



GUAJALOTES, ZOPILOTES, Y PAISANOS

Newsletter of the Hillsboro Historical Society

November 2009

Volume 2 Number 4

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 3, 2009 HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by president Shaw.

Board members present were Ike Wilton, Stretch Luna, Paul Torres, Larry Cosper, Sonya Rutledge, Patti Nunn, and Matti Nunn. Also present was Patricia Woodruff, acting as recording secretary.

Patricia introduced our two guests, Rebecca Holgarth and Bob Barnes.

We postponed minutes and financial report in order to address the subject of the courthouse. Larry and Sonya needed to leave early for chorus practice, and we wanted both of them present for any decision being made. Harley reported on a conversation he had with Bob Boze Bell, owner of True West Magazine. Mr. Bell stated that the True West Preservation Society was definitely on board to help raise purchase money for the courthouse. However, they had been caught in the current financial crunch and probably weren't going to be able to mount a fundraising campaign until after March, 2010. Harley also reported on email correspondence he had with Alan Bojorquez, who had suggested that we might pursue a lease/purchase agreement with Jim Sullivan in order to tie the courthouse property up until the preservation society could begin to help. This would also place us in better position to begin survey and stabilization work on the site and, possibly, seek grants. Sonja suggested that we make an offer of \$80,000 with \$10,000 down and \$2500/year as a lease/purchase agreement to last for three years. Larry moved that we proceed with this offer, and give Harley authority to negotiate. Paul seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Larry reported that no progress had been made on the fire truck. He also noted that Chris Adams had found a host of Hillsboro photographs at the new State Historic Museum in Santa Fe. Many of these are portraits of children and are dated. They can be viewed online. He also noted that a Wheeler expedition map from the 1870s of our area is in that museum.

We returned to our agenda. Paul moved we waive reading them and accept. Patti accepted. Vote was unanimous.

Stretch gave a brief financial report and requested approval of the board to post the quarterly report on the community bulletin board. He felt that this was important for transparency in the community. The board felt no motion was necessary and told Stretch to proceed. Paul moved we accept the financial report as presented and Matti seconded. All ayes.

Patty and Harley informed the board that our archives are now in a file cabinet in the library and that keys are available in the library. Use of the archives will be restricted to the reading room, but files can be copied for use of researchers.

Harley noted that Jay had resigned from the board.

The Cemetery committee reported no new activity.

Patty commented that she would like the board to find a new recording secretary to take minutes. Harley agreed to contact one individual who was recommended.

Fundraising events for the upcoming year were discussed, with Patty Woodruff saying that she would not manage a music festival but would rather put her time into a home tour. Ike said he and Mary Wilton would discuss possibilities for a music festival.

The next meeting was set for February 2, 2010.

Meeting adjourned approximately 7:45 PM.

Hillsboro Historical Society
Balance Sheet
November 30, 2009

ASSETS

Current Assets

CASH ON HAND	\$	60.00
REGULAR CHECKING ACCT		450.28
Savings Account		5.00
SPECIAL ACCOUNT-Courthouse		20,578.55
Truck Maintenance Account		100.00

Total Current Assets		21,193.83
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Property and Equipment

AUTOMOBILES/ANTIQUE		1,800.00
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Total Property and Equipment		1,800.00
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Other Assets

ORGANIZATION COSTS		30.00
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Total Other Assets		30.00
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Total Assets	\$	23,023.83
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LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL

Current Liabilities

Other Taxes Payable	\$	(3.37)
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Total Current Liabilities		(3.37)
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Long-Term Liabilities

Total Long-Term Liabilities		0.00
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Total Liabilities		(3.37)
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Capital

Retained Earnings		8,807.83
Net Income		14,219.37

Total Capital		23,027.20
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Total Liabilities & Capital	\$	23,023.83
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HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL

Excerpted from manuscript by Patricia P. Sze, Ph. D.
Written for National Register of Historic Places

December, 1992

Hillsboro, once the center of a rich gold and silver mining district, is located in the valley of the Percha Creek which drains from the mountains on the west to the Rio Grande. The town lies south of the creek itself, primarily along three main streets running roughly east to west through the valley, and is bounded by steep ridges on the north and south. The high school lies on the north slope of the south ridge commanding a view of the townsite and the north ridge beyond.

