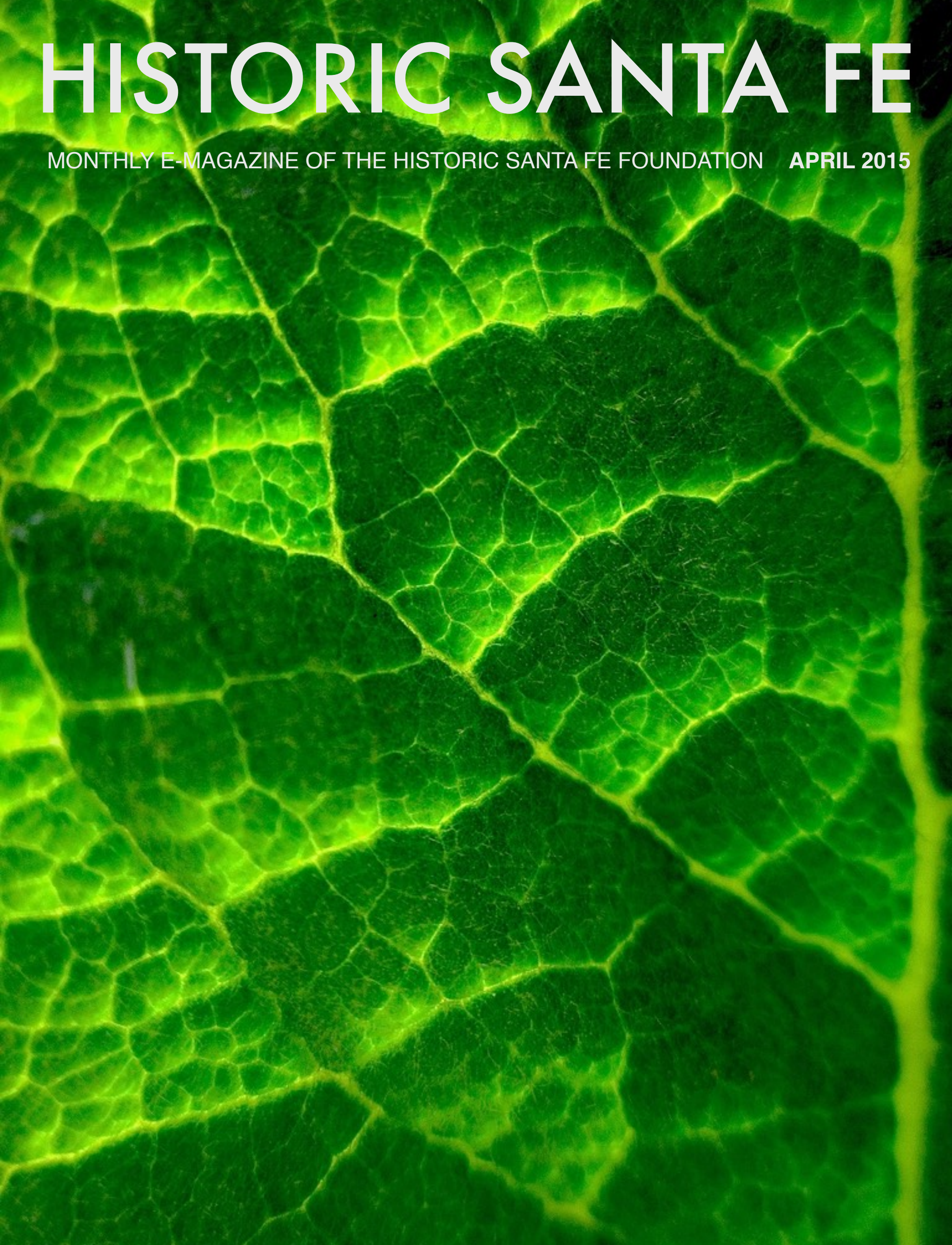


HISTORIC SANTA FE

MONTHLY E-MAGAZINE OF THE HISTORIC SANTA FE FOUNDATION APRIL 2015



INSIDE HISTORIC SANTA FE

For April 2015 we interview **Pen LaFarge**, historian, writer and president of the Old Santa Fe Association—the sister organization of our Historic Santa Fe Foundation. Pen cares and thinks deeply about most issues and here details his thoughts on the historic state of The City Different. We also highlight our annual **Mother's Day Tour**, which is approaching quickly to judge from the blossoming fruit trees in town. For something new we add a book review of ***American Ghost***, a recently published history of the Staab House. Enjoy.

