

CULTURA DE LAS MONTAÑAS

NEWSLETTER

for the
EAST MOUNTAIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Third Quarter 2009

Music in the Montañas

Music historian Francisco Chavez, right, and his brother James, left, gave the public a music history lesson at EMHS' open house in July.



Photo by Becky Schnelker

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Special Treat!

A video of Tom Herrera will be shown along with the classic East Mountain film, *Lonely Are the Brave*, after our annual meeting Nov. 8.

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Family Stories, Happy Music Flavor History Lesson

Levity was in abundance as music historian Francisco Chavez, right, told family stories as background for the traditional East Mountains music he and his brother James, played for the public at EMHS' open house in July.

Nearly the entire afternoon, an appreciative audience that filled nearly all the seats in the historic Santo Niño Church was entertained by Francisco on fiddle, accompanied by James on guitar. The event not only served as a musical history lesson, but helped celebrate the historical society's agreement with the village of Tijeras to continue using the historic church for exhibits and events.



Photos by Becky Schnelker

Chavez said he attended school in Ewing, half way between Willard and Estancia, where he



became familiar with music that was introduced by homesteaders from Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas who settled in the area in 1862.

Thanks to Anabel Sanchez for arranging this entertaining and informative musical event.

East Mountain Historical Society
Newsletter

Published Quarterly

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The EMHS Newsletter aims to inform members and prospective members of EMHS events and endeavors, including committee work, and to serve as a record of society activities. It is also a forum for stories about the area. Please send your ideas for future newsletter items to the Editor, P.O. Box 379, Cedar Crest, NM 87008, or by email: newsletter@eastmountainhistory.org Deadlines for future issues of the newsletter are April 30, July 31, Oct. 31, and Jan. 31.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the East Mountain Historical Society is to identify, preserve and present to the public the history and culture of the East Mountain area. EMHS will assist in protecting historical buildings and landscapes, artifacts, records, or any item considered to be of historical significance. EMHS will also identify, collect and archive historical material of significance to the area.

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Members-Only Field Trip Will Meander Through Historic Tijeras Canyon Oct. 17 "In Search of Genízaros"

Archeology Chairman Chuck Van Gelder will lead members on a moving tour Saturday, Oct. 17, starting at San Antonio and moving through Tijeras and Carnuel, ending up at Four Hills.

The topic of the tour is "In Search of *Genízaros*."

Genízaros, according to Wikipedia, were Indian slaves who served as house servants, sheepherders, and in other capacities in Spanish, Mexican, and American households in the Southwest, well into the 1880s. They and their contemporary descendents were recognized by the 2007 New Mexico State Legislature as indigenous people, and by the late 1700s, *Genízaros* and their descendents, often referred to as "*Coyotes*," comprised nearly one-third of the state's population.

Carnué was among the villages in which *Genízaros* were settled throughout the Spanish and Mexican period, along with Belén, Tomé, Valencia, Los Lentos, Socorro, and San Miguel del Vado, the site says, adding that *Genízaros* also lived in Albuquerque, Atrisco, Santa Fe, Chimayó, Taos, Abiquiú and Las Vegas.

To attend, meet at the parking lot for Los Manzanos Open Space, which is located directly behind San Antonio Church, about one mile south of Tijeras on North N.M. Highway 14.

We will meet at **9 a.m.** and carpool to get to the other sites. Chuck says there will be some walking but nothing too difficult, and that we should be back at the parking lot by noon.

Annual Meeting / Elections Set for Nov. 8

All members are encouraged to attend our annual meeting at 1 p.m. Nov. 8 at Santo Niño Historic Church in Tijeras, at which we will elect officers and directors for 2010. The meeting will be followed at 2 p.m. by a double-feature film showing.

On the executive committee ballot are four incumbents: **Andre Larroque**, president; **Anabel Sanchez**, vice president; **Pat Rich**, treasurer; and **Anne Dacey-Lucas**, secretary.

Up for board of directors are two who will be new to the board: **Bev Neville**, who has been our program director this year; and **Kris Thatcher**, who will be working on oral histories.

Seeking to remain on the board are **Dot Rich**, **Chuck Van Gelder**, **Denise Tessier**, **Kathy Rich**, **Louise Waldron**, **Marie**

Herrera Dresser, **Becky Schnelker**, and **Manuel Garcia y Griego**.

Nominations also will be taken from the floor. The board meets monthly.

Chuck is archeology director and leader of member-only field trips; Denise does the newsletter, publicity and Web maintenance as communications director; Kathy recently digitized our entire photo collection; Louise is a co-founder of EMHS and still active; Marie is a founding member and also still active; and Manuel is our University of New Mexico liaison (where our archives are currently stored).

Margaret Garcia has resigned from the board, but has graciously agreed to continue archiving local newspaper obituaries for us.

