



CULTURA DE LAS MONTAÑAS

# Newsletter

## EAST MOUNTAIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### “Great People, Great Stories”

#### Joint Oral History Project Kicks Off

By Denise Tessier

The East Mountain Historical Society, working in partnership with the East Mountain Coalition of Neighborhoods, in June launched its “Great Stories, Great People” oral history project, results of which will be presented next spring at a community event to honor those interviewed and to coincide with the state’s 2012 statehood centennial.

The EM Coalition of Neighborhoods graciously agreed to partner with EMHS in order for the project to qualify for a Bernalillo County grant, the application for which was drafted by EMHS oral history director Kris Thacher, who named the project, “Great People, Great Stories.” So far, proceeds from the grant have been used to train seven community interviewers to record the stories of “living treasures” in the area’s more than 30 neighborhood associations. A second training session will be held this fall. Please contact me at [president@eastmountainhistory.org](mailto:president@eastmountainhistory.org) if you would like to receive training and be a part of this exciting project.

Those who are trained become part of our Centennial Committee and help us conduct interviews, either by acting as an interviewer or by accompanying the interviewer and helping with recording equipment. Each trainee will do at least one interview.

The first group of trainees includes Kris Thacher, Nancy Carpenter, Bev Neville, Anabel Sanchez, Denise Tessier and two EMHS members who are also on the board of the coalition: Jim Hanlon and EMC President Christine Smith.

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#### Matachine Head-dress Modeled

During one of the Centennial Committee’s many meetings this summer, Jim Hanlon conducted an oral history of the life of EMHS member Marie Herrera Dresser, who afterward donned a colorful cupil she had made for her brother Ray, who passed away this summer. Marie said Ray wore the cupil while dancing in many fiesta processions as a matachine, and that it was the first in the East Mountains to incorporate the image of the Guadalupana, or Virgin of Guadalupe.

*Photo © 2011 by Denise Tessier*

~~Wanted~~ Needed: Scribes  
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## More on New Oral History Project

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In gearing up for the project, EMHS purchased with its own funds a one-terabyte storage disk to hold all the interviews conducted. Nancy Carpenter, who operates a computer/software business in Cedar Crest Center, upgraded the computer that was donated to us last year so that we can transfer from Flip cams and still cameras the interviews, photos and documents we collect into files, and then edit the interviews in preparation for transcription.

We hope to interview at least one resident a month this first year of the grant/pilot project

and to continue the process beyond the year as long as we have volunteers willing to conduct the interviews. Of course, we would love to do more than one a month, and the more interviewers we involve in the process, the more East Mountain “treasures” we will be able to document.

With this project, EMHS is preserving history, as the federal Works Progress Administration did in the 1930s. It’s a venture that promises to be wonderfully rewarding and worthwhile, preserving culture, history and stories, while forging a partnership with EMC and helping engender a sense of community among residents in participating neighborhoods.

## First Oral History Project Materials Given to UNM

On July 29, Archive Committee Director Becky Schnelker turned over to UNM’s Center for Southwest Research (CSWR) about 30 oral history cassette tapes and transcripts. In acknowledging the donation, Kathlene Ferris at CSWR wrote to EMHS:

“The recordings and transcripts will make a fine addition to our collections. The oral histories collected on behalf of the East Mountain Historical Society will enrich and complement Joyce Mendel’s earlier East Mountain interviews already housed at the CSWR.

“It was a pleasure working with your organization to bring this materials to UNM. Our priority now is to digitize the recordings and make copies for the EMHS.”

Becky reported that most of these oral histories were collected and transcribed by Joyce and other EMHS members in the 1990s and early 2000s. She said, “Joyce provided her set of tapes, which we presumed were in the best condition possible, to be catalogued and digitized by CSWR. These also will be added to the Library’s digital interface called the Rocky Mountain Online Archive and therefore will be accessible to the public. EMHS will receive copies of the digitized cassette tapes. The library will store the original cassettes and transcripts, and will keep them updated to the standard of technology over the coming years.