NOTE: The recent Salon El Zaguán lecture given by Jerry Rogers on the history and status of the Old Santa Fe Trail Building (National Park Service Building) can be read here in transcript. It is worth the read. <http://goo.gl/CsbXU9>



UPDATE: MOTHER'S DAY TOUR

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation has presented an inside view of historic homes and buildings in the city on Mother's Day each year, since 1969. That is a true tradition. This year, on May 10, from 1-4 pm, the tour will be open at:

Church of the Holy Faith

Marian Hall

Scottish Rite Center (Temple)

Felipe B. Delgado House

(Lacuna Galleries)

Tickets for the event will be available at each of the locations and will be priced at:

- \$10 individual and \$20 family
- \$5 individual Members of HSFF

We are encouraging members to buy their tickets in advance at the HSFF office at 545 Canyon Road in order to receive the special HSFF Member pricing. We plan to institute credit card capability for the first time and will announce that in an email when it is ready. In that event Members could purchase by phone, online, or at the office. Stay tuned as we up our technology game.

Sponsors for the 2015 Mother's Day Tour who have helped us with the costs of bringing this to the public are:

- **Lacuna Galleries**

www.lacunagalleries.com

- **Los Alamos National Bank**

www.lanb.com

- **Del Norte Credit Union**

www.dncu.org

The tour promises to be one of special note. The Scottish Rite Center is a fascinating trove of architectural detail and history. The Church of the Holy Faith has a long history as a center of faith in the city at several locations since it began as a house church in 1863. The current building is a beautiful collection of architectural additions, significant art, and peaceful space. Marian Hall has not been open for a very long time; in addition to access, there will be historic photos and information that show its various incarnations as hospital and sanatorium complete with three-level sleeping porches. The open access from the porch of the Hall through Cathedral Park is a wonderful walk. Finally, the HSFF-owned Felipe B. Delgado House is a magnificent late Territorial building now housing Lacuna Galleries. Sheryle and Olaf Moon, gallery owners, will provide English high tea to tour participants (tea, scones, clotted cream and jam).

BOOK REVIEW AMERICAN GHOST: A FAMILY'S HAUNTED PAST IN THE DESERT SOUTHWEST

Review by Alan Peters

**American Ghost: A Family's Haunted
Past in the Desert Southwest**
By Hannah Nordhaus

HarperCollins, 2015

320 pp.; illustrated. \$25.99

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation's Staab House file provides a concise account of the facts of Abraham Staab's life. Staab came to Santa Fe as a 17 year old in 1858. Before long, he and his brother Zadok had established the largest wholesale trading and merchandising business in the Southwest. They became major supply contractors for the U.S. Army during the Civil War. They also acted as bankers before there were banks in the area, and they invested in real estate. In 1865, Abraham Staab returned to Germany to marry Julia Schuster, promising her that he would build her an elegant European home in Santa Fe. The couple lived on Burro Alley until 1882, when they moved into their new three-story brick home on East Palace Avenue, one of the first brick structures in the mud-and-straw town. The materials and the furnishings were

all imported and included ornate chandeliers, French antiques, and Italian paintings. The house originally had a third-story ballroom with a green mansard roof, which was destroyed by fire at the beginning of the 20th century.

In *American Ghost*, journalist Hannah Nordhaus attempts to delve into the life of her great-great grandmother Julia Staab. Her account is a combination of biography, memoir, cultural history, and ghost story. According to Nordhaus, Julia was slight—less than five feet—delicate, and often unhealthy. When her seventh child (or eighth, depending on the source) died, she became severely depressed. Eventually she took to her room, where she spent almost all of her time until her mysterious death at the age of 52 in 1896—and this is a kind of skeleton key for the rest of the book.

Today the Staab House forms the core of La Posada Hotel. Although the exterior of the house is no longer discernible, some inside areas remain intact. For example, the house's staircase still leads to the second floor of the old Staab mansion and Julia Staab's bedroom, a

room she is said to haunt. The first sighting of Julia's ghost came in 1979 and, from that time on, the hotel has been a site of ghostly activity and the subject of the popular television shows "Unsolved Mysteries" and "Weird Travels."

