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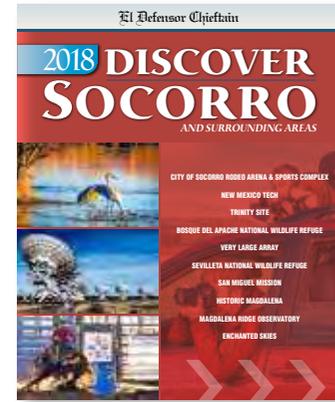
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Jonathan Miller | El Defensor Chieftain

Welcome to Socorro

Welcome to Socorro County, known for its friendly spirit, incredible bird watching opportunities, world-class science and technology developments, fascinating cultural attractions and year-round outdoor recreation. From the mountains, to the desert, to the river valley — a diverse landscape offers everyone something to love.

Socorro is a close-knit but welcoming community. People here are never in too much of a hurry to stop and chat for a moment, and always have a smile and a wave — even for those they don't know. Some families have been here for hundreds of years and some for only a few, but they all are willing to stop and listen.

The city boasts an active village plaza surrounded by shops, eateries, a historic mission church and government buildings — bringing a focus to the area rarely found in the world today.

It is now home to a new rodeo arena at the City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex. With seating of 800, the rodeo arena hosted its first competitions in 2017 and has a full schedule of events this year.

Many community events are centered at the plaza, including the community music parties such as SocorroFest, car shows, the annual Christmas luminaria arts stroll, several parade routes and the farmer's market.

Looking west, one finds a history of mining and ranching as well as modern technological marvels.

While old-timers return to Magdalena each year to celebrate



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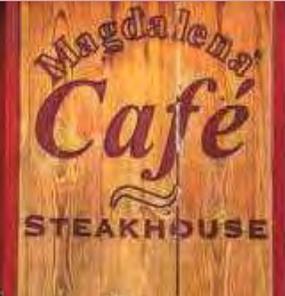
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Magdalena

The history of Magdalena, New Mexico, begins with the discovery of lead and zinc in the 1860s in the Magdalena Mountains up to the present day with its growing reputation as a destination for professional and amateur astronomers seeking dark skies and artists escaping urban areas.

Serving both the ranching and mining industries, Magdalena was once a bustling Old West town in the most traditional sense. Saloons and hotels catered to the cowboys, miners and frontier families that lived in the area. Cattle rustling, shootouts on Main Street and barroom brawls are part of the town's legendary history. In fact, WS Ranch manager Capt. William French relates that Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid once worked at least one cattle drive into Magdalena, saying they were two of most well-behaved cowboys he knew.

Magdalena received its name when Spanish soldiers passing through saw a rock formation resembling the face of a "Lady on the Mountain". The priest they were traveling with was reminded of a similar peak in Spain called 'La Sierra de Maria Magdalena.' Early settlers believed you were protected if you passed beneath the shadow of the "lady on the Mountain". The formation can be seen on the west side of Magdalena Mountain.

Nicknamed "Trail's End," Magdalena was the destination for cattle drives on the "Hoof Highway." The Stock Driveway was the route used by ranchers and cowboys to drive cattle and sheep from as far away as Springerville, Arizona, across the San Agustín Plains to the stockyards in Magdalena. The driveway was used annually from 1885 when a railroad spur was built connecting Magdalena to Socorro, and became a designated driveway by the Grazing Homestead Act of 1916. The cattle-driveway was 5 to 10 miles wide and extended about 125 miles west to Springerville. In 1971, semi tractor trailers supplanted transport by train and the last cattle drive was in 1972.

Another branch of the trail extended from the sprawling WS Ranch in Alma and merged with the main trail at Datil. Cowboys could drive cattle about 10 miles a day, while herders moved their sheep about 5 miles a day, allowing them to graze along the way. Wells were drilled every 10 miles to accommodate the herds.

In 1919, as many as 150,000 sheep and 21,000 cattle used the trail to reach the stockyard. The original stockyards are still intact on North Ash St. in Magdalena, although the railroad tracks are long since gone.

But Magdalena also owes its origins to the mining industry. The ghost town of Kelly, three and a half miles south of Magdalena, was once the center of mining in the area, and boasted a population of 3,000, supported by the numerous mines in the Magdalena Mountains. The Kelly Mine, named after Andy Kelly when the town was not much more than a mining camp, was the most productive, and its headframe still stands.

■ See **Magdalena**, Page 9

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Magdalena

Continued from Page 8

The operators of Kelly Mine were at least partly responsible for bringing the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad spur to Magdalena, so its ore could be brought to Socorro some 20 miles away by rail to be smelted.