“A number of interviewees are now deceased and leave a unique legacy to those that follow about their lives and communities,” Becky added.

Becky, Anne Dacey-Lucas and Anabel Sanchez, who make up the EMHS Archive Committee, went through the tapes and transcripts making sure EMHS had two complete sets, working in consultation with Joyce. The duplicate set remains in the EMHS office in Tijeras. Becky added that the partnership between EMHS and the UNM library is timely, as the newly acquired grant from Bernalillo County through the Coalition of East Mountain Neighborhoods is allowing EMHS to embark on a new oral history project that will result in the creation of more oral history tapes and transcripts. EMHS is now ready, as its house is in order with regard to its already existing collection of oral histories.

The original East Mountain collection already at CSWR can be found online at <http://rmoa.unm.edu/docviewer.php?docId=nmu1mss597bc.xml>

Now that EMHS has its workspace at the Tijeras Visitor’s Center, VP Anabel and President Denise Tessier have also spent time bringing to the center from their own files the minutes of EMHS meetings and agendas in order to come up with a complete set.



Photo by Becky Schnelker

# Remembering Bob Cooper

Editor's note: On May 27, long-time EMHS member Robert Williams "Bob" Cooper died at his home in Cedar Crest. There was no funeral service, and Bob's remains were to be buried in the Cooper-Ellis family cemetery in Las Huertas Canyon in the North Sandias in a private ceremony. Bob knew well the history of

the mountains and Albuquerque, and shared that knowledge on Feb. 26, 2000. The story that appeared in the EMHS spring 2000 newsletter (which is not on our website) is reprinted here for the benefit of those who missed that wonderful lecture.

## Long-Time Resident Holds Audience Spellbound

By Denise Tessier

Two hours fly by when one-time history teacher, ski area "snow ranger" and longtime mountain man Bob Cooper starts talking about East Mountain history. During a well-attended talk hosted by the East Mountain Historical Society Feb. 26, Cooper gave an overview of the area's most recent century, including both little-known local details and generous excerpts from a paper he had prepared for the New Mexico Historical Society on "The Remarkable Ellis Family," original owners of the Sandia Mountain ranch on which he has lived every summer for 72 years.

Cooper said there is little written or eyewitness evidence of life in the East Mountains, so historians use a lot of qualifiers like "maybe" and "probably." His own memory goes back to the 1930s, extended by stories he's collected from the generation before, including Paul Ellis, youngest of the Ellis clan (born in Albuquerque in 1891).

A century ago, Cooper said, "life was an isolated, mean, poverty-stricken existence," with people spread out in numerous villages, farms and ranches. But there "was no government assistance" and people "helped each other... They didn't consider themselves deprived." Ever resourceful, they eschewed self-pity "and accepted the life they had."

Most spoke Spanish, and lived in the small villages of Cerrillos, Placitas, San Antonio, Tijeras, Cedro, Carnue, Canoncito, Chilili, Juan Tomas, Punta de Agua, Miera and Escobosa. San Antonito was "founded by unhappy relatives of San Antonio." At this time, Indian villages were no longer occupied.

The few non-Hispanics, including "quite a few Italians," mostly came to work the mines at Cerrillos, Madrid and in the San Pedro Mountains.

In 1880, the population of San Pedro (6,000) was greater than that of Albuquerque (4,500). Cooper remembered that in his boyhood, long after San Pedro's heyday, people still lived in tents there. At one time the town had 29 saloons and a number of houses of ill repute.

In 1879 the Santa Fe Railway was fueled by coal, and at one point, the railroad was scheduled to come to the East Mountains. A roadbed was cleared through Tijeras Canyon and dirt work was done along Frost Road (the train would have traveled northwest to San Pedro Creek, where raised beds can still be seen). At the time, one of the officials of the railroad was named Frost; hence, a legacy was left, even though the tracks were never laid.