In an effort to get inside the head of her great-great grandmother, Nordhaus balanced her time in the archives with paranormal investigation. Despite the fact that she is a self-proclaimed skeptic, she details her visits with psychics, tarot card readers, ghost hunters, and dowzers during the course of her book. Her

lengthy digressions and wild suppositions are distracting—for instance, Nordhaus speculates that Julia had a possible love affair with Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy. (Nordhaus actually took a DNA test to see whether she has French markers.)

That said, Hannah Nordhaus provides a multilayered look at Julia Staab's life, and the result is not just a good ghost story. *American Ghost* offers an interesting, albeit spooky, slice of Santa Fe life at the turn of the century. It is certain to appeal to a variety of readers.





INTERVIEW: PEN LAFARGE, PRESIDENT, OLD SANTA FE ASSOCIATION

Interviewed by Debbie Lawrence

Q: When and how did you first get involved with preservation?

My first involvement with city matters was entirely accidental. My father, Oliver, had been one of the original writers of the Historic District Ordinance, but preservation and civic affairs held little interest for me. Then, in the '70s, the city "improved" College Street into Old Santa Fe Trail—widened it, made it even in width, and removed the bumps that caused Texan Cadillacs to bottom out as they zoomed downtown. The city decided to improve the sidewalks, as well. At the time, the sidewalks were a mixture of brick, cement, and dirt. Naturally, the city wanted them all to be cement. As the plaza had recently been paved in brick, I asked the city to do likewise up Old

Santa Fe Trail. The city engineer, with the striking name of Ormande Earp, objected along the lines that cement was better than brick, easier to maintain, less expensive, and, well, it had already been decided on. I objected. He then posed me the sort of task heroes are posed in fairy tales, that is, something impossible, but, if you do it, you get the princess. He asked me (I was in college at Boston University) to have everyone up and down the street sign a petition to put in brick. So, on vacation, I did. You may see the princess for yourself every time you drive the trail.

Q: Describe the role you play at OSFA. What is your affiliation and history with HSFF?

I am the president of the Old Santa Fe Association, a task to which, as a writer, I am completely unsuited. To my best, I try to manage, to administrate, and to keep track of all that with which the members and committees are doing or are concerned. My affiliation with HSFF goes back to the '80s, when I was put on the board and became chairman of the Membership Activities Committee.

Q: Overwhelming economic and political forces cause the destruction of old places every day. How does the OSFA help Santa Fe hold onto its history while forming its future? How can

OSFA help to create greater community support for cultural preservation? What have been some recent successes of your organization?

OSFA, unlike HSFF, is an advocacy organization, so we can and do lobby at the city, county, and state levels. Both of our organizations have a mandate to educate. We try to keep an eye on buildings and areas of the city that come into danger, which means we actively work with the Historic Districts Review Board (to which we are entitled to name one member) and the Historic Preservation Division. We also are interested in zoning, new building proposals, city ordinances that control what may or may not be built and under what conditions, ridge-tops, and the Plaza. We generally look after the good of the city as well as its traditions and authenticity.

We hope our advocacy for historic authenticity, for the general welfare, and for preserving what makes Santa Fe the City Different will encourage our citizenry to join with us and to support us.

As to recent successes, we joined with hundreds of citizens to preserve La Bajada Mesa from being exploited for a gravel mine, and we successfully asked the HDRB to designate three bridges, including the Delgado Street bridge, as historically significant (later this year, we will

work to see that the Delgado Street bridge will be placed on the state and national registers, as the others have already been).

One project we have undertaken that is entirely new to us is our Film Preservation Initiative, in which we will solicit (and have solicited) old film, going back to the '20s, that would otherwise deteriorate and be lost, to be given to the state photo archives to be digitized, and thereby saved for the future.

One loss and one fear ought to be mentioned. For the first, we tried but failed to save the Valdes House on De Vargas Street from being ruined by El Castillo in the process of renovating the building for its Memory Center.

For the second, we continue to fear the demolition-by-neglect that St. Catherine's Indian School is undergoing while the bank seeks to unsnarl its future.

