

# Guajalotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos

Newsletter of the Hillsboro Historical Society

May 2014. Volume 7 Number 2



Margaret Armer Reid--Woman ahead of her time

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## From the President

About 12 years ago a small group of us decided that we needed to do something to preserve the rich history of our area and to educate those who are not aware of Hillsboro's role. We formed the "Hillsboro Courthouse Preservation Society" later to become the present "Hillsboro Historical Society", a recognized 501.3C organization. As the name implies our first endeavor was to purchase and preserve the Courthouse site, to prevent further deterioration and vandalism. So far we have not succeeded in purchasing this property, however, we have not lost our determination and desire to preserve the Courthouse and as much of the history of the area as possible. We have expanded our efforts to include the stories, artifacts and real estate as they become available. We have raised over \$25,000 and continue our fund raising efforts to eventually establish a permanent Museum. To date our most successful fund raiser has been the reenactment of the "Fountain Murder Trial". We have been very fortunate to have many new and old faces join us in our efforts. Each person brings new energy and ideas to further our mission and are much appreciated.

Currently we have rented a location on Main St. in the old Hatcher Hotel. Therein we maintain a rotating educational display of artifacts and a gift shop with many books and souvenir items. Our goals have not changed and we welcome your participation and ideas. Please come by the shop or contact anyone on the HHS Board to share your ideas. We are open Friday-Sunday 11-4.  
Sonja Rutledge

## Comments, HHS Reports and News

### Activities

Perhaps the latest and most exciting news is our new display in the Education Center. Steve and Janie Dobrott have set up a great new display on the history of Ladder Ranch. Ladder Ranch has been a major player in our regional history. In May, we had our second annual tour of the ranch and its headquarters, led by Steve Dobrott. This was, again, a success and netted \$1052.48.

In keeping with our current Ladder Ranch theme, Steve and Janie Dobrott have set up the Ladder Ranch history display in the Education Center. We are planning an opening for the show on June 7, 2014. The Education Center floor has been repainted with a Navajo rug theme. Janie Dobrott created the design, and Melody Sears, Jan Haley, and Becky Porter did the painting. We are deeply indebted to members of the community who are stepping up to help the Historical Society succeed. We want to thank Steve Elam for coordinating a supper and tour provided by the Kingston Mason's of the the Mason's building in Hillsboro. All of us enjoyed seeing the interior of this fine old historic building. Steve is currently going through the files and log books of the lodge and plans to write its history. A copy of this will be made available to HHS.

We also want to thank Brian and Nikki O'Dell for hosting Dr. Dennis O'Toole's entertaining program about the history of Monticello and Los Alamos Creek.

Sherry Fletcher of T or C gave a presentation about a New Mexico State initiative to improve roadside historic markers and to create new ones featuring significant women in New Mexico History. She suggested that a marker for Margaret Armer-Reid of Kingston would be appropriate and might be taken on as a project

for HHS. Our newsletter has acknowledged the Reid goat operation in the past, and our feature article in this issue provides a more information on Mrs. Reid.

## **Business**

In March, the Hillsboro Historical Society board voted to eliminate terms for board members. Those elected to the board will serve until they resign or are removed for inactivity. This decision was made because the previous system of staggered terms was not working. Keeping track of individual member terms became extremely complicated, and annual elections were becoming too time consuming. New board members will be elected as openings occur.

Joe Ficklin was elected to replace Robin Tuttle on the board. Marg Stewart was elected board secretary.

The playgroup has held its first meeting in preparation for doing the Fountain Trial reenactment again next Labor Day. Most of the actors are willing to do a repeat.

Albert Sanchez completed the engine swap in the old fire truck. He will work on the brakes next. Once the truck is safe to move, it will be brought back to Hillsboro and members will work on its exterior.

Barbara Lovell is beginning to work on an annual antique show for Hillsboro. This may replace the Fountain Trial reenactment once the play has run its course. If demand for the play continues, the it might be moved to the Memorial Day weekend. Planning is ongoing here.

## **Feature Article**

### **A Woman Ahead of Her Time**

Last month, HHS hosted a presentation by Sherry Fletcher. Sherry talked about the lack of information and mis-information on, and inappropriate placement of, New Mexico's historic roadside markers. The initial thrust of her talk was to demonstrate that our roadside markers almost never provide information about the subject portrayed on the marker head. This portion of the talk was entertaining, but it was not Sherry's main purpose for speaking.