Health seekers started showing up by 1910. (Cooper's own grandfather came to Albuquerque dying of tuberculosis, lived another 30 years and founded Presbyterian Hospital). They gravitated toward the mountains, building many of the houses with screened porches found in Cedar Crest, Sandia Park and Mountainair.

By the 1920s, the first county schools were started at San Antonito and Tijeras. There were few stores; some residents made a living shooting and dressing game to sell in Albuquerque, to neighbors or in the mining camps.

Cooper's story of the Ellis family was especially fascinating. Having arrived in New Mexico in 1879, George Ellis, wife Julia and mother Eliza Carter Ellis eked out a fairly good living halfway between Vaughn and Encino when their well went dry and they headed to Albuquerque. Working for the Herman Bleuher Gardens (near the present-day Sheraton Old Town), Ellis delivered fruit to the mining camps when he discovered a "steep, deep canyon of extraordinary beauty ... (Las Huertas Canyon)."

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# More from Bob Cooper

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The Ellis family settled in what is now called the Ellis/Cooper Ranch, an area made exceedingly rich by its 37 springs, miles of creek and abundant rain and snowfall. Ninety percent of all the water on the Sandias is found on the piece Ellis patented in 1905.

Cooper described in rich detail the lives of the Ellises and their children and the ranch's abundant animal and plant life. All 480 species of flowering plants found in the Sandias are found on the ranch, including orchids, osha and five colors of columbine. More than 120 varieties of birds have been documented there, including a gray, nondescript water bird called the "oozle." Cooper says the water oozle walks on the bottom of creeks and ponds, completely submerged, then flies away. He's seen them in the clear waters of the ranch "nearly every year"

since his boyhood, and they're "very rare."

Hawks, eagles and wild turkeys have returned to the ranch, which is also host to eight varieties of hummingbirds, "more than have been spotted in any one place in New Mexico."

During the Ellis' 25 years on the ranch, daughter Charlotte kept a journal, in which she recalled hiking several miles to get iron water from a certain spring (for medicinal reasons). Plants from the ranch were shipped to botanical gardens in New York and London. Son August W. Ellis shot the last recorded grizzly bear in the Sandias in 1906. Son Paul was buried in the family plot on the ranch in 1962, on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Today, 18 to 20 families and the Presbyterian Church own the Ellis/Cooper Ranch. Bob Cooper raises trout there in deep pools of "absolutely clear water, even after a heavy rain."

## EAST MOUNTAIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### NEWS AND NOTES

Elections of officers and board members will be held during the general membership's annual meeting in October, time and place to be announced.

All but one of the current officers has indicated a willingness to continue serving, but any member may be nominated. Please let us know if you would like to serve on the board. We would love your input. If interested, please e-mail Denise Tessier at [president@eastmountainhistory.org](mailto:president@eastmountainhistory.org) or write her at P.O. Box 379, Cedar Crest, 87008.

Anne Dacey-Lucas will not be able to continue serving as secretary, and we thank her for her service.

The slate of officers for 2011–2012 so far is:

President	Denise Tessier
Vice President	Anabel Sanchez
Treasurer	Pat Rich
Secretary	open

Up for consideration as board members, who are also elected by the membership, are:

Chuck Van Gelder, archeology director;  
Andre Larroque, preservation director;

Kris Thacher, grant writing;  
Becky Schnelker, archives;  
Kathy Rich, webmaster and graphics;  
Bev Neville, programs; and  
Gerry Jones, Marie Herrera Dresser and  
Anne Dacey-Lucas, at large.



Congratulations to long-time members Jim and Kathy Hanlon, who on August 26 celebrated 50 years of marriage by renewing their vows.



Remember to check out our web site at [eastmountainhistory.org](http://eastmountainhistory.org), where you may now renew your dues and sign up your friends for membership online via Pay Pal.