Q: Fake historic buildings are being constructed in many tourist-oriented cities. Many design review boards inadvertently encourage such architecture. What is your attitude toward this type of construction and what impact has it had on your attitude toward historic preservation?

My answer depends upon what one means by "fake historic." In the historic

districts of Santa Fe, all new buildings have to conform to certain strictures. I have no quarrel with that, although one wishes that architects of greater imagination and integrity were let loose upon the landscape of those strictures. Otherwise, anything that is "fake" is inherently unacceptable because it both confuses the viewer and devalues that which is true. One might say there is a continuum, with Main Street in Disneyland at one end, Venice at the other, and living museums and Santa Fe somewhere in the middle.

Unlike during my youth, Santa Fe's economy now depends upon the tourist trade, and as that rests largely upon our authenticity and feel of authenticity, then whatever detracts from authenticity will do the city, its citizens, its economy, its future, and its visitors a true ill. The great historic cities of the world depend upon their feel of authenticity and truth. Those that have devolved into mere tourist circuses selling coffee-cups, t-shirts, and bad art have their visitors, but I doubt they ever return or recommend such cities to their friends.

In cities and in landscape, as in life, truth gains trust and empathy; it is all. Falsity is nothing and of no value.

Q: How can preservation organizations like OSFA and the HSFF help cultivate in young people (students in

high school and college) an appreciation for how important connection with our past is to living in the present day?

I think both our organizations, as well as others, such as Cornerstones, must educate children as to the worth of their surroundings, to their aesthetics, to their heritage and how all these have an impact on who they are. Their parents ought to do this, of course, but our organizations ought to jump in with education in the schools, make it enjoyable and accessible, then encourage youth to follow up, to make certain authenticity and truth are always a central part of their lives.

Q: What prompted you to write *Turn Left at the Sleeping Dog*? If you were going to write a sequel, who are some of the people you would want to interview?

I wrote *Turn Left at the Sleeping Dog* because I was trained as an historian but could not figure a way to preserve the memories of what I heard during my childhood about the golden age of Santa Fe. My parents, my relatives, and their friends all spoke in a way to bring the past alive to me, and I loved it. I wished to preserve for the future why it is that we live in Santa Fe, or why people visit, or why their children return here. Why is

Santa Fe the City Different? Why is Santa Fe not just any other city of its size, in the middle of nowhere, dusty and forgotten? My formal, academic historical education did not prepare me to create the right sort of history. However, in graduate school, I came across Studs Terkel and his oral histories, and, at the same time, oral history began to be recognized as a worthwhile manner of retaining memory.

It occurred to me that this was what I wanted, the memories of those who had lived through the time when Santa Fe went from being a lone, lost capital into an art colony, with a world-class scientific outlier in Los Alamos, when we became the city that is now world famous.

SPONSOR

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation sincerely thanks Susan and Bill Banowsky, owners of the new Violet Crown Cinema at the Railyard, for their support in making this month's edition of *Historic Santa Fe* e-Zine possible.

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OUR MISSION

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the historic properties and diverse cultural heritage of the Santa Fe area, and to educate the public about Santa Fe's history and the importance of preservation.

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APRIL 2015 EVENTS CALENDAR

Through April 20 at the El Zaguán

Gallery: An exhibition, *Color Us Caring*, by resident artist Dominic Cappello.

April 24, 2015 at the El Zaguán

Gallery: A new exhibition anchored by resident photographer Anna Yarrow.

What If? An Exhibition + Reading

Art Opening: 5-7 pm

Poetry Reading: 7-8 pm

Artist-in-residence Anna Yarrow presents a group show in collaboration with Edie Tsong and the Cut+Paste Society.

Women visual artists and writers explore dream-space, possibility, and creative tension by asking the question:

What If . . . ?

The show will also be open during regular HSFF office hours.

May 10, 2015, 1-4 pm: The Historic Santa Fe Foundation Annual Mother's Day Tour. Four downtown locations on an elegant walking tour. Tickets available for the general public at each location. Members are encouraged to buy ahead of time at the HSFF office to receive Member special discount pricing.

To check your HSFF membership status and to renew or become a member, contact Jacqueline or Bonney at (505) 983-2567.

Please send us information about Foundation-related events in Santa Fe: info@historicsantafe.org.

