

# The Mansardian™

The Quarterly Publication  
of the Silver City Museum



Theodora Lopez Ott Hobart raised a blended family in the Ailman House after marrying D.C. Hobart in 1885. This formal 1921 portrait captures her children as adults: (back) Charles Ott and Edmund "Eddie" Hobart, (front) Frances, Mary, and Amelia Ott. Eddie, born in 1886, was Theodora and D.C.'s only child. The Ott siblings were Theodora's children from her first marriage to Peter Ott (From the Silver City Museum Archive).

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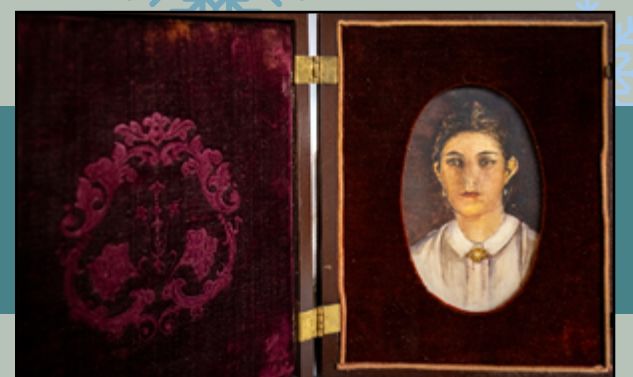
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# Director's Desk

E pluribus unum. Remember that little saying? Well, it's taken on new meaning these days, but the Silver City Museum has a mission



Bart Roselli

that embraces the concept, calling the museum to be of the people, by the people, and for all the people of Silver City, Grant County, and visitors to our home.

Recently, we have expressed that mission in the form of our exhibit "Healers and Heroines" that

explores the vital role women played and have played in the formation and growth of our local health care systems. Embracing diversity and inclusiveness led us to bring to light the efforts

of women which have been overlooked in the historical record. Last month, we were honored to host a reception for the New Mexico Nurses Association (NMNA), who had heard about our exhibit and were overjoyed to finally see an organization paying attention to their history. This recent connection has led us to begin building a closer partnership with NMNA. To explore the challenges of researching women's history, Javier Marrufo and I offered a course through the Western Institute for Lifelong Learning (WILL), sharing the challenges the museum faced in uncovering the role of women in building the health care system we enjoy today.

To continue our quest to be inclusive by recognizing the role of our diverse population and mix of cultures, we are revamping our beloved Victorian Christmas celebration to embrace the many ways of celebrating the holiday season in Southwest New Mexico. The newly named program, "Tapestry of Traditions: A Celebration of the Season," will highlight

the Mexican, European, and Apache ways of honoring and enjoying the winter solstice. See inside for more details.

A new exhibit also opens during this holiday event, "A Place in History: The Legacy of the Ailman House." This exhibit takes visitors through the many iterations of the site where the museum sits and the various ways this piece of land has served the community of Silver City. "A Place in History" will profile the story of this museum and its predecessors.

Again, we are so proud of our offerings to the community, and we could not do it without your support. Thank you for supporting the museum as members of The Friends of the Silver City Museum.

Museum Director

## When Community Shows Up

By **Brittany Beers**,  
Community Engagement Manager

Our commitment to community engagement continues to flourish through meaningful partnerships and celebration, and this season has reinforced the power of collaboration in fulfilling our mission at the Silver City Museum.

We are deeply grateful to the Silver City Daily Press for their generous donation, which has provided us with four months of advertising to promote our programming, special events, and the Museum Store. When local media champions cultural institutions in this way, the entire community benefits.

October brought an unexpected highlight when Silver City hosted its inaugural burro race, The Silver Lode, on Sunday, October 19. We were honored that the race began and concluded directly in front of the museum, providing an opportunity to connect our mission with contemporary community celebration. This event gave our team the perfect reason to dive into our archives and explore the role burros played in Grant County's history. We're already looking forward to participating in next year's race!

Our partnership with the New Mexico Nurses Association continues to expand in exciting and meaningful ways. We're thrilled that efforts are underway to feature a portion of

our exhibit at the state capitol, and even more energized by the conversations connecting communities throughout New Mexico. Our team has been honored to share exhibition development strategies and research methodologies with these emerging projects. When one museum's work sparks a statewide movement to document women's contributions to health care systems, we see the true ripple effect of mission-driven collaboration.