Video Interview with E. Mtn. Sheriff Tom Herrera To Share Double-Bill With Classic ‘Lonely Are the Brave’ Both To Be Shown at Annual Meeting

The Sandia Mountains – and the view they afforded of 1962 Albuquerque – are among the stars of the classic film, *Lonely Are the Brave*, which features Kirk Douglas, Gena Rowlands, Walter Matthau, and for a few brief scenes, the East Mountains’ premiere deputy sheriff, the late Tom Herrera.

Starting at 2 p.m. at historic Santo Nino Church in Tijeras, the East Mountain Historical Society will fete the late lawmaker and former EMHS member by showing portions of an oral history of Tom done by Louise Waldron. Tom’s sister, member Maria Herrera Dresser, will introduce the event.

The video of Tom will be followed by a full showing of *Lonely are the Brave*, a local cult classic for its depictions of Duke City, N.M. In the movie, Tom Herrera plays one of the mountain officers in search of Douglas. Watch the

[movie trailer online](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaMOvaJdXN8) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaMOvaJdXN8>.



Remembering Tomás Herrera, Consummate Deputy Who ‘Tamed’ the East Mountains

By Denise Tessier

For four decades, from 1943 to 1983, Tomás “Tom” Herrera served as a law enforcement officer in the East Mountains. For the first 30 of those years, he was the *only* sheriff’s deputy, responsible for an area that covered more than 180 miles of roads and trails in Tijeras Canyon and the Sandia and Manzano Mountains.

Herrera, who died Feb. 16, 2001 just short of his 85th birthday, knew more than anyone about the history and people of the East Mountains, and delighted in sharing stories with historians and residents, including this writer. Those who knew Sgt. Herrera as an officer, however, remember him as the consummate protector in what had once been a truly wild and lawless region.

Herrera became a Bernalillo County sheriff’s deputy in 1943 at the age of 25. His salary, he said, was \$150 a month. He was issued a 1943 Harley Davidson, and was told he would have to buy his own patrol car. The people of the East Mountains, he said, “gave me some money to buy the car.”

He already knew the area well. He had grown up in Tijeras Canyon and Juan Tomás. Second oldest of 16 children (11 of whom lived to adulthood), Herrera helped his father cut piñon and juniper in the forests of the Sandia district and the San Pedro Mountains. On these outings, young Tom collected both arrowheads and his father Alejandro’s stories about outlaws of the previous century.

Like many families at the time, the Herreras sold the wood in Old Town Albuquerque, a full-day’s journey by horse-drawn wagon from Carnuel. As an adult, in 1934, Tom helped excavate the Paa-Ko archeological site (“We got 35 bodies out of that ruin”), working for \$1.50 a day

Even as a child, Tom displayed a predilection for law and protection. At the age of 10, he took his father’s rifle and shot *La Llorona*, the ghostly “wailing woman,” not realizing the “ghost” was actually a family friend who, as a favor to Tom’s mother, donned white material and stilts to frighten the children into coming home before dark. Fortunately, the friend survived Tom’s bullet.

Herrera knew putting on a badge in the mountains would be dangerous; the last deputy assigned to the region had been killed by moonshiners in 1929. He’d had about six months’ experience as a state policeman when the county slot in the East Mountains opened up in 1943, but the year before, he had proven his mettle when he singlehandedly tracked, arrested and walked three horse thieves from a snowy canyon to a waiting deputy’s patrol car.

Cattle and horse rustling, bootlegging and thievery were rampant. “People (didn’t) believe in the law over here.” He was wounded countless times, and bore the scars to prove it. Once, he was shot in the knee by two escapees he encountered alone in a canyon. “My boot was full of blood,” but he managed to tie the convicts together at a nearby Forest Service cabin. Two rabbit hunters happened by and were so mad at what the escapees had done “they hit the guys over the head with rifles, and they got me and the guys to the highway. Then I called for help – and we had very lousy radio at that time.”

The shot split the bone; 11 pieces of lead stayed embedded in the leg 10 years before they were found and removed, and the pain bothered Herrera the rest of his life.

Another time, while making arrests after a fight in 1959 at Dick Bills’ supper club (now Town and Country Feed on old Route 66), a prisoner managed to break Herrera’s leg.



Photo Courtesy of Ofimiano Herrera
Sgt. Tomás "Tom" Herrera with his beloved dog, King

Some of Tom's legendary stories are comical, like the time he arrested two Oklahoma prison escapees near Edgewood, cuffed them and walked them to his car -- only to find it had rolled into a ditch because he forgot to put the hand brake on. (State Police arrived and helped out.) Or the time he found a frozen body in the hills behind Burger Boy, got a judge to pronounce the body dead and then had to re-find the corpse after it slipped out of the back of the judge's four-wheel drive vehicle as they were transporting it down the hill. (A

reenactment of that caper was performed at the Tijeras Canyon History Festival in 1994).

