

Guajalotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos



Turkey



Vulture



Roadrunner

Hillsboro Historical Society
November 2015 Volume 8 Number 4



Beginnings of the Silver Fire as Seen from Hillsboro

What's in a Name—is Hillsborough still the seat of Sierra County?
... and Beginning a Percha watershed time line.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been a special honor for me to serve as President of the Historical Society. I was part of a small group that decided to do something to preserve our history—that was many years ago! It has been rewarding to see HHS grow into what we are today, thanks to a lot of hard working, smart people. It makes me sad to have to resign as President due to health problems. I think it is best for me and the Board— I can't do what I feel is needed. I will stay on the board as long as I feel like I can be of help, and I hope to see HHS grow and continue to preserve our great heritage. Take care and I'll be seeing you. Sonja.

NEWS, COMMENTS, AND ACTIVITIES

The Antique Festival and Historic Home Tour over Labor Day weekend exceeded everyone's expectations. The Community Center filled with antique dealers from all over, and some 63 people toured the historic homes. Thanks to Barb Lovell, Garland Bills and all for organizing the Antique Festival and to Jane Dobrott and Becky Porter for putting the home show together. We also want to thank Herb and Diane Denish, Patsy King, Asa and Becky Porter, Gary Sapp, Craig Springer, Catherine Wanek, Inga and Martin McCord, as well as the two churches for allowing people to view their buildings. In addition, we must thank Kaye & Russ Bowen, Ted Caluwe, Jane Dobrott, Rebecca Halgarth, Gretchen Kerr, Tom & Le Leonard, Marilyn Poitras, Becky Porter, Qate Rice, Billie Jean Rutledge, Harley Shaw, Patty Woodruff, and Sandy Ficklin, all of whom served as docents at particular buildings during the tour. We want especially to express our appreciation to single anonymous buyer who purchased three of the four art pieces during the silent bid auction. The print by Dan Viets Lomahaftewa is still available and has been placed back on sale at the HHS store. If anyone is interested in acquiring it, check in at the store.

Two committees are working on updating bylaws and writing a development plan for HHS. Larry Cospers and Patti Nunn are willing to work on bylaws. Patty Woodruff, who drafted the initial bylaws has also offered to serve on the committee. Barb, Garland, Robbin, and Joe Ficklin have agreed to work on a development plan, with Chuck Barrett as an advisor.

Our Hillsboro welcome sign at the corner of 152 and 27 is needing some touch up. Sue Bason has offered to retouch the painting if HHS will come up with a suitable way to protect it so that it doesn't deteriorate so quickly. Steve Dobrott and Larry are working on ideas to protect it. It is a wonderful improvement over the old sign, and we need to keep it intact.

We're finally moving ahead on the fire truck. Mr. Wayne Terry, who lives near El Paso, has agreed to provide advice, help locate parts, and purchase the parts truck from us. We're working with Wayne on details. In the meantime, we'd like to gather up memories of the fire truck and any photos that anyone might have of it. Contact Harley or any other board member if you have any such materials.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

is Hillsborough still the seat of Sierra County?

By Mark Thompson

Mark Thompson, a frequent contributor to this newsletter, has ancestors from Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. His great, great grandmother Tamezin (Kimball) (Stocker) Dodge, was one generation removed from New Hampshire, the birthplace of her father. Tamezin moved to Hillsboro, New Mexico about 1901 and lived with her daughter, Ninette (Stocker) (Miller) Bird, a long-time Hillsboro Postmaster and business owner. Tamezin died in 1927 and is believed to be buried in the Hillsboro, New Mexico cemetery.

Historians and place name gurus agree that Nicholas Galles, W.H. Weeks, H.H. Eliot and Joe Yankie, four of the miners working the Black Range of northern Doña Ana County, New Mexico, decided to choose a name for their encampment in August of 1877. Maybe they “drew straws” or played a hand of poker, but, one way or another, Joe Yankie got the right to name the settlement for his hometown, Hillsborough, located in Highland County, Ohio, not far from Cincinnati. End of story? Of course not!



Joseph T. Yankie

One version of the Hillsborough, Ohio story was that it was so named in 1807 because of the terrain. The other version is that Hillsborough, Ohio, as with the county in New Hampshire, was named for the British politician, the Earl of Hillsborough. I checked with Jean Wallis, the chief historian of the Highland County Ohio Historical Society, and she is convinced by the evidence that both “Hillsborough” and “Highland County” were named for the “hilly” terrain. Jean Wallis also told me that the U.S. Postal Service decided in 1894 that the name of the town should be “shortened” to Hillsboro, a decision not necessarily to the liking of the Ohio residents.

Hillsborough County was one of the original New Hampshire counties organized in 1771 and one of three named for incumbent ministers in the government of King George III. That sounds like good politics but Lord Hillsborough, the Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1768-1772, was no champion of the American efforts to end the colonial relationship with Britain. New Hampshire was home to many advocates of a split with Britain, so maybe it was just cynical politics. In 1776, 91.6 percent of the eligible male inhabitants of New Hampshire signed a declaration favoring military opposition to the English, officially known as “The Association Test” and considered the first New Hampshire “census.”