Much of the town's history is preserved at the Box Car Museum, located at the loading dock of the restored Santa Fe Railroad depot, which now serves as the Magdalena Public Library. The museum has undergone a recent renovation and is scheduled to reopen on June 2, 2018. The collection includes photographs, memorabilia and artifacts donated by residents that tell the story of miners, cowboys as well as the homesteaders and Navajo natives who settled the area. Many of the town's historic buildings are still in use, either as private homes or businesses. Unfortunately, fire has claimed most of the hotels, bars and mercantile that once lined the main thoroughfares.

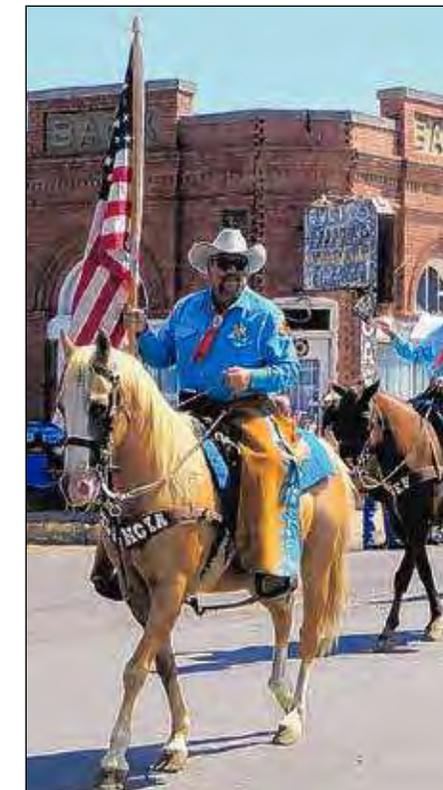
The Magdalena Hall Hotel built in 1917 and restored a few years ago is still operational and has a café on the ground floor.

Today, the Village of Magdalena is home to roughly 900 residences. There's a vibrant art scene that hosts an annual open studio and gallery tour the first weekend in May as well as other art and cultural events at the Magdalena Public Library and local galleries year-round. Its history, galleries, dark skies and outdoor recreation opportunities make it a popular tourist destination.

For the past 46 years, the village of Magdalena has celebrated its history as an Old West mining and cattle-shipping center on the second weekend of July. The event, Old Timers Reunion and Rodeo, features a rodeo and street dance on Friday; a parade, barbecue cookout and more rodeo events on Saturday; a pancake breakfast and the Kelly Mine 5K walk-run on Sunday; and arts, crafts and music throughout the weekend.

The 25th Annual Enchanted Skies

■ See **Magdalena**, Page 10



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Magdalena

Continued from Page 9

Star Party hosted by the Magdalena Astronomical Society, held over four days in October, attracts star-gazers from around the county. One visiting astronomer was quoted as saying it has arguably

one of the darkest sites in the continental US, as well as one of the driest.

There's plenty to see and do within easy driving distance of Magdalena.

The National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Very Large Array is just 19 miles west on U.S. 60. The Alamo Navajo Indian reservation is a half-hour drive north on Highway 169. There are numer-

ous hiking trails and camping sites in the surrounding Cibola National Forest. Deer and elk hunters also are attracted to the area during hunting season.

The Cibola National Forest Ranger Station on First Street has information and maps.

For more information on Magdalena, visit www.magdalena-nm.com.

Welcome

Continued from Page 5

the village's glory days as a cattle railhead, just a few miles away on a 10,600-foot ridge in the Magdalena Mountains stands a state-of-the-art, rapid-response 2.4-meter optical telescope — the Magdalena Ridge Observatory. The MRO will eventually become home to 10 telescopes that will make up the Magdalena Ridge Observatory Interferometer (MROI). When complete, the 10 telescopes of MROI will be arrayed in a Y-shape and will be able to achieve a resolution 100 times greater than the Hubble Telescope.

A few more miles west on the Plains of San Agustin lies the Karl P. Jansky Very Large Array radio telescope.

While much of the county is rural, it

also plays host to one of the nation's premier research universities, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology.

The campus is also home to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, where a state-of-the-art mineral museum attracts visitors from around the world. But science and technology are not the only draws to the New Mexico Tech campus; the 18-hole golf course attracts golfers of all levels.

Flowing through the heart of Socorro County, the Rio Grande is the center of the agricultural community and also affords numerous opportunities for nature lovers to explore unique environments. Tens of thousands of visitors come to see the two wildlife refuges in the county — many to attend the annual Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Sevilleta National Wildlife

Refuge also provides many birding and wildlife opportunities.

Hundreds more come to visit the 150-year-old Fort Craig, one of the most important Civil War-era Union forts in the West.

