

# HISTORIC SANTA FE

MONTHLY E-MAGAZINE OF THE HISTORIC SANTA FE FOUNDATION NOV. 2015





# INSIDE HISTORIC SANTA FE

Old and new. Fitting for the coming of the end of the year. There is a burst of activity at the Historic Santa Fe Foundation as volunteers on the Archive Committee flood the office fueled by a grant for organizing the files. New employees have come this month to help us maintain our momentum in becoming a very relevant organization for the times. Our files are full of fascinating materials and we are working to get them in shape for use by researchers and historic home owners looking for information on their houses or neighborhoods.

**Mara Saxer** comes to us from New England, returning to where she grew up and takes over as Preservation Specialist, picking up where Charles Coffman left off after his retirement.

**Melanie McWhorter** has jumped into organizing our new database for better communication with members and highlighting our Annual Year-End Giving Campaign.



We interview both Mara and Melanie inside this issue. We also follow my own proclivities with a review of a book that was first printed 75 years ago in a new/old look at New Mexico.

#### ACCOMPLISHING MUCH

We have accomplished much this year, and are not done yet with a month and half to go. Our printed Winter 2015-2016 Newsletter will be coming in the mail in the next several weeks, as will our Annual Appeal Letter.

You all have supported us very graciously and generously this year, but the Foundation has needs that continue and grow as we add programs and outreach to make the history, culture, architecture and landscape accessible and understood to all. I would ask that you help us again as we finish a very accomplished year at the Historic Santa Fe Foundation.

**As always, we look forward to hearing from you.**

—Pete Warzel, Executive Director, HSFF





# BOOK REVIEW FOCUS ON CULTURE+HISTORY

## OLD ROADS

### **A Book Review in Arrears**

At down times I look through the shelves of the Foundation's randomly filed library for something new to me about the history or prehistory of our city and state. There are wonderful books here, all stamped on the page edge with our HSFF logo. I have read *Old Santa Fe* in all its Twitchell imaginative glory.

*The Missions of New Mexico 1776* is precious. I rediscovered Stan Crawford's *Mayordomo* and decided to rush down to the Farmer's Market to tell him what a great book it is, as if he needs or cares to know. This past week I found a dense hardcover simply titled *New Mexico*. Normally I pass on general histories on any subject as being too quick an overview when I am after the substance and detail of a more focused work.



I am grateful I picked this one off the shelf.

*New Mexico: A Guide to the Colorful State*, a book in the American Guide Series, is a gem from 1940. It is in fact a tour guide of our state, but oh so much more. The WPA engaged writers across the nation to write guides for all fifty states and selected cities and regions. These New Mexico Writers' Project authors remain anonymous, but it is clear from their words that they were significant talents, well versed in the history and landscape of the state in question.

*New Mexico* reminds me of the detailed and dense tour guides my friends in Europe still use to plan weekend excursions to monasteries or cathedrals, small vineyards and arcane museums. There is enough detail to educate, but also the typically American anecdotes and hearsay that turn driving directions into an adventure rather than a trip. Some of the joy here is that this is 1940, so I-25 does not yet exist. Directions are given on the old routes I-85 (Santa Fe Drive in Denver) from Raton Pass to Santa Fe. Roads now well paved (as well as is possible in New Mexico) and marked with state numbers are described as dirt roads with landmarks to find and make the turns. As far as I can tell, the High Road is not

yet really delineated—the world seems to end at Chimayo. And French, New Mexico (elev. 5,804 ft., pop. 398) is no longer the trading and shipping point at the junction of the Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railways, in fact, it is technically a ghost town.

Why write about this old book here? We all enjoy road trips. It is an elegant travel guide to the state, in enough detail and with enough forgotten places to be interesting, and useful, to the membership of this Foundation. It is a piece of history itself, part of an undertaking that collected significant writers and artists to produce work that is of exceptional quality (the photographs are black and white images made by Ernest Knee, Laura Gilpin and Ina Cassidy, in stunning detail printed in this book). It also also a reminder that history changes over time. The research and writing here are precise, but at the end of 2015 some of it is wrong. No matter; the roads and side roads that get you to that conclusion are worth the trip.