The region which became Sierra County had few settlements until the discovery of major metal deposits in the late 1870s and the construction of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway line from Albuquerque south to El Paso which passed through the county east of the Rio Grande. Although Sierra became one of the leading metal producing counties in New Mexico, population growth remained slow. The 1890 population of 3630 had only increased to 4619 by 1920. Among New Mexico counties in 1921 Sierra ranked twenty-first in area; twenty-seventh both in population and number of people per square mile; twenty-eighth in number of pupils and twenty-ninth in number of teachers.¹

Hillsboro began as a mining camp after gold was discovered in 1877 in the nearby Black Range and became the center of a rich mining district. By 1880 the town had a post office, saloons, mercantile establishments, and a population of about 300. In 1887 an optimistic town plat was filed anticipating a sizable increase in population. The Hillsboro mining district produced gold, silver, copper, lead, vanadium, and manganese; the value of production before 1904 was about \$6,750,000. When Sierra County was organized in 1884 from sections of Socorro, Grant, and Doña Ana Counties, Hillsboro was a natural choice for the location of the county seat, and an impressive brick courthouse was built eight years later.

Although subject to the boom and bust cycles which characterized the mining industry generally, Hillsboro remained a center of ranching and banking, and was able to attract a more diverse population including lawyers who needed to be near the judicial center of the county. In 1922 the county high school was built in Hillsboro.

Competition for the county seat had begun as early as 1909 when commercial interests in Cutter, located on the ATSF, made an unsuccessful bid for its relocation to their community. Laws requiring wide margins for the passage of measures attempting to move county seats defeated subsequent attempts until 1936 when the town of Hot Springs² finally took the county seat by a referendum vote of 1012 to 572. The county court house at Hillsboro was sold and largely dismantled, its bricks and fixtures sold for

¹ Charles F. Coan, *A History of New Mexico I*, 565.

² Hot Springs, located 33 miles northeast of Hillsboro and renamed Truth or Consequences in 1950, developed near mineral springs which drew health seekers after the building of the railroad. The Elephant Butte Dam, constructed from 1911 through 1916, created a large lake which grew into a center for commerce and recreation in the region. By 1920 there were 544 inhabitants at Hot Springs; ten years later, the number had grown to 1336. During the 1930s, the population again more than doubled making Hot Springs the largest community in the county.

other uses. By 1940 the population of Hillsboro had decreased to 350. Today, Hillsboro, an unincorporated village with a population of about 100, attracts artists and the retired, as well as vacationers.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEW MEXICO

Tax-supported public education was slow to develop in New Mexico. In the Spanish and Mexican Periods, education had been the province of the church. Although school codes were passed by the legislature during the Territorial Period (1846-1912), they were underfunded and largely theoretical; education remained primarily a matter for religious, private, or local initiative. In 1870 78.5% of the population over age ten was illiterate.³ By legislation passed 1884, education was organized at the county level. The commissioners of each county were to appoint a superintendent of schools and each voting precinct was constituted a school district. A Territorial school system was legislatively organized in 1891 to be supported for the first time by public taxation. A Territorial board of education and a superintendent⁴ of public instruction were to exercise overall supervision of the public schools. Nevertheless, schools remained effectively decentralized until after statehood in 1912, and progress was slow particularly in less populated areas. In 1894, 16 teachers were working in the 15 school districts of Sierra County. Out of a total enrollment of 636 students, the average daily attendance was 331.

Rural schools as well as those in unincorporated towns were under the direct control of a county board of education and a county superintendent. Incorporated towns were independent districts unto themselves governed by a local rather than a county board. Under a law passed by the first state legislature and amended in 1913, counties could by special election establish one or more county high schools supported by a general county tax and available at no cost to all children living in the county. After the law was repealed in 1923, district or union high schools, organized by groups of districts, replaced county high schools.

The first legislature under statehood also provided for the first time that practical subjects, such as home economics and agriculture would be taught in public schools. This effort was increased after 1917 by cooperation of the Federal government under the Smith-Hughes Act of Congress.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Because Hillsboro was not near a railroad, most buildings were constructed of locally available materials, primarily adobe, fieldstone and bricks manufactured from the ore-smelting slag. The Spanish-Pueblo style predominated with linear floor plans and flat roofs that were later supplanted by metal gables. Architect-designed buildings were few and reserved for major structures.

The Mission style was brought to New Mexico in the early part of the twentieth century from California by the railroad in the design of depots, hotels, and restaurants, and became widely used for homes, churches (often remodelings), and public buildings including schools.