Her main message dealt with the New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative. This Initiative was founded in 2005 by members of the New Mexico Women's Forum in a statewide effort to recognize women's contributions to New Mexico history on the state's Scenic and Historic Markers. The initiative ensures that women's diverse histories will be acknowledged. The 2006 Legislature funded the project. Sherry suggested that at least one woman in our area deserved a roadside marker: Mrs. Margaret Armer.

As editor of this newsletter, I'm proud to note that we have already brought attention to Mrs. Armer, as well as at least two other females in her family in a past issue (November 2011: Life on North Percha through three generations. Mary Reid and Bobbi Ostler). Since then, I've grown increasingly aware of Mrs. Armer's amazing accomplishments. Given Sherry's pitch for markers for women, I suggest that we would be hard pressed to find a more deserving person than Margaret McEvoy Reid-Armer (1864-1933).

Discussing Mrs. Armer provides me with an opportunity to air (once again) one of my favorite irritations regarding history of the American West. On the whole, we're so enamored with our gunslingers, lawmen, outlaws, and military or political misfits that the quiet, work-a-day folks who made the country go unnoticed. Even our women's histories tend to favor madams and prostitutes; witness our only two books about local ladies--Sadie Orchard and Millie. Don't get me wrong, their stories are interesting, but neither of them can hold a candle to the lifetime accomplishments of Mrs. Armer. Fortunately, she was recognized by a few writers in her lifetime, so we have a record worth bringing forth here and now.

Photos and stories used here are from the Sherry Fletcher Collection and are reproduced with her permission.

## **Mrs. Margaret Armer--Queen of the Angora ranges wins many prizes on her stock at the World's Fair**

By Countess Anne de Montago

From *The American Woman's Review*. November, 1904—a profitable industry for women.

White and fleecy, fine as silk, lively as crickets, is the herd of Angora goats on exhibition at the World's Fair from New Mexico, to prove to the world that the pluck of a woman, though she be left widowed and poor, is equal to the task of achieving fortune when intelligently applied to opportunities. These Angoras belong to Mrs. Margaret Armer of Kingston, Sierra County, N.M. who has made a handsome fortune in goat raising. She is the queen of the Angora ranges of the great Southwest. Veteran cattlemen from all sections take off their hats to her, both figuratively and literally, and well they may, for Mrs. Armer has just been awarded nine prize ribbons on her magnificent stock on exhibition at the Fair. And not only on her goats did she win honors and distinction, but she is the happy possessor of the World's Fair gold medal for the best display of mohair.

Upon leaving St. Louis she will take her herd to the Royal Stock show at Kansas City, where she will no doubt add to her laurels.

A dozen years ago, Mrs. Armer was left a widow, with six small children. Her husband, a miner at Saw

### **Sierra Woman Queen Of Mohair Industry Throughout World**

Pit Gulch, left her this flock of little ones and a small herd of milch goats, with a home just big enough to accommodate the children and the goats. Those were the early days of the Angora in this country. In Turkey, Italy, and other European and oriental countries this breed of goat for ages has been highly esteemed for meat and milk purposes. Importation to America was slow, but from time to time, a small herd found its way to the West. When Mr. Armer died, his family was using the goats merely to supply milk and meat for the household. The widow conceived the idea that she might cultivate the goat industry for the creation of an income to maintain her family. In other words, as Pat Mulvaney, a neighboring miner, expressed it:

"Th' wider has two koinds of kids, begorry, an' she says, says she, 'Oi'll make th' goat kids support th' child kids, Oi will."

The Widow Armer was remarkably resourceful. She possessed a mind that looked into the future and measured the possibilities. For a time she sold goat milk and cheese, and now and then a kid—of the goat species—for roasting purposes; for be it known that a suckling kid of the Angora sort is deemed as great a delicacy as is the famous roast pig of which Charles Lamb wrote so happily. Adult goat also makes excellent edible meat, and it is whispered that much of the so-called mutton now on the market is merely goat disguised under another name on account of the prejudices against goat meat, which still obtains in certain American quarters.