This is the way a tour guide should be—hefty with pages, photos and maps to make notes upon, to dog-ear and mark with pieces of paper. A partner in the passenger seat can given directions and read aloud the stories of place. GPS and



a computer voice, photos and sound-bites on a website do not cut it when you are looking for substance. This is substantial and as good as it gets

As an end note ... I am a page writer, a maker of rubrications in books, and this being an HSFF library book I could not indulge my usual urges to mark it up. So I went on a two day quest to find a copy on the Internet. They are there in the on-line antiquarian bookstores. All are missing the map that came originally tucked into a paper pocket glued to the back board. I found one on a Saturday walk here in town in a used book store on Gar-

field Street. 1940, third printing, missing the paper cover but tight, clean, and containing the Official New Mexico Road Map where I-85 runs from Raton to Santa Fe ... where I-25 is supposed to be. Look for one for yourself. That trip of finding is worth the trips that can come from this guidebook from the past.

## SPONSOR

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation sincerely thanks **Safety+Success Communities** for its support in making this month's edition of *Historic Santa Fe* e-zine possible.





## **INTERVIEW: MARA SAXER AND MELANIE MCWHORTER, NEW STAFF AT HSFF**

**Interviewed by Pete Warzel**

**Mara Saxer is our newly appointed Preservation Specialist at the Historic Santa Fe Foundation. Melanie McWhorter joins us as Development Associate. Let's talk to them both as they start a new era at the Foundation.**

**Q: You both are from elsewhere but had ties here in Santa Fe. Give us some sense of deciding to live here.**

**Mara:** I was born in Austria but grew up in Santa Fe, with frequent trips back to visit family. My childhood involved a lot of duality—of location, of language, of culture. I think the frequent juxtapositions made me particularly aware of the sense of place

found here in northern New Mexico. It also left me with the perpetual habit of comparing other places against Santa Fe, and while I've lived in some wonderful areas, it's a hard city to compete with.

**Melanie:** I traveled across country from South Carolina to a photography job on the dude ranches of Jackson Hole, WY, in early 1997, and stopped by Santa Fe on the way to my final destination. Coming over the hill from Pojoaque, I remember the feeling of Santa Fe sneaking up on me. The structures were so hidden, so respectful of the surrounding landscape. We stopped for only a day in New Mexico, but I knew that I wanted to live for a while in Santa Fe or Taos.

The summer passed, and the fall leaves started to change. The chill was in the air in Jackson and the prospect of 40-degree-below-zero weather did not sound enticing. Stopping in Taos after a wonderful drive from Wyoming, I discovered the only means of employment seemed to be nude modeling. I moved on. Santa Fe was my final destination. In the 18 years since, I have made Santa Fe my home, found a husband whose family has been here dating back to Vargas, and settled in to raise two beautiful children.

## **Q: What is special in northern NM and Santa Fe?**

**Mara:** What isn't?

Less snarky answer: Everyone says this, but it's true—the light is just incomparable here. It's Light with a capital L. A lot about the place and culture here is unique, but I think that light is a jumping off point for many things.

**Melanie:** Will my answers be much different than the multiple qualities that seduce many a visitor to move here year after year? The distinct four seasons, unlimited access to fresh air and outdoors, a ski (snowboarding) area about 30 minutes away, lots of art and artists, rich culture, and GREEN CHILE (red is a very close second)!

## **Q: Two distinctly different jobs—Preservation Specialist and Development Associate - or are they?**

**Mara:** I see the work of everyone at the Foundation as moving toward the same goal. There may be different tasks and focuses, but it all goes together in the end.

**Melanie:** There is a relationship to our jobs, most definitely. I believe that we can work closely together so that we are both aware of particular projects on the



properties that need repairs and renovations. Development can target certain fundraising efforts to cover specific projects on the respective properties. I think that a donor would love to walk by a historic building and think that they made a great difference in the preservation of that structure, but also contributed to the maintenance of the aesthetic and style of Santa Fe.

**Q: What do you see as the priority issues for HSFF over the next year?**

**Mara:** Gaining a clear picture of the conditions of our historic properties in order to best conserve them. Creating opportunities for people to experience those properties, and all the historic places here, while also marrying an experience of the area's cultural traditions to the physical spaces. Providing tools and guidance to owners of historic properties so they can be good stewards of those places.