It was routine for Tom to flush fugitives from the canyon. He used dogs for both manhunts and protection and rode horses to patrol the area's most rugged spots. He found lost children and lost hunters.

When a Cessna plane from Texas failed to clear south Sandia Mountain in the 1960s, crashed and killed three men, it was Herrera who pressed on after other searchers surrendered to freezing temperatures, fog and snow. He was able to find the wreckage, he explained simply, because he smelled smoke.

His renown as a tracker landed him roles as both consultant and actor alongside Kirk Douglas in the 1962 movie, *Lonely Are the Brave*. Filmed almost entirely in the Sandia Mountains, producers sought the advice of the district forest ranger, who referred them to Tom, saying, "He knows more than I do." In the movie, Herrera didn't have to stray far from character, playing deputy to a "Bernal County" sheriff (played by Walter Matthau), tracking Douglas, who had escaped from the nearby "Duke City" jail. At one point, Douglas hit Herrera with a plastic rifle. "I felt like he really cracked my head."

Herrera served at the pleasure of several Bernalillo County sheriffs of both party affiliations, but was fired in January 1969 by incoming Sheriff Albert "Red" Dow. East Mountain residents wouldn't stand for it. More than 500 signed a petition of protest, saying it would be "impossible to adequately replace him."

Spotting a political opportunity, then-Gov. David Cargo just days later announced "the administration that cares about people" (Cargo's administration) had hired Herrera to drive a truck for the highway department. But Tom wanted what the people wanted, and when Dow refused to back down, Tom was made a constable and he continued to serve in the mountains until his deputy status was restored by the next sheriff, Thomas Richardson.

Just a few months before his ouster, Herrera had been praised for rounding up groups of hippies who had been breaking into cabins and living in them while the owners were away. One Christmas eve, he saved the life of a young man trapped inside a pump house; Herrera was driving on 66 to help a stranded tourist when he noticed truck lights on the side of the mountain

and went to investigate, thinking someone was trying to steal a resident's truck. He found the young man inside the pump house, passed out. "Tom knows every car and truck in the area and when he sees one that is strange or in an unusual place he will check it out," a petitioner said at the time.

Residents also appreciated that Herrera never took anyone to jail unless he had to. He would settle family fights and bar fights by simply talking to people.

Chris Schwappach was 17 when, in 1977, Herrera put "the fear of God" in him. He remembers with great chagrin going as fast as he could up and down a bladed area off North N.M. 14 after a two-day steady rain, trying to impress two girls with his four-wheel-drive Jeep's "ripping" abilities. Then, through the mud on the windshield, he saw the lights of Herrera's patrol car. Schwappach turned off his motor -- the Jeep sunk to its axles -- and during what seemed an eternity Herrera calmly walked to the trunk of the patrol car, pulled on knee-high rubber boots and waded out to the silent teenagers. Still calm, Herrera stood in a soaking rain, telling Schwappach he was on private property, that Herrera would have to ask the owners if they would like to press charges, and that the young man and his parents would likely have to pay damages. "He said I should have more respect than I did. He didn't tell me I was a dumb kid or anything. He didn't give me tickets. Then, he just walked away."

Schwappach never heard another word about the incident, but says, "He really scared me. I was worried about Tom calling my folks for -- literally -- a month."

Herrera was a sergeant when he retired in December 1982. He shared his stories and knowledge as an active member of the East Mountain Historical Society. As a member of the East Mountain Lions Club, he was a regular fixture at the group's flea markets, joined in the effort by his wife, Barbara. He was a familiar sight on Route 66 and N.M. 14, tooling along in his white and faded-red 1957 Chevy Bel Air. He was, as my husband says, "a cool guy."

Editor's Note: Similar versions of this article originally appeared in the Albuquerque Journal Feb. 23, 2001 and the Mountain View Telegraph March 1, 2001. Used with permission.

Dues Renewal Reminder: Jan. 1

Dues are collected at the start of the calendar year, which is coming up fast on Jan. 1.

Please mail your 2010 dues renewal to Treasurer **Pat Rich** at the address below.

Haven't joined yet? We'd love to welcome you to our group!

To join EMHS or renew membership, send your name, address, phone number, and email address to:

**East Mountain Historical Society, P.O.
Box 106, Tijeras, NM 87059**

Annual dues:

**Student, \$10 / Individual, \$15 / Family, \$20
Sponsor, \$25 / Corporation, \$50**

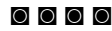
Please tell us your interests and if you would like to work on one of our committees.

Honorary members -- those who've lived in the East Mountains more than 50 years -- do not pay dues.

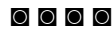
Does your employer match **charitable donations**? Donations are welcome. EMHS is a 501(c) 3 non-profit and dues are tax deductible as allowable by law.