These experiences exemplify the reciprocal relationship between museum and community that we strive to cultivate. Your continued support and participation enable us to serve as both guardian of our shared past and active contributor to our community's present and future.

## A Word from Your Friends

The primary support organization to the Silver City Museum, The Friends of the Silver City Museum, has been actively rebuilding and reenergizing the efforts of dedicated citizens to bring new resources to the cause.

A growing board of trustees is currently soliciting membership and donations to help the museum expand its services to present programs for adults (the museum's Community Conversations), develop new exhibits, care for our collections, and serve school children and families.

Thank you, Marsha Sue Lustig, Brittany Beers, Bart Roselli, and Phyllis McQuaide for spearheading the effort to support the museum. Our partner and fiscal sponsor, The Gila Community Foundation ([gilacf.org](http://gilacf.org)), provides professional and accurate financial accounting and support. As we enter the final months of 2025, The Friends ask for your support through our



annual appeal. We hope you can help us in our efforts to support the museum by contributing your tax-exempt donations.

Your support greatly helps the museum to begin work on its seminal core exhibit, tentatively entitled "Silver City 101." This exhibit will pack an enormous amount of history into two relatively compact spaces at the front of the museum and become a "must-see" attraction for residents and visitors.

Incorporating additional interactive media will help the museum share its extensive collection and the region's multifaceted past. The museum's newly published book "Unpacking Silver City: Revealing the Rich Tapestry of a Historic Town" serves as both the foundation for this exhibit and a perfect companion to it. Thank you for your ongoing support!

*-The Trustees of The Friends of the Silver City Museum*

## 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](http://silvercitymuseum.org)

## Replacing Invisibility with Inquiry: Allen Allensworth and Black Legacy in Grant County

By Javier Marrufo, Curator

Grant County's Black history is one of the most critically under researched parts of our community's past, even though traces of Black lives — soldiers, families, laborers and educators — are woven throughout its early story. Recovering these histories helps us recognize that Black experiences were integral to the shaping of southwest New Mexico.



Javier Marrufo

### Early Black Settlers

The first Black settlers in the Grant County area came with the U.S. Military in the 1860s. Buffalo Soldiers, Black soldiers serving in the U.S. Army after the Civil War, were stationed all along the expanding western frontier. When slavery ended in 1865, many Black men were newly free but continued to have limited economic opportunities. Service in the military offered steady pay, housing, clothing, and food. When Congress created all-Black regiments, thousands of formerly enslaved men enlisted.

The first Buffalo Soldiers in Grant County came the same year that all-Black regiments were created. The men of Company B of the

125th Colored Infantry regiment arrived in Fort Bayard in 1866. In addition to assisting in the construction of the barracks, stables, and buildings at the fort, these soldiers were tasked with patrolling the rugged hills of Grant County, escorting mail and supply wagons, and protecting newly arriving settlers from the Apache whose lands were being seized by the U.S. government. The work was often physically demanding and dangerous, and directly impacted the development of Grant County.

Although the Buffalo Soldiers were the first Black residents of the area, census records show that a small group of Black civilians began making their way into Grant County shortly after. These records provide small but invaluable views of an otherwise invisible community.

In-depth research drawn from census records often reveals how local lives reflect broader regional, national, and even global histories. A compelling example is James Duncan, who appeared in the 1880 census as a 40-year-old teamster — a demanding and respected occupation in a region where freight transport sustained mining towns. Born in Texas around 1840, Duncan listed both of his parents' birthplaces simply as "Africa." Although the importation of enslaved Africans was officially outlawed in 1808, illegal trafficking continued for decades, with the last recorded importation occurring in 1860, just before the Civil War. Duncan's presence in Silver City reminds us that New Mexico's frontier was home not only to formerly enslaved people but also perhaps to those whose connections to Africa remained vivid.

### Giving a Face to History

A remarkable connection between Grant County and national Black history came through Chaplain Allen Allensworth. Born into slavery in Kentucky in 1842, Allensworth escaped bondage and served in the Union Navy during the Civil War. He went on to become one of the most distinguished Black officers in the U.S. Army. In 1886, at age 44, he was appointed chaplain of the Buffalo Soldiers' infantry regiment. His wife, Josephine Leavell Allensworth, a trained musician, often played the organ in the chapels where he served.

The Allensworths' postings took them across the western frontier, from Fort Supply in Indian Territory to Fort Harrison in Montana, and eventually, to Fort Bayard, New Mexico. There, Allensworth combined his roles as chaplain, educator, and reformer to improve the lives of soldiers and their families.

