exhibit of sculpture and photography concluded on July 28. Jesse's work was the final installment of a series of exhibits titled "Arté Chicano." The exhibition series began in 2016 and has been a fruitful run. Many thanks to all the artists who have participated over the years and special thanks to Diana Ingalls Leyba who has been the curator throughout "Arté Chicano's" 10-year history.

The Besse Gallery will get a fresh coat of paint, and local photographer, Jay Hemphill will exhibit his photographs from September 2025 through March 2026. Jay is a professional photographer with several portfolios of work that focus on the region's landscapes as well as the people who populate them. Jay moved to Silver City in 1999. Among his many accomplishments, Jay has recently produced a photographic essay on the Gila Wilderness. The book, titled "The Gila 100," is published by Mimbres Press of Western New Mexico University and celebrates 100 years of the first designated wilderness in the United States.

"Nuestra Voz: The Chihuahua Hill Story" permanent exhibition was opened to the public on May 17 and will undergo a few updates to be

finished by October 2025. Updates include the addition of a section dedicated to military service, quotes from residents on how life was lived on Chihuahua Hill, as well as a few

physical changes to the gallery to help make the space a more enjoyable experience.

Updates for "Healers and Heroines: Women and the Shaping of Local Health Care" include a new section on midwifery in Grant County. We will present historical as well as contemporary information in the newly conceived section. We will also add "reading rails" to the exhibit. These rails will take the place of the ropes used to cordon off objects in the gallery. The rails are essentially angled panels on legs that will give the museum more room for text and photographs to better describe objects. We will update text panels and reconfigure a few spaces in the gallery as well. The updates to this exhibit will be finished by early October as the museum will be hosting the New Mexico Nurses Association in mid-October.

The updating of exhibits is "baked in" to our exhibition process. The staff, myself, and our director Bart Roselli all have played a part in discussing what worked well, what didn't work as well, and what additions to the exhibit would make for a richer visitor experience. Just as important is the feedback we get from you. This is your museum. There have been several instances over the past few years where member and visitor feedback have helped guide our decisions. You are an important part of our process.



Scenes like this exemplify Jay Hemphill's "Gila Wilderness by Foot" exhibit, opening September 27 at the museum. Hemphill backpacks deep into the wilderness with his camera gear to capture the remote, untamed landscapes few get to see.

September

**“Trends in Herbalism from Ancient Times to the Present”
Wednesday September 10**

12:00pm – 1:00pm

WNMU Global Resource

Center, ABC Room

Explore the history and practice of using plants as medicine with Monica Rude, founder of Desert Woman Botanicals.

Exhibit Opening

“Gila Wilderness by Foot”

Photography by Jay Hemphill

Saturday September 27

2:00pm – 4:00pm

Silver City Museum

Connect to America’s

first wilderness through

Jay Hemphill’s profound

photographic journey.

October

“Living Art Studio: Women’s Health and Healing at Every Stage and Age”

Wednesday October 8

12:00pm – 1:00pm

WNMU Global Resource

Center, ABC Room

Kaya Lazzell and Juniper

Bowers explore the challenges

women face in prioritizing their

own well-being.

Southwest Print Fiesta

Saturday October 11

10:00am – 4:00pm

Main Street Plaza

Join museum staff at the

Printers’ Market as they guide

you through the tactile art of

collagraph printing.

November

“The Challenges Faced Exploring Women’s History: A Two-Part Class”

Monday November 3 &

Tuesday November 4

10:00 am – 11:30am

Museum Director Bart Roselli

and Curator Javier Marrufo

facilitate this WILL course that

explores the hurdles, sources,

and stories behind uncovering

women’s hidden contributions

to local health care history.

Available to WILL members.

Visit www.will.community to

become a member.

“Expanding Outpatient

Mental Health in Grant

County”

Wednesday November 12

12:00pm – 1:00pm

WNMU Global Resource

Center, ABC Room

Robert Whitaker, CEO of Gila

Regional Medical Center,

will discuss the significance

and impact of GRMC’s new

behavioral health unit.

Book Launch

Saturday November 15

3:00pm – 6:00pm

Silver City Museum

Celebrate of the official

publication of “Unpacking

Silver City: Revealing the Rich

Tapestry of a Historic Town.”

Member Appreciation

Holiday Shopping

November 15 – December 31

Silver City Museum Store

Starting November 15, our

valued members can enjoy a

20% discount throughout the

holiday season!

Upcoming Programs and Events

BECOME A MEMBER

The Friends of the Silver City Museum is the nonprofit partner of the Silver City Museum. It complements public resources with private philanthropy.

As the museum’s premier support organization, The Friends provides crucial funding for exhibits, educational programming, and collection care.

Membership Levels

❖ **Student \$15.00**

❖ **Senior \$30.00:** One adult 60+ years old

❖ **Friend \$35.00:** One adult

❖ **Family and Couples \$50.00:** Up to two adults and all children under 18

❖ **Sponsor \$100.00**

❖ **Patron Sponsor \$250.00:** Also includes acknowledgement on our website and a private behind-the-scenes tour with Museum Director

❖ **Benefactor \$500.00:** Also includes acknowledgement on our website, a private behind-the-scenes tour with Museum Director, and a \$50.00 Gift Certificate at the Museum Store

Ready to Join? Visit silvercitymuseum.org to download your membership form or stop by the museum to pick one up in person. We’d love to welcome you to our community of history enthusiasts and museum supporters!



- ❖ The Mansardian™ newsletter
- ❖ Invitations to exhibit openings and member-only events
- ❖ 10% off every day at the Museum Store
- ❖ Holiday discount at the Museum Store
- ❖ Recognition on the Museum Appreciation Wall while membership is current
- ❖ A matted print image of your choice from the Silver City Museum’s photo collection

Additional Sponsor Benefits Include

The Silver City Museum
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The 2024/2025 Mansardian is underwritten by Liz Mikols in memory of her husband Joe Schindler.

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