**Melanie:** Wow, that is a tough question because I have been thinking about HSFF since the moment I found out about the position. Pete and our resident and volunteer Dom have been working on the website, but I think we need to finish that project very soon and I will help with that. We want to further develop some of the educational programs, in-

crease membership and our outreach into the preservation, historical, architectural communities and incorporate more of a general audience including an expanded social media presence. We want to utilize our properties more fully for the benefit of our membership and the organization. We have lots of ideas moving forward.

**Q: Can we, HSFF, make a difference in not only preserving history and cultural landscape, but in helping the city grow? In other words is there a conflict or a synergy between preservation and economic development?**

**Mara:** HSFF absolutely has a role to play in the growth and development of Santa Fe. To attempt to develop a city without attention to or use of its history and existing fabric is to leave a wealth of resources untapped. Santa Fe is a living city, you can't open the book of a life and jump in the middle, at least not if you hope to successfully integrate the new.

**Melanie:** I bumped into someone I know on the street a few days after starting this job and told him that I was now working at HSFF. I cannot recall the exact phrasing, but he said that I was now going to be telling people what to do. It was a quick off-the-cuff remark, but I think that he saw some preservation or-

ganizations as obstructionists. Santa Fe's historical buildings are an asset to the community and lend the city its charm and alluring qualities. Without preservation efforts, economic development and growth would be more difficult. I know that our board and director are thinking of ideas on how we can use our properties to help the city grow economically.

**Q: Short term plans for you at HSFF?**

**Mara:** Get the door code for El Zaguán right.

**Melanie:** My short terms goals will be to consolidate all the many files containing information about the foundation into the new software system, work on updating social media including HSFF and our tenant and resident artist events, and revamp the website.

**Q: Longer term goals?**

**Mara:** Keep the Foundation's properties shipshape and acting as examples of preservation done well. Visit—at least from the outside—all of the places on our Worthy of Preservation register. Get my hands dirty with some adobe, lime plaster and paint.

**Melanie:** Focus on some of the priorities that we talked about earlier and create a relationship with some of the hotels and tourism-related businesses so that we can include visitors and potential future residents in the organization's activities.

**Q: Wish list for the holidays for HSFF? For yourself?**

**Mara:** The shop could use tools! Hand tools, power tools, carpentry, plastering new, gently used, antique, we use it all. My personal wish list is actually fairly similar ....

**Melanie:** Wish list for HSFF ... High membership participation for our first year of Giving Tuesday, on December 1st, and to create a wonderful schedule of educational talks and community events for 2016. For me, well, a healthy, happy family (a loaded stocking will not be left unopened either).

**Thanks for time Mara and Melanie.**

**E-ZINE CREDITS**

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# HSFF 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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# HSFF STAFF

*Executive Director*

Pete Warzel

*Administrative Assistant*

Jacqueline Hill

*Restoration Specialists*

Mara Saxer

Bobby Wilson

*Intern in Oral History*

Hana Crawford

*Development Associate*

Melanie McWhorter



# NOV 2015 **EVENTS CALENDAR**

**Spirit+Bone: Women in Nature. Photography by Anna Yarrow.** Currently at the Gallery at El Zaguán: Anna Yarrow, resident artist at El Zaguán and the Cut and Paste Society present Spirit and Bone, an unscripted collaboration between women and nature—photographer and subject.

**Nov. 26: Happy Thanksgiving**

**Fri., Nov. 20, St. Francis Auditorium, 6:00-7:30 PM: Works by New Mexico Composers,** Santa Fe Community Orchestra. Free. Donations welcome.

**Fri., Nov. 27, Santa Fe Plaza: Christmas tree lighting with Santa Claus.**

**Sat., Nov. 28: Ski Santa Fe opening.**

SHARE YOUR EVENTS

Please send us information about Foundation-related events in Santa Fe: [info@historicsantafe.org](mailto:info@historicsantafe.org).

SPIRIT+BONE: WOMEN IN NATURE BY EL ZAGUÁN ARTIST RESIDENT ANNA YARROW