In 1889, while stationed at Fort Bayard, Allensworth published a military education manual titled "Outline of Course of Study, and The Rules Governing Post Schools of Ft. Bayard, N.M." This program introduced age-graded classrooms for soldiers and their children, which eventually helped students of military families to integrate smoothly into



Buffalo Soldiers photographed in Silver City in the late 19th century. These unnamed men were from the 24th Infantry, an all-Black regiment first formed in 1869. Stripes and medals on the uniforms exemplify the celebrated service of the Buffalo Soldiers (From the Silver City Museum Archive).

civilian schools. Allensworth's system was so effective that it became a standard for all U.S. Army post schools, influencing the structure of modern military and public education alike.

Allensworth also helped establish a school at Fort Bayard that by 1888 had enrolled 118 students, many of them children of formerly enslaved people. Through these efforts, Allensworth contributed to the development of educational systems in the rural West.

### Why Diverse Perspectives Matter

Learning about Allensworth and other early Black residents helps illuminate Grant County's role in the larger tapestry of the American story. The Southwest has always been a crossroads, a place where different people and different cultures meet and change. Recognizing Black contributions to local development, whether as frontier soldiers, laborers, or educators like Allensworth, helps us build a more inclusive sense of community identity and pride. We begin to see Grant County not as a remote outpost, but as part of a complex national narrative. It challenges the common misconception that the Southwest lacks Black history and replaces those preconceived assumptions with a deeper truth: that African Americans, although underrepresented, were here from the beginning. Uncovering the social history of the early Black residents of 19th-century Grant County not only enriches our understanding of our local community, but reveals the complex circumstances of the cultural, racial, and social borderlands that are the Southwest.



In this earliest known photograph of a young Rev. Allen Allensworth (three years into his 20-year service), the chaplain is photographed while stationed with the Buffalo Soldiers in Fort Bayard on January 15, 1889. The back of the card advertises several lectures available to be given by the distinguished orator in the United States and abroad (Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture).

## From Private Fortune to Public Good: The Story

**Brittany Beers,**  
Community Engagement Manager

Before Broadway had a name, before lot numbers or property lines, the valley that became Silver City was known as the San Vicente *ciénega*—a wetland marsh in Apache territory. Spanish traders passed through in the 18th century but didn't stay. By the mid-1800s, Mexican herders grazed sheep and goats there, supplying meat to miners working in Pinos Altos. San Vicente remained unsettled—a lush oasis, yes, but in *Apachería*. Americans would soon change that.

In 1880, Henry Boyer Ailman and Hartford M. Meredith sold the Naiad Queen, their silver mine in nearby Georgetown, for \$160,000. They invested that wealth in new ventures: a mercantile business, a bank, and matching houses on Broadway. The houses were built in the French Second Empire style, modified from an 1873 architectural plan book and constructed by Robert Black, Silver City's premier contractor and future mayor.

Ailman's house took more than a year to complete. He recalled digging nearly forty feet through solid granite to strike water, then building a hundred-barrel rainwater cistern. As their home neared completion in 1881, Henry and his wife Theora took a belated honeymoon trip back East, shopping in St. Louis for furniture. On their return, Ailman wrote, "...

We found our house completed and ready for occupancy. In due time the furniture arrived by ox train. It was in good shape, with only one dining chair being damaged [sic], and made our home most comfortable." Cultivation of a lawn and tree planting soon followed.

The Ailmans were prominent citizens. Henry served as county treasurer and school trustee, and Theora devoted herself to the Methodist church and was a founder of the local hospital. Their four children grew up in rooms designed for comfort and permanence. But permanence proved elusive. When drought devastated ranchers and a competitor spread rumors of the bank's weakness, the Meredith & Ailman Bank failed in December 1887. A notice on the door read, "We have not wasted our money, but have loaned it to residents of our county who have property but not money to pay their notes."

The courts took five years to settle the debts. In 1892 the Ailmans left to start a new life in California. The house they'd built to announce their arrival became the monument to their departure.

Colonel D.C. Hobart and his wife Theodora acquired the house at auction for \$3,500 in 1891. Theodora and her first husband had owned the Tremont House hotel, and the blended family spilled into every room. Hobart built an addition on the home's west side and reconstructed the stairway, enlarging the entry hall.