Arthur Hill, the great-uncle of the 18th century Earl, had established a fort in County Down, Ireland sometime between 1630 and 1650. At that time the area was known by its Irish name, Cruim-ghlinn, meaning “curved glen” or “crooked valley.” It was an important military outpost on the road from Dublin north to Carrickfergus, today part of the A1 highway. Hill was supporting the English/Scot plantation of Ireland by maintaining order on behalf of the English and Scot settlers, which adds another political element to this story. In 1661, the English changed the name of the town to Hillsborough. Today the mansion built by the Earl of Hillsborough is known as Government House and it is still used by the British royal family and the U.K. government.

Joe Yankie was probably feeling a bit homesick in 1877, perhaps hoping for a few more trees in the wild and scenic landscape of New Mexico, and he may or may not have known of this history of the use of the name Hillsborough in America. As noted, the U.S. Post Service did not change the spelling of Joe Yankie's home town in Ohio until 1894 and his use of the spelling "Hillsborough" for the New Mexico site will be found in the 1880 census. But about 1887, at least I have documents with that date, the spelling "Hillsboro" appears.

When Sierra County was created in 1884, the legislature provided the following: "the county seat of said county of Sierra be and the same is hereby permanently located and established at the town of Hillsborough in said county of Sierra." (Laws 1884, ch. 109, Sec. 3). What is interesting is that this statute is still "the law" and can be found in the current compiled statutes almost exactly as quoted above. (The "be and the same" was dropped.) See section 4-27-3 NMSA 1978. End of story? Of course not, but now the story becomes one that only a lawyer can love!

On November 3, 1936, the voters of Sierra County answered the following question in the affirmative: "Shall the county seat of Sierra County New Mexico be removed from its present location in Hillsboro in said county to the Town of Hot Springs . . .? Yes, the ballot provision spelled it "Hillsboro." It gets better. An action was brought to set aside the election, the plaintiffs arguing, among other things, that the statute clearly said that the county seat was "permanently located and established at Hillsborough." The Supreme Court quoted the statute adopted in 1884 but changed the spelling to "Hillsboro." It then proceeded to hold that permanently did not necessarily mean permanently because the state constitution gave the voters general power to change a county seat (Orchard v. Board of Commissioners of Sierra County, 42 New Mexico Reports p. 172, 1938). I think I heard the Earl of Hillsborough cry out from his grave, "I warned you not to break away from his Majesty's government!"

MUSEUM STORE AND EDUCATION CENTER



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

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A PERCHA CREEK TIMELINE

Harley Shaw and Judy Majoras

In the aftermath of the 2013 Silver Fire, residents of Kingston and Hillsboro spent several months watching anxiously uphill every time clouds formed over the Black Range. Everyone who moves into these villages on the banks of Percha Creek eventually becomes aware of past floods, especially those occurring in 1914 and 1972. Both of these destroyed property and took lives. The Silver fire bared a lot of the Percha Creek watershed, and subsequent presentations by specialists from the U. S. Forest Service and Corp of Engineers made us brutally aware that we were, as one hydrologist put it, “looking uphill at a 140,000 acre Walmart parking lot tilted at a 45 degrees.” Fortunately, except for one frightening surge that did modest damage in Kingston and revealed to resident Jack Stewart how fast he could move uphill, we have yet to experience the predicted post-fire flooding potential. With vegetation returning to the Black Range slopes, perhaps that potential has declined. However, fire or no fire, history tells us that the threat of flooding is always present for our towns.

Truth is, had a modern-day geologist, hydrologist or climatologist accompanied Nicholas Galles, W.H. Weeks, H.H. Eliot and Joe Yankie, and other eastern-bred prospectors who settled Hillsboro, they might have suggested locating the town on the slopes rather than in the creek bottom. No doubt these early settlers looked around at the dry landscape and concluded that deep water would never flow down the rocky Percha Creek bottom. But a long, thoughtful look at the landscapes around the Percha watershed reveals that this has been a pretty violent terrain, and, at times, more water than we can even imagine lay on the land.



Looking downstream from Hillsboro after the 1914 flood.

So, if we want to understand the history of where we live, why not go back as far as we can in time as we can. Why we're here and how we live is definitely affected by those events that formed our landscape millions of years ago.

The earliest rocks showing in our region are sandstones deposited between 300 and 100 million years ago, when the area that we now call southwestern New Mexico alternated between being covered by tropical forests or shallow seas. At that time, the landscape lay within a large continent which straddled the equator. A narrow belt of sandstones deposited during this period can still be seen near the present Gila National Forest boundary.

Between about 80 and 40 million years ago, collision of the continent that became North America with the tectonic plate to the west (the Farallon Plate) compressed the landscape and pushed up mountains made up of these earlier sedimentary deposits. Friction produced by continued subduction of the plates

under the continent from 60 to 20 million years ago caused major volcanic activity. Plate movement shifted from E-W toward a N-S orientation between the continent and the Pacific Plate, creating the San Andreas Fault. In our area, the compressional force reversed and became extensional about 17 million years ago. Weakening of the crust and hot magma fractured the mountains into blocks which tilted and collapsed, leaving the rugged Basin and Range mountains that exist in the western United States today.