Another look at area history is provided by *Albuquerque's Parks and Open Space* by Matt Schmader, superintendent of the city Open Space Division. The book, which includes vintage photographs, is available at local stores and from Arcadia Publishing, <http://www.arcadiapublishing.com>.



# Native Foods Topic of Joint Event

A smorgasbord of native plants, seeds and dried meats was collected and prepared by ethnobotanist Jean Brody (right in photo at right) to share as part of her talk May 7 on the kinds of foods people in the East Mountains have eaten over the past several hundred years.

Brody's presentation, which included a large display of food (photo below), was a highlight of the half-day "Garden Traditions" event jointly sponsored by the East Mountain Historical Society and the Friends of Tijeras Pueblo at the Sandia Ranger Station.



Presentations were also given by expert Isaura Andaluz on Seed Saving, Tomás Apodaca, who operates an organic family farm in Escobosa, and Gary Hefkin, who talked about the historic acequia watering system at the village of San Antonio. The event was free and open to the public.

Photos by Chris Husted

## Ojito de San Antonio to Host Two Events

EMHS President Denise Tessier and board member Becky Schnelker will be lead a talk and walk at Bernalillo County's Ojito de San Antonio Open Space Sept. 24.

The event, from 10 a.m. to noon, is free and open to the public. Visitors will walk through the site and hear Tessier speak about Ojito's history as the backdrop for the oldest village in the East Mountains. Tessier has written an interpretive booklet on the the area, which is currently being published by the county. Her talk will be complemented by Becky Schnelker, who will point out the native plants in the area

In addition, the county is hosting a Bear Aware event from 10 a.m. to noon Oct. 15 at Ojito de San Antonio Open Space. Open Space coordinator Colleen McRoberts says this session aims to inform participants about the characteristics of bears, their importance in our ecosystem, and how to minimize the threats they can pose to our community.

To attend any of these events, please contact Colleen McRoberts at (505) 314-0398 or by e-mail at [calangan@bernco.gov](mailto:calangan@bernco.gov)

# History of Sabino Canyon Open Space Traced

Text and photo by Becky Schnelker

The meadows were bursting with wildflowers at Sabino Canyon Open Space during a walking tour and lecture by Manuel Garcia y Griego, an associate professor in UNM's History Department and a member of the Cañon de Carnué Land Grant.

The event was sponsored by Bernalillo County Open Space and attracted about 20 people, including EMHS members.

Garcia y Griega traced the history of the small settlements on the edges of early Albuquerque, many of them near springs along travel routes in Spanish land grants, and noted that some of them were abandoned because of raiding Indian bands. He also described how the majority of these lands eventually were incorporated into the National Forest, which left resentment among the land grant descendants. He said that the current Cañon de Carnué grant retains 200 acres, which is broken up in small parcels. However, recent legislation has allowed them to establish themselves legally within the larger community.

The historical markers in Sabino Open Space, including this one for an early 20th-century fur farm, were prepared with the help of the East Mountain Historical Society. The open space is north of Juan Tomás Road off South 337.



## Wanted—No—Needed: Scribes

The EMHS needs people with writing skills for two important posts:

- secretary to the board of directors, whose primary duty is taking minutes; and
- writers for this newsletter, who could provide reports on EMHS meetings and outings, news about related organizations and accounts of East Mountain history, among other things.

No experience is needed—just enthusiasm! The secretary will be elected in October (see page 4), and would-be reporters may contact President Tessier at [president@eastmountainhistory.org](mailto:president@eastmountainhistory.org).

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Fred and Virginia Belk, Tijeras  
Jerome T. Loomis, Tijeras



## East Mountain Historical Society Newsletter

Denise Tessier, editor/writer  
[newsletter@eastmountainhistory.org](mailto:newsletter@eastmountainhistory.org)

Melissa Howard, design and production

### 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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