For 16 years, the house absorbed the social life of Silver City. In April 1900, Amelia Ott married James Harvey in the parlor, the rooms decorated with rare cut flowers and wax tapers. When Joseph Lehner, a 21-year-old consumptive from Albany, NY, died in October 1902, the Hobarts nursed him through his final weeks, treating him as family though he'd arrived only two months earlier.

But the Meredith & Ailman bank failure came back to haunt the



*H.B. Ailman's notation on the back of this 1891 photograph reads, "This picture taken in our parlor . . . our last act before leaving our lovely home forever." The family gathered in the bay window (now one of the museum's front galleries) shortly before financial troubles forced their move to California. Pictured are Nancy Smith (Theora Ailman's mother), Harry Jr., David, Harry, Theora Pearl, Theora, and Grace (From the Silver City Museum Archive).*



*Harry Benjamin (right), the Silver City Museum's founding curator, prepares an exhibition circa 1970, during the museum's early years.*

Hobarts. The house reverted to the bank estate in May 1908. That same month, Colonel Hobart died at 57.

At auction in October 1908, Mrs. J.R. Johnson purchased the property, understanding that its value lay not in who had lived there, but in who might need to. She boarded individuals chasing cures or second chances, called them her "boys and girls," fed them at long tables, kept the linens clean, and noted when homesickness crept

in. Mrs. Johnson's 1915 obituary observed that her former boarders would feel "a pang of deep regret and sense of personal loss." The house had become a waystation, a place that caught people in transit and held them gently before releasing them onward.

Other proprietors ran the boarding house until 1926, when the Town paid \$3,500 for the property—full circle to Hobart's price. The mansion became City Hall. A vault was installed, and clerks processed permits and taxes in rooms where the Ailmans once entertained. The Red Cross set up headquarters.

In 1931, the Town acquired a former bank

building on Bullard Street for a new city hall. They paid \$25,000, trading in the Broadway property as partial payment. The town council members soon had second thoughts, however, and bought it back for \$5,500. For nearly four decades, the property would serve the

community as the municipal fire station.

What followed was the building's most resourceful era. Workers erected a brick garage for the firetruck, and volunteer firemen moved into the house; one claimed a second-floor room to watch over the "sleeping city at night." When the men needed showers, they rigged a cold-water spray in the fire engine stall. Fire Chief Rowland Ball moved his family into the first floor in 1933, installing new ceilings, partitions, and hardwood floors. The vault became a mushroom farm.

The building had become a lesson in practical reuse: one structure serving as fire station, family home, dormitory, and agricultural experiment. Chief Gene Boren and his family succeeded the Balls, staying until around 1957. Mrs. Mildred Boren refinished the floors, painted, and started a square-dancing program for junior high students.

In October 1942, the property hosted its most solemn public moment. Hundreds gathered in front of the fire station—where Ailman had cultivated trees and grass—for the unveiling of rustic tablets bearing 1,351 names of Grant County residents serving in World War II. Children of 200th Coast Artillery members, whose fathers were captured in the Philippines, removed the covers. The crowd was reminded to honor "the parents, wives, sisters and sweethearts" as well as the servicemen. A banker's front yard paid homage to working-class sons.

By the mid-1960s, the fire department was professionalizing and community members hoping to organize a museum meanwhile

# of 312 West Broadway

recognized an opportunity. The Silver City Museum opened July 1, 1967 in a handful of front rooms while the firemen still occupied the back of the building. Founding curator Harry Benjamin worked with an extremely limited budget to assemble artifacts.

When firefighters moved into the Public Safety building in 1970, curator Nodé Farmer closed the museum for two weeks. She and her helpers rearranged exhibits, spreading into portions of the former fire station. A May open house drew crowds eager to see the transformation, and the building's newly red-painted roof was visible for miles—no longer announcing private wealth or municipal function, but public memory.

The transition held a certain logic. A mansion built to embody mining fortune had become a place for preserving collective history. The building had always been a container, but its contents kept changing. The Ailmans laid a foundation strong enough to hold over a century of other people's needs.

Today's museum visitors walk through rooms where the Ailmans once entertained prominent citizens, where Mrs. Johnson comforted homesick boarders, where city councilmen debated, where firefighters slept, and where community members gathered to honor their absent sons. The building itself has become an exhibit, its walls holding nearly 135 years of

continuous use. What began as a monument to frontier success became something more valuable: a space perpetually reshaped by the community it serves.

*Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Susan Berry for her instrumental contributions to this article. Her careful editing, fact clarification, and dedication to*

*historical accuracy were invaluable. Berry, founding editor of The Mansardian and former director of the Silver City Museum (1983-2010), brings decades of expertise in Silver City's architectural heritage and continues her advocacy for regional history as a member of the Historical Society of New Mexico board.*



*Assistant Fire Chief G.O. Gwyne Jr. sits in his fire truck outside the Ailman House in summer 1933. The garages visible behind Gwyn were added specifically to house the fire department's equipment, marking another chapter in the building's history (From the Silver City Museum Archive).*

## Education Update

### Education Programs Build on Strong Foundation

**Dr. Rob Haworth,  
Education Programs Manager**

Greetings! My name is Dr. Rob Haworth, and I am the new Education Programs Manager at the Silver City Museum. I first want to give a shout-out to Deb James, who stepped down from the position in August. She did an incredible job developing important educational programming at the museum and established an excellent foundation for future work.

I've been working on some exciting educational projects at the museum and in our schools here in Silver City. At several middle schools, I'm collaborating with eighth-grade teachers to develop "I Am From" poems with students. These poems help students understand the importance of personal narratives and better appreciate the oral histories and historical narratives documented throughout our museum exhibits. Students at participating schools will work on oral history

projects through the end of the year, specifically focusing on the immigration history of our diverse communities.

Additionally, I'm creating curriculum materials for each museum exhibit, particularly for students in grades 7-12. The lessons will focus on issues surrounding labor, women's health, rural health, the importance of oral history, and other inquiry-based topics. These engaging lessons will be available for teachers interested in bringing them into the classroom. Keep an eye on the "For Teachers" section of the Silver City Museum's website as we make them available in the coming months.

We're also developing an exciting interactive web-based map that will highlight historical locations throughout Silver City and parts of Grant County. Teachers, students, community members, and visitors will be able to explore specific locations with historical images, information, resource links, and other supporting materials. This interactive map will help our community and visitors develop a deeper understanding of "place" based on geography, history, and culture.

I'm delighted to introduce myself to the Silver City Museum community and look forward to continuing the important educational work our museum has provided over the years.

## Volunteer View

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this museum! More than 60 active volunteers provide daily support to our collections care efforts, greet visitors and help them find the perfect treasure in the Museum Store, distribute posters advertising our programs and exhibits, and assist with events and programs. As we step into 2026, we look forward to inviting more volunteers to help provide service to our community. Special thanks to Melody Collins, Jody Rose, and volunteer Marcia Sherry-Newby for their exceptional support in keeping our volunteer program running smoothly. There will always be a need for new volunteers as some retire (again) or move away. Please pass the word! Volunteering at the museum gives you a sense of accomplishment, pride in public service, great camaraderie, and active learning about the museum's many programs, exhibits, and collections. Please reach out [volunteer@silvercitymuseum.org](mailto:volunteer@silvercitymuseum.org) or call 575-587-0226 and join the team!

## Bringing Silver City's Past to Life: Living History Program Launch

**Jim Charleston,**  
Executive Director of Silver City Theatre



Silver City is about to take a bold step into its own history. In an exciting new partnership between the Silver City Museum and Silver

City Theatre, a group of performers will soon embody some of the most fascinating figures from the region's past through the Living History Program.

The program highlights the lives of Aldo Leopold, a pioneering ecologist and conservationist whose ideas shaped modern land ethics; Arturo Flores, a champion of Silver

City's Mexican-American community, whose resilience and cultural contributions helped define the town; Beatriz Manquero, a civic-minded woman whose leadership and family legacy illustrate the role of women in Silver City's growth; Ben Lilly, a larger-than-life frontier hunter whose complex story reflects the challenges of the early Southwest; and, of course, Billy the Kid, the notorious outlaw whose formative years in Silver City shaped a legendary path. Also represented is Isabel Eckles, a notable figure whose life connects personal stories to broader social and cultural movements in the region.

Each performer will undergo rigorous research, costume design, and rehearsal under the guidance of content advisors, costumers, and project leadership to ensure historical accuracy

and cultural respect. Visitors will experience immersive storytelling that brings these figures vividly to life, connecting Silver City's history to the present.

The Living History Program promises to educate, engage, and inspire, giving residents and visitors alike the chance to meet the people behind Silver City's enduring legacy. Keep an eye on upcoming performances to witness history in motion.