The nineteenth century educational reform movement had promoted classroom dimensions of about 25' X 35', a size appropriate to the range of the human voice, and

³ Reeve, *History of New Mexico II*, 278.

⁴ *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, 112.

rooms that were lighted by a large panel of windows on only one wall to prevent the glare that was supposed to result when light came in from two directions.⁵ When the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction commissioned the Nebraska firm of Johnston Brothers to prepare *Plans and Specifications for Small School Buildings*, including plans for one, two, three, and four-room schools in adobe, brick, and wood frame, the plan for a 4-room adobe was in the Mission style.⁶ The plan, which is designed to face either north or south, reflects current thinking on school design in the size of classrooms and placement of classroom windows in banks on one wall.

The firm Trost and Trost, which designed the Hillsboro High School, was founded by Henry Charles Trost (1860-1933) in El Paso, Texas, in 1903. The leading architects working in southern and central New Mexico in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Trosts used all the major architectural idioms of the period including the Mission and Pueblo Revivals and the Prairie style. The firm designed a total of at least five hundred buildings, including homes as well as major commercial and civic commissions, and more than 240 school buildings. In New Mexico, the Trosts established the campus plan and designed buildings at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped in Alamogordo; they also designed buildings at the University of New Mexico and Western New Mexico University, and were responsible for numerous elementary and secondary school buildings.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Trost graduated from art school at seventeen and, after working as an architectural draftsman, came west to Colorado in 1880. He set up an office in Pueblo the following year and began to practice architecture. From about 1888 to 1896 he was back in the Midwest, working in Chicago as an ornamental metal designer, and then came west again to work in Colorado and Tucson, Arizona, before establishing the firm of Trost and Trost in El Paso with his brother, Gustavus Adolphus Trost.

The Trost plans for the Hillsboro High School resemble in basic form the Johnston 4-room adobe school, a U-shaped plan in which two classrooms flank an open courtyard and a common area, in this case a cloakroom, which is at the back of the courtyard. Two of the four classrooms are entered from the courtyard and two from the cloakroom. The Trosts appear to have refined and amplified this basic plan. The four classrooms were placed in two more unified blocks with a common entrance from the courtyard. The banks of classroom windows have been moved from the east and west facades to the north and south. A pergola has been omitted. The principal's office has been added at the back of the courtyard. In place of the cloakroom, a large auditorium extends well beyond the back of the classrooms.

HISTORY OF THE HILLSBORO SCHOOL

In 1920, Hillsboro had a population of 829 and a public elementary school serving 136 students, 80 of whom were Hispanic.⁷ In the county seat election held in December, Hillsboro prevailed only because Hot Springs failed to win the necessary 60% of the vote,

⁵ *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, 112.

⁶ Johnston, *Plans and Specifications for Small School Buildings*, 40-42.

⁷ *Sierra County Advocate*, December 10, 1920.

though the count was 809 to 908 in favor of Hot Springs.⁸ The following June, the school board engaged Mr. Martin Richardson, a resident of Hatch and graduate of Mississippi College, as principal of the Hillsboro Public School, and sought to hire a high school teacher as his assistant. Work began on a new adobe room to be added to the elementary school for high school work.⁹

The new high school room was ready by the fall school term. Nineteen students were taught the first three grades (ten in the ninth, nine in the tenth, and three in the eleventh) by Mr. Richardson and Katherine James. This was reported to be the only high school work being done in Sierra County.¹⁰ At the same time, a campaign was launched for a full county high school at Hillsboro at the Teachers' Institute held there that fall. A petition was circulated and a high school campaign committee raised funds with a chicken dinner, cake walk, and the like.¹¹

A county election held in November sanctioned the building of a county high school by a vote of 555 for and 261 against. A \$12,000 bond issue passed in Hillsboro 133 to 11 the following March.¹² J. Trost and Trost drew up the plans in May. H. B. Bundy of Las Cruces received the contract to build the school, and Roy Graham was appointed supervisor of construction.¹³ In June, the County Board of Education purchased from M. D. Apodaca lots 5 and 11 of Block 6 of the townsite of Hillsboro and from J. G. McPherson lots (among others) 4 and 7 of the same block.¹⁴ In July work began on making 20,000 adobes and excavating the foundation.¹⁵