Two major geologic features of Southern New Mexico developed during this time: the Rio Grande Rift and the Mogollon-Datil volcanic field. The Rio Grande Rift began forming between 35 and 29 million years ago as the colliding continents slowly rebounded and pulled the North American plate apart. We now know this rift as the Rio Grande Valley, a place that the first humans visiting North America found attractive when they arrived over 12,000 years ago. The same spreading accentuated volcanism, forming the Mogollon-Datil volcanic field. Roughly 35-40 million years ago, a giant mountain was pushed up by these volcanic forces at the southeastern edge of this volcanic field. This mountain grew and collapsed, apparently more than once, forming what geologists call the Emory Caldera. We now call its rugged central remains the Black Range. Small eruptions that continued until about 2.5 million years ago created the numerous lava flows that cap the buttes and mesas throughout the region, including the one across the mesa top north of Hillsboro. During this time, soils and rocks washed from the slopes of the caldera that was to become the Black Range left deep deposits that form the many outwash plains that we pass through between Hillsboro and Interstate 25. Faulting, fragmentation, and erosion formed the deep canyons, such as Percha and Animas Creeks, that interrupt these plains.

Percha Creek is intercepted by two fault lines that form the narrow and rugged “boxes” that the stream flows through upstream and downstream from Hillsboro. These same faults can be traced across Animas and Trujillo Canyons, south and north of Percha Creek, and form similar “boxes” in those canyons. They are actually the remains of the edges of giant craters, or calderas, formed when the early mountain collapsed. Such fault lines force water to the surface, creating streamflow even during extended droughts. Thus the Percha Box always has pools of water, even when the creek is dry through our town. Once Percha departs this “box” it flows through the ancient plains formed by outwash sediments, forming a steep-sided canyon almost all the way to the Rio Grande.

The surface streamflow of Percha Creek comes mainly from precipitation at higher elevations on the Black Range. Normally only a small portion of the total precipitation on the watershed reaches the Rio Grande River as surface water--mostly during summer monsoons. Much of the rainfall infiltrates downward through permeable soils, rocks, and crevices, being held as soil moisture or feeding the subsurface water table of the stream and moving downward to enter underground aquifers at lower elevations. Snow from winter storms melts sustains perennial flow in upper reaches of the tributaries, such as North Percha, South Percha, and Drummond Canyon. These also eventually infiltrate the downstream water table.

It is the effects of the steep mountain with its lodes of ore, on the one hand, and water on the other, that brought about our town. Ranching followed quickly on the heels of settlement, and it, too is obviously dependent upon water. Historian John Wilson has made a strong case in his unpublished book, *Between the River and the Mountains* that, except for sporadic occupation by semi-nomadic Apaches, Percha Creek was unoccupied in historic times, until Dan Dugan and Dave Stitzel discovered gold in 1877. However, we know from ruins on the points above Percha Creek, that the Mimbrenos lived here some 800 years ago. The upland locations of their pit houses suggest that they understood the workings of the mountain and the stream better than the folks who built our town. These events are way down our timeline, though, and we'll leave their stories until later.

PERCHA WATERSHED TIMELINE

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| 25-2.5 million years ago. |  | Cold/wet periods create massive outflows from mountain resulting in broad outwash plains between the Black Range and the Rio Grande. Minor faulting and resulting downcutting creates large canyons intersecting plains. Percha Creek is one of these. Ongoing minor volcanism creates lava caps on mountains and mesas through the area. |
| 40-25 million years ago | | Rebounding continental shift causes Rio Grande Rift. Volcanism increases, pushing up giant mountain which was predecessor of Black Range. Mountain collapses inwardly, forming Emory Caldera (Black Range). This uplift and collapse happened more than once during this period. |
| 60-20 million years ago | | Shifting of plate slippage to north-south direction. Friction between plates creates massive volcanic action. Further collapse and fragmentation of mountains and crust creating complex mixed age jumble of rocks. |
| 80-40 million years ago | | Colliding tectonic plates push up giant mountain ranges with intermittent valleys. Mountains collapse due to weakness of continental crust. |
| 300-100 million years ago | | Alternating tropical forest and shallow sea. Sedimentary deposits. |

MEMBERSHIP

OUR MEMBERSHIPS ARE ON A FEBRUARY 1 TO JANUARY 31 BASIS. ANY APPLICATIONS WE RECEIVE AFTER NOVEMBER 15 WILL BE CONSIDERED 2015 MEMBERSHIPS VALID FROM FEB 1, 2016 TO JANUARY 31, 2017.

The Hillsboro Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to collect, preserve and share the history and artifacts of the Hillsboro, Kingston and Lake Valley communities of New Mexico. Members may choose to participate in many aspects of the Society's activities, including fundraising, collections and conservation, oral histories, education and interpretation, special events and programs. Member benefits include the quarterly newsletter, priority registration for lectures, programs and field trips. 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.

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ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH. 6:30 PM AT
THE COMMUNITY CENTER. EVERYONE WELCOME.**