## WILL Celebrates 20 Years of Lifelong Learning

In early 2005, three Silver City lifelong learners met to brainstorm on the idea of creating a "Lifelong Learning Institute" in



Grant County. Soon six other folks joined the group and hammered out all the specifics of a learning institute. Three of those individuals met with Dr. John Counts, then President of WNMU, to present

their program. Dr. Counts response was, "Great idea! Let's do it!"—and Western Institute of Lifelong Learning (WILL) was born!

Over the past 20 years, WILL has grown from 36 members offered 3 courses in the spring of 2006, to 340 members and 72 Courses offered in the spring of 2025. In fact, WILL currently offers over 150 courses per year—2,838 courses since its founding!

Until quite recently, WILL followed its original mandate as an organization created by, run by, and facilitated by volunteers. But as membership, course offerings, and technology requirements grew, WILL hired staff to support operations. Both our executive director and technology support coordinator are funded by WNMU. Once just an independent learning opportunity for Grant County residents, WILL is now the official Lifelong Learning Institute for WNMU.

In May 2026, WILL celebrates its 20th Anniversary. Throughout 2026, WILL is hosting monthly celebrations to commemorate two decades of service to the residents of Grant County. Scan the QR code for dates and details.



The Western Institute for Lifelong Learning Advisory Board in 2009, three years after WILL's founding. (Back row, from left) Mary Ann Buckley, Jeannie Miller, Frost McGahey, Helen Lemal, Frank Merritt, Mary Hotvedt, and Bill Baldwin. (Front row, from left) Linday Kay Jones, Patty Reed, and Kathie Gilbert.

## Programs and Events

**Tapestry of Traditions:**  
A Celebration of the Season

**Saturday December 13 | 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**  
**Silver City Museum**

Join us for the Silver City Museum's expanded holiday celebration. This free, family-friendly event celebrates the winter traditions that unite us in community.

Explore the heritage that makes our community special with activities for all ages. Members of the Chiricahua Apache Nation will share traditional winter stories, and you can watch demonstrations of *tamalada*—the communal tamale-making tradition passed down through generations. The Silver Ringtones will perform Christmas carols, and at the Community Hearth, you'll find Victorian Christmas favorites like warm cider and cookies alongside traditional seasonal foods including tamales, biscochitos, meat pies, dumplings, struffoli, and pies.

Children can make bird seed ornaments with the Bird Alliance of Southwest New Mexico, create wishes for the Tree of Wishes, make mini tapestries and luminarias, get their faces painted, and try the Bird Wheel of Fortune. Every visitor can contribute to the Community Tapestry Project by decorating a cloth square with their holiday memories and traditions. Father Christmas will hand out books from Literacy Link Leamos, and a Holiday Market features local food vendors and artisan crafts.

Admission and activities are free, with food vendors and crafts available for purchase.

**New Exhibit Opening**

**A Place in History:**  
**The Legacy of the Ailman House**

**Saturday December 13 | 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**  
**Silver City Museum**

This new long-term exhibit explores how the building that houses the Silver City Museum has been continuously reshaped by the community it serves. Built in 1881 as a banker's mansion, the structure has transformed through nearly 135 years of use—each era leaving its mark on the architecture, grounds, and community.

Through photographs, artifacts, stories, visitors can trace these layers of history and discover how a single building absorbed the needs of multiple generations. The exhibit reveals what these transformations tell us about Silver City itself and why this site has remained central to community life from the 1880s to today.

# Collections

## More Than a Building: Personal Artifacts Reveal Museum's Family History

By Ashley Smith,  
Registrar & Collections Manager

Before the beautiful Mansard-roofed house became the Silver City Museum, it was a private home occupied by two families: the Ailmans and the Hobarts. Their lives, stories, and some of their personal items have been recorded by the museum and will soon be part of a new exhibition.

When each family departed, they took their worldly possessions with them, so the few pieces we have made their way back to Silver City through the generosity of their descendants. One special item had been left in the house's walls for us to find during renovation, and another was a piece of the house since it was built. Let me highlight four items from these families featured in our upcoming exhibition about the house and the people who made it a home.