Socorro is a place to get away from the big city hustle yet still participate in a variety of community activities — everything is here. Whatever your mood, there is a place in the county to satisfy your hankering.

Whether you feel like hiking in the mountains or sitting in a tavern listening to the blues, we have it. You can go places to hang out with people, to enrich your mind or be alone with nature. It's a free and open county, uncrowded and friendly.

We offer this guide as a gateway to your Socorro adventure.

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A rich history

More than two centuries before Christopher Columbus' fabled sojourn to the New World from Spain, Piro Indians — the southernmost Pueblo tribe — inhabited nearly two dozen villages along the Rio Grande from San Marcial to La Joya. The Piro, living in pueblos since at least the 1200s, weren't the only Indians to call this land home — Apache Indians also inhabited much of the area that today is called the Middle Rio Grande Valley.

As the Spanish explorers in the mid-16th century began to make their way north from Mexico, they followed the Rio Grande and established El Camino Real — the Royal Road into “New Spain.” As a result, they were frequent visitors at the Piro villages.

Socorro got its name in 1598 from explorer Juan de Oñate, whose tired and hungry men were given food and shelter by the Piro.

He renamed the Pilabo pueblo “Socorro,” which means “help” or “succor” in Spanish.

In the early 1600s, Franciscan friars built missions at Socorro, Senecú, near San Marcial, and Sevilleta, near La Joya.

In 1680, when the Pueblo Indians of northern New Mexico staged their revolt against the Spaniards, the people of Socorro and surrounding areas fled.

The Piro did not participate in the revolt and headed south to El Paso, Texas, with the Spanish troops and settlers.

When the Spaniards came back up the valley, they found that the abandoned pueblos from Senecú to Sevilleta had been pillaged by the Apaches. For the next 100 years, there were few settlers in the area.

The resettlement of Socorro began in the early 1800s. In 1815, 21 families were given land grants to settle here.

Socorro flourished because of the fertile farm land and grazing along the river; however, occasional attacks by the Apaches remained a constant threat.

When New Mexico became a territory of the U.S. in 1848, the region saw some relief as the military established a series of forts for protection against the Apaches.



Photo courtesy of Socorro Historical Society

In Socorro County, the Army established Fort Conrad in 1851, but found it indefensible and relocated to the newly-built Fort Craig in 1854.

The Civil War made its way into New Mexico and Socorro County. On Feb. 21, 1862, Union and Confederate forces engaged in a day-long battle south of Socorro near Fort Craig — known as the Battle of Valverde. On March 30, the Confederates met stiffer resistance and lost the Battle of Glorietta near Santa Fe, which forced their retreat from New Mexico back to Texas.

The Battle of Valverde is re-enacted every year in Socorro County, with hundreds of Civil War buffs in attendance both participating and watching the many demonstrations of warfare.

Socorro and the surrounding area boomed after the Civil War, thanks to mining strikes — lead and zinc in the Magdalena area and silver on Socorro Peak. The railroad arrived in 1882, fueled from the vast coal fields east of San Antonio.

Socorro, with her mines, mills and smelters, became the center to this diverse mining activity. In 1889, the government chose Socorro as the site for its new School of Mines (now New Mexico Institute of

Mining and Technology, or New Mexico Tech for short), which opened in 1893. The glory days of mining are recalled each year in Socorro during the '49ers celebrations, events put on by the school to relive its early days and pay tribute to the area's mining history.

Livestock, ranching and agriculture have always been integral to the fabric of the area and those who call it home. Because the county contains two of the nation's most important wildlife refuges, nature plays a key role of life in Socorro as well.

The area's rich and varied history has spawned a number of annual celebrations that continue to grow in popularity, many of which can be found throughout this guide.

Socorro's Free State of Mind

This year marked the 65th anniversary of the “Free State of Socorro” — a movement, started by accident, that placed Socorro in the spotlight across the country. For a time, Socorro declared itself a free sovereign territory from the State of New Mexico. In the 1950s, District Judge Charles Fowler began an investigation that determined the city of Socorro

■ See **History**, Page 13

History

Continued from Page 12

had virtually no laws — he was quoted in the Socorro Chieftain, stating “city laws were indistinguishable from mere scraps of paper.”

A local attorney, Claron Waggoner, and his colleague, attorney Garnett Burkes, continued to investigate Socorro's legal status. What they found was truly intriguing. When the Spanish Empire fell, in 1821, all Spanish lands were converted to Mexican land grants. With statehood, the constitution provided that all Mexican land grants become part of the state of New Mexico.

Socorro was an exception. It seems the Spanish “Provincia de Socorro” land grant was never turned over to Mexican authorities and omitted from the 1848 annexation to the territory of New Mexico. Legally, Socorro remained a Spanish Land Grant.