### **INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN**

Little by little Mrs. Armer was able to increase her goat herd. As the herd grew, the usefulness of the animal increased. He became valuable as a fleece product, textile manufacturers using more and more of the long, silken Angora fleece for the making of mohair. There was a terrible drought on the southwestern plains and this was utilize to advantage by Mrs. Armer, inasmuch as she slaughtered her goats by the hundreds when the streams dried up and the cattle died. Goats thrive on little moisture and the steaks and chops and roasts from the Armer ranch took the place of beef.

Gradually Mrs. Armer's ranch grew larger, until she has acquired a considerable area of land admirably adapted to goat raising. Angoras delight in eating underbrush and small trees. In fact, so strongly does their appetite turn in this direction that in many sections they are now employed in clearing land. After a



herd of these goats has thoroughly browsed over of piece of rough country there is not much work left for the grub-axe and scythe. Thus the Angora becomes a pioneer of civilization in a new country.

Mrs. Armer began buying pedigreed goats with her surplus earnings. There was a big goat show at Kansas City, where Mrs. Armer's Toto won the first prize. This is one of the fancy goats at the World's Fair. Another is Royal Stock, a doe worth \$500, who was bred at the Armer ranch. Pasha Columbia, is another of the prize bucks of the Exposition exhibits.

## **Historic Armer Ranch To Be Site Of Passport In Time Investigation**

The busy season on the goat ranch is from January to June, the first half of which is shearing time. Even Mrs. Armer lends a hand in this work. At present the shearing is done by hand, but the herd has increased to such proportions that Mrs. Armer has contracted for a shearing apparatus run by steam, which will be installed by next season.

From March to June is the kidding season. To bring up the kids, eternal vigilance is required. A goat kid is not noted for common sense. He must be tethered to a peg in the ground until he has sense enough to recognize his own mother, who visits him twice a day to give him sustenance. The kids are delicate creatures, and unless carefully and scientifically attended to during the first few weeks a large percentage will die. Mrs. Armer studied the problem with intelligence and is able to rear nearly all of the young.

The Armer ranch, which is named "Silver Tip," is ideally located. It is 11,000 feet above sea level and embraces thousands of acres of brush-clad hills, just the proper pasturage for the animals. There is also plenty of water. On the ranch, Mrs. Armer has built a commodious residence. There is an abundance of corrals, pens, and sheds for the shelter of the herd in inclement weather. The Angora has peculiar habits. He likes to travel long distances, eating his way along. As a pedestrian he is without a peer. Goats frequently make a circuit of from fifteen to twenty miles a day, but by 3 o'clock in the afternoon they are usually back at their corral ready to take advantage of the shelter before dark, for the goat is a timid animal and easily frightened at night.

The goat much prefers to sleep on top of his shed or stable, if he can get there. If there is a pile of logs or lumber handy, the herd climbs on top and takes possession. Much care must be taken lest the animals get rheumatism in their leg joints. To avoid such an ailment their corrals and sheds are provided with drainage ditches to run off the moisture.

# Passing of Noted Ranchwoman Reveals Romantic Life

by Alvin Clifford Gage

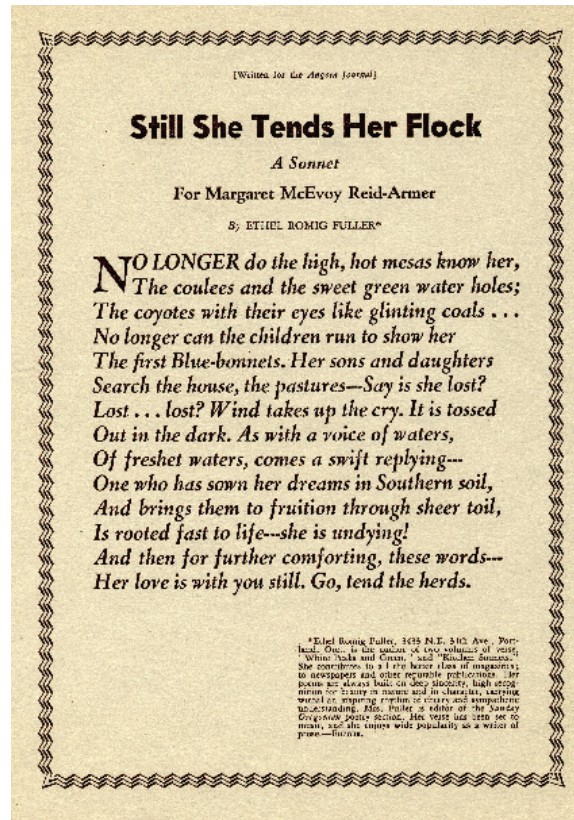
From the January 1934 "Angora Journal."