The house was built by H.B. Ailman, who owned and operated a general store, bank, and mine here in Silver City along with his partner H.M. Meredith. Ailman and Meredith built twin homes in 1881, with the Meredith home standing on what is now the corner of Arizona and Broadway. The building was later moved onto Cooper Street and is unrecognizable today, but that is another story. After financial issues, the two men parted ways, and the Ailmans left Silver City for Los Angeles. In 2006, George Ailman, a descendant of H.B. and his wife Theora, donated a heavy train pocket watch and a German language Bible to the museum. The watch is noted to have belonged to H.B., as is the Bible. Ailman was of German ancestry, so the Bible is most likely a family piece, as it is dated from the 1780s.

In 1892, Daniel Calvin Hobart and his wife Theodora Lopez Ott Hobart moved into the house. They added onto the west side in 1900. Their only child, Edmund "Eddie" Hobart, was born in 1886 and grew up in the house. Part



of growing up in the house meant spending time in the cupola, which sometimes served as a bedroom and at other times a playroom. During renovations, a note signed by Eddie was found in the walls. It reads, "I may become the greatest (singer) (actor) (ruler) (teacher) (general) (poet) (sculptor) (wiseman) (musician) (chemist) (student) and [illegible] famous, something commercial or otherwise." This is one of the few items we have from the house itself. Another is a finial from the pitched section of the roof on the west side of the house.

One other item comes from the descendants of one of Theodora's seven children from her first marriage to Peter Ott who died in 1883. Theodora married D.C. Hobart in 1885 and most likely brought the rosary along with two miniature portraits of herself as a young woman.

These items represent the lives of the people who lived in the house and remind us that this building has always been more than walls and windows—it has been a place where families dreamed, worked, and built their lives.

# Exhibits

## A Place in History: The Legacy of the Ailman House

By: Tom Oberg,  
Exhibitions Projects Manager

Silver City Museum will open a new permanent exhibition Saturday, December 13, in conjunction with our annual holiday celebration. This exhibit will highlight the museum's place in Silver City's history, investigate the people who have lived and worked at 312 West Broadway, examine the architectural elements of the building, and celebrate the museum's first director and curator, Harry Benjamin.

Titled "A Place in History: The Legacy of the Ailman House," this exhibit will give guests

a sense of place and provide a point of entry into the history of a house that is tightly bound to the history of Silver City and the region. Situated toward the front of the museum, it will add a visual element to the already thorough introduction provided by our front-desk volunteers.

On deck is the development of the hallway by the main office into a space that will highlight and thank our partners, donors, and members. We plan to complete this section by the end of February 2026. The space will also inform guests about museum programming and community events. Next up is an exhibit to celebrate Western Institute for Lifelong

Learning's (WILL) 20-year anniversary. The exhibit will be held in the Besse Gallery and is scheduled to open Saturday, May 2, 2026, running through Sunday, November 1, 2026. Development of this exhibit has just begun, and I look forward to working with the WILL team on what will soon become another important exhibit at the Silver City Museum.

Please remember, this is your museum, and your input is always welcome. Member and visitor feedback is an important component in the development of exhibits, and your contributions are appreciated. For questions or to provide feedback, email [exhibits@silvercitymuseum.org](mailto:exhibits@silvercitymuseum.org).

# December

## **Tapestry of Traditions: A Celebration of the Season**

**Saturday December 13**

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Silver City Museum

Silver City Museum's expanded holiday celebration brings together winter traditions that unite our community.

Chiricahua Apache Nation members will share traditional winter stories. Watch *tamalada* demonstrations and enjoy Christmas carols by the Silver Ringtones. At the Community Hearth, find Victorian Christmas favorites and traditional seasonal foods. Contribute to the Community Tapestry Project. Father Christmas hands out books from Literacy Link Leamos. A Holiday Market features local vendors and crafts.

Free admission and kids' activities.

## **New Exhibit Opening**

**A Place in History: The Legacy of the Ailman House**

**Saturday, December 13**

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Silver City Museum

Visitors can trace the layers of history and discover how the building that houses the Silver City Museum has been continuously reshaped by the community it serves.

This new long-term exhibit explores how the structure has transformed through nearly 135 years of use — each era leaving its mark on the architecture, grounds, and community.

## **Member Appreciation Holiday Shopping**

November 15 – December 31

Silver City Museum Store

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 copy of "Unpacking Silver City."

Ready to Join? Visit [silvercitymuseum.org](http://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!



- All Membership Levels Include**
- 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
- Additional Sponsor Benefits Include**
- 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

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

## **The Silver City Museum**

312 West Broadway  
Silver City, NM 88061

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# The Mansardian

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