The Hillsboro County High School was ready for occupancy in October of 1922. Thirty-nine students enrolled that fall. Although the majority were from Hillsboro, they also included four students from Monticello, four from Kingston, one each from other Sierra County communities such as Derry, Nutt, Lake Valley, Arrey, and Caballo.¹⁶ Mr. Richardson, the first principal, is said to have traveled the county encouraging students to enroll. Students from nearby ranches traveled to school on horseback. Some families rented or purchased homes in Hillsboro so that their children could attend high school. Other students from distant locations boarded in the village and by 1925 a "bachelor hall" was furnished for the convenience of self-supporting students. It sometimes happened that students were older than their teachers.¹⁷

The school was placed on the corner of 1st Avenue and Elenora Street, near the red-brick County Courthouse and Union Church (both Built 1892), impressive buildings which also look out over the village from the south ridge. The building consisted of four classrooms, one of which was dedicated to domestic science, the centrally placed principal's office, and large auditorium. The auditorium contained fixed seats and a floor that slanted downwards toward an elevated stage that was 12" deep and included two

⁸ Ibid., December 3 and 10, 1920.

⁹ Ibid., June 3 and 10, 1920.

¹⁰ Ibid., September 9 and 16, 1921.

¹¹ Ibid., October 21, 1921; November 4, 1921.

¹² Ibid., November 11, 1921; March 23, 1922; March 31, 1922.

¹³ Ibid., July 7, 1922; July 28, 1922; Trost and Trost, Architects and Engineers. "School Building, Hillsboro, New Mexico: First Floor Plan and Front Elevation," May 1922.

¹⁴ Sierra County Deeds, G:136, 129.

¹⁵ *Sierra County Advocate*, July 7, 1922.

¹⁶ Ibid., September 8, 1922.

¹⁷ Nave, interview. Thwaites, "History of the Hillsboro High School." "Sierra County High School. Announcements 1925."

dressings rooms. A curtain that could be drawn across the full stage contained advertising for local merchants.

Classes were taught by four faculty members, one of whom also served as the principal. Mr. Richardson, the first principal, was known as "the Professor." Other first-year faculty were Katherine James, Mildred, Rea, and Leroy Graham, who was replaced in March by Professor Tom Davenport.¹⁸ Mrs. James taught domestic arts. By December, her class was ready to give a public exhibition in the domestic science room.¹⁹ In May of 1923 the first class to graduate from the Hillsboro County High School consisted of 4 boys and 4 girls.²⁰ Subsequent graduating classes ranged from about three to about ten members and seem most often to have numbered around 6 or 7.

In 1925 the school still could claim to be the only building in the county used exclusively for high school work. The curriculum was divided among the four teachers as follows. The Superintendent, C. V. Koogler, taught mathematics; Clay W. Vaden taught commercial work; Bessie E. French, home economics and high school physiology; and Reva Newman, English and History. Special pride was taken in the school library, which contained more than 400 books ranging from "inspirational and instructive biographies and auto-biographies," reference works including several "authentic" encyclopedias, and "the very best of Classical and modern fictionalists." More than half of the books were secured through money raised by teachers and students and by generous donations.²¹

A commercial department was established that year to teach shorthand, typing, and the like. A dramatic arts club which included the entire student body and faculty was formed and presented several productions in the school auditorium. The manual education class made furniture and helped with the stage and new typewriting room. All girls belonged to the Home Economics Club where they gained "knowledge of the wise expenditure of money, time and energy, and of the care of children and the ability to secure service from others." The school fielded both a girls' and a boys' basketball team. The boys won nearly half their games although most were played with larger schools.²²

Generally each of the four teachers was assigned to one of the classrooms. In the early years history was taught in the front room on the east and English in the room behind. On the west the front room was used for science and that behind was designed for home economics. The area where the rest rooms are presently located was the typing and shorthand classroom. The auditorium was used for dramatic productions, school holiday programs, graduations, and other functions of both the secondary and elementary schools; as well as community activities such as political gatherings and speeches, and funerals too large for the local churches.²³

Teachers were hired by the local school board. Exemplary conduct was required of them: no smoking, drinking or unladylike behavior was tolerated. Early on female teachers could not be married as pregnancy might interrupt their teaching responsibilities. Single teachers paid for a board and room with local families. In addition to their

¹⁸ *Sierra County Advocate*, September 1, 1922; March 16, 1923.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, December 22, 1922.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, May 25, 1923.

²¹ "Sierra County High School, Announcements 1925."