Telling the life story of Margaret Armer is equivalent to writing the history of mohair development in America. Since 1887, she has been actively engaged in the fleece industry. Truly a pioneer in the highest sense, she came as a young woman, with her engineer husband, Simpson Percy Reid, to settle in Sierra County, New Mexico, where he was interested in mining.

More than fifty years have passed since the 16-year-old bride dared the adventure into the wild mining country, where . . . bands of Indians still made life hazardous on the semi-arid range.

. . . Mrs. Armer wrote from her ranch-house at Kingston, New Mexico, a letter received by the editor of the Angora Journal, Dec. 23, in which she expressed her never failing confidence in the future. The letter reached ther Journal one day after her passing at Los Angeles, Dec. 22. In part, it reads: "The year is about at an end, and no one will weep. Feel sure 1934 is going to be more prosperous. All well here. Feel very much better, myself, and shall go to California tomorrow for the winter. Write me at Los Angeles."

Her son, Bob Reid, wired Dec. 24 from Los Angeles: "Mother died suddenly here Dec. 22. Burial at Kingston." Thus passed a very fine woman, loyal of high spirit and splendid character.



Margaret McEvoy Armer was born on a farm, near Watsonville, Monterey County, California, May 25, 1864, of native American parentage. She married Simpson Percy Reid, of Cerro Gordo, Inyo County, California, Sept. 22, 1879. He was an engineering expert of wide experience, operating mines and smelters, and was a recognized authority on smelting and refractory ores.

From this union were born six children, all surviving their mother: Joseph W. Reid, Henrietta (Mrs. Ben Wilton), Robert W., Percy, Thomas B., and Simpson G. Reid. Mr. Reid died of typhoid at what is now known as the Armer Ranch, March 9, 1892.

The heroic young mother, still in her twenties, faced the future with characteristic fortitude, and with her five boys and one girl developed the career that has made her life an epic in pastoral American history. . .

. . . Mrs. Reid married Leven Edward Armer, at Kingston, New Mexico. From this marriage were born three children: Edith Armer Pankey of Hot Springs, New Mexico; Mary Armer Earwood of Sonora, Texas, and a son, Edward, who died in infancy. . .

## **MUSEUM STORE AND EDUCATION CENTER**



**Hours: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 11am to 4pm.**



**Ladder Ranch Display opens June 7, 2014.**



## Historic Buildings: Masonic Lodge

The Masonic Building was built about 1900. Many of Hillsboro's women and girls sat out the 1914 flood in its upper story, anxiously feeling the building shudder as the waters pressed against it. It held and they survived. One of Hillsboro's top citizens, Sheriff Murphy drowned trying to cross main street to rescue the women. The building still serves as the meeting place for the Kingston Masonic Lodge. The Masons treated Hillsboro Historical Society Directors to a dinner and a tour of the building earlier this spring.

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### MEMBERSHIP

OUR MEMBERSHIPS ARE ON A FEBRUARY 1 TO JANUARY 31 ANNUAL BASIS. ANY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS WE RECEIVE AFTER NOVEMBER 15 WILL BE CONSIDERED 2014 MEMBERSHIPS VALID FROM FEB 1, 2014 TO JANUARY 31, 2015. The Hillsboro Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to collect, preserve and share the history and historical artifacts of the Hillsboro, Kingston and Lake Valley communities in New Mexico. Its membership comprises supporters and volunteers who may choose to participate in many aspects of the Society's mission including fundraising, collection and conservation, oral histories, education and interpretation, special events and programs. Member benefits include the Historical Society quarterly newsletter, priority registration for lectures, summer programs and field trips, and an invitation to our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction. Dues are \$25 annually for individual or family and \$50 for business memberships. Please mail this completed Membership Subscription, along with your check made payable to Hillsboro Historical Society, P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro NM 88042.

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

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City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer interest \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annual (from Feb to Feb) individual or family membership

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annual (from Feb to Feb) business membership that includes ad in newsletter

Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Gift Membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

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We prefer to send the newsletter via email. If we have no email address for members, we will mail them a hard copy.