News and Notes ... of the East Mountain Historical Society

On Sept. 19, the **New Mexico Genealogical Society**, hosted by the East Mountain Historical Society, presented author **Mike Smith** and his stories of the “Towns of the Sandia Mountains” at the Santo Niño Historic Church. The topic is also the title of Smith’s book.



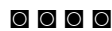
A hearty welcome to new members **Christine and Christopher Smith** of Cedar Crest. Christine is president of the East Mountain Coalition.



Old Schoolhouse Gallery last month held its grand opening as an art gallery; a ceramics business, Aspects of Clay, has reopened on the schoolhouse property. The gallery is housed in the historic, renovated San Antonito schoolhouse on North N.M. 14 just north of Frost Road, hence its name. Gallery owner Sharon Marks and her husband David Engelmann were honored by EMHS with an achievement award for their renovation efforts on the old stone school building, which was profiled in the last EMHS [newsletter](#).



Also in September, the Sawmill/Wells Park District in Downtown Albuquerque held its third Carnuel Road Parade & Fiesta. The parade headed east toward the mountains from 7th Street along Mountain Road, which was originally named Carnuel Road because it led to Carnuel. Member **Becky Schnelker** reports it was a fun afternoon. The event was developed after local residents expressed the desire for an annual celebration of the area’s history.



Historian **Chris Wilson’s** seminal survey of historic buildings in East Mountain villages is available for purchase through EMHS. “*Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey of the Manzano and Sandia Mountain Villages*” includes text and photos and may be purchased for \$10 a copy at the Annual Meeting in November (see story on Pg. 4).



Did you work at Bella Vista and have stories you’d like to share? Or perhaps you worked at the cement factory, the Barn Dinner Theater, the Ski Area or Mountain Bus Company? These are all part of the history of the East Mountains. If you have a story you’re willing to share, please send it to newsletter@eastmountainhistory.org. Please contact vicepresident@eastmountainhistory.org if you are interested in doing oral histories for us.



Our winter holiday party and potluck will start at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6, at the home of member **Becky Schnelker**. Look for an email reminder and directions before that event.



The village of Tijeras has linked the East Mountain Historical Society to its Web site. Check out the village’s history page at www.villageoftijerasnm.com and click on the “history” bar.

Viewing History at the Historic Hubble House



Photo by Andre Larroque

Among those at the August meeting were, from left, Louise Waldron, Anne Dacey-Lucas, Bev Neville, Anabel Sanchez, Joyce Mendel, Colleen Langan and Becky Schnelker.

The historic Gutierrez Hubble House in Albuquerque's South Valley was the site of our monthly board meeting August 1, thanks to the efforts of open space coordinator Colleen Langan of Bernalillo County's Parks and Recreation Department.



©2009 Photo by Denise Tessier

A tour of the renovated farmhouse and grounds followed the meeting, conducted by a member of the [Hubbell House Alliance](#).

EMHS has been working with Colleen on gathering information for an interpretive booklet and signage for another county open space project, Sabino Canyon Open Space, south of Tijeras. For more information on the history of the Gutierrez Hubbell House, visit the Alliance Web site at <http://www.hubbellhousealliance.org/history.html>.



Can You Help Us?

The East Mountain Historical Society has come up with a list of things we need in order to continue our mission of preserving the history of the mountain villages east of Albuquerque. Please contact Andre Larroque at president@eastmountainhistory.org or Anabel Sanchez at vicepresident@eastmountainhistory.org if you can donate to EMHS any of the following items:

File Cabinet
Storage Cabinet
Television (at least a 25 inch)
DVD/VHS/CD player
Computer (Laptop and Desktop)
Printer/Fax/Copier
Scanner
Projector (to connect to laptop computer)
Slide projector
Movie Screen
Digital Voice Recorder

Visit our Web site at:

www.eastmountainhistory.org



Had You Heard?

In August, Gov. Bill Richardson unveiled a new license plate (2010 in picture) to commemorate the state's upcoming centennial in 2012. Available in January 2010, the plate has yellow lettering on turquoise and incorporates a "retro" design based on license plates of the past.

Through 2012, the plates will read "Centennial 1912-2012" at the top, which will be replaced after the commemoration ends.

The hot air balloon-themed license plate will no longer be made. But 77 percent of the nearly 9,000 participants in a survey said they'd like also to keep the classic red-on-yellow plate. "The people have . . . a very nostalgic attachment to the classic yellow plate," Richardson said in a statement in September. "Therefore, I am directing the Motor Vehicle Division to issue both the old yellow and the new turquoise as New Mexico's standard official license plates."

The East Mountain Historical Society is looking for a volunteer to help us with grant writing. Please contact Andre Larroque at president@eastmountainhistory.org if you can help.



East Mountain Historical
Society
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