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Thwaites, 4.

academic duties, teachers were also responsible for extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, drama, dances, and picnics.²⁴

The Hillsboro High School continued in operation until about 1940.²⁵ High school students were thereafter bused to Hot Springs and the building turned to elementary school use until about 1970. The property had been conveyed to the Truth or Consequences Municipal Schools in 1958 pursuant to the consolidation of Sierra County rural school districts.²⁶ In 1970, the Truth or Consequences Municipal Schools quitclaimed the high school property to the "Hillsboro Community Club" on the condition that it operate under an approved charter and be properly incorporated. The property is to be used as a community building and will revert to the legal ownership of the Truth or Consequences Schools if the Hillsboro Community Club ceases to exist, or fails to abide by its charter, and/or fails to remain legally incorporated.²⁷ Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State Corporation Commission on June 22, 1972.²⁸

At present the building is a community center. The sloped auditorium floor and the stage have been removed; the building is otherwise without major alterations. It is used for such activities and community meetings to discuss matters of local concern, the Hillsboro School Reunion, New Mexico endowment for the Humanities programs, art exhibits, community celebrations and memorial observances, wedding parties, and a wide variety of gatherings by different groups. The front classroom on the east holds the town library.

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Hillsboro High School represents a major step in the history of education in Sierra County where it was the first building constructed exclusively as a 4-year high school. Having few alterations, it illustrates the best in small school design in early twentieth-century New Mexico as executed by Trost and Trost, the leading architectural firm working in the region.

The Hillsboro High School was entered in the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties as a contributing resource of the Hillsboro Historic District on October 24, 1986.

REFERENCES

²⁴ Ibid. 3.

²⁵ According to the report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1938-1940, 22, the high school at Hillsboro was suspended in 1939. However, a class of 4 graduated in 1940 and in the same year the dean of Eastern New Mexico College ranked Hillsboro High School among the first four high schools in New Mexico with less than ten graduates sending the highest percentage to college. (*Sierra County Advocate*, May 17, 1940; Graduation program, Hillsboro High School, 1940; unidentified newspaper clipping, 1940; Geronimo Springs Museum, Hillsboro High School Collection.) The roster of rural teachers for Sierra County published in the fall of 1941 listed only a principal for Hillsboro High School (*Sierra County Advocate*, October 3, 1941). In the summer of 1942 the school system advertised a transportation route to convey high school students from Hillsboro to Hot Springs (*Sierra County Advocate*, August 21, 1942.)

²⁶ Deed of Conveyance, May 1958. Copy in the files of the Historic Preservation Division.

²⁷ Quitclaim Deed, September 17 1970. Copy in the files of the Historic Preservation Division.

²⁸ Articles of Incorporation of Hillsboro Community Center. Copy in the files of the Historic Preservation Division.

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INTERVIEWS

Garcia, Andy. November 30, 1992.

Lett, Emma. November 30, 1992.

Naves, Ruby. December 2, 1992.

Thwaites, Nell. September 17, 1992.

Because of our ongoing effort to purchase the Sierra County Courthouse and Jail, I had hoped to include an article about the site in this newsletter. But its history seems so overshadowed by the Fountain murder trial that little has been written regarding other noteworthy events and people associated with courthouse or jail. Short of going through old courthouse records or old newspapers, I'm at a loss regarding how to get this done. In reading, I've discovered intriguing tidbits that might be worth follow up:

What jobs did Frank Bojorquez hold in the courthouse? Bojorquez was considered the best horseman and cowboy to ever work in our area, and he held positions of responsibility in Sierra County later in life. We need a good biography of the man.

Eugene Manlove Rhodes made at least one appearance here for a legal transgression. What was the reason and the outcome? Also, did Rhodes participate in the trial of Oliver Lee? Vague tradition holds that he didn't attend. Michael Farmer's entertaining new fictional history of the trial gives Rhodes a significant role.

Undoubtedly other interesting characters "boarded" at the jail now and then. Where are the stories.

How about the Lake Valley War. What happened at the trial that resulted from that conflict. Were there any interesting game violations tried here? Who was an early game warden?

Who were the early Sheriffs in the county?

When Hillsboro was still incorporated, did it have a town constable? Who?

How about the trial of the woman who poisoned her husband?

And it doesn't all have to be negative. What might have been significant marriages here?

I'm thinking everyone interested in local history has a good story. We'd like to begin to include them here. We've only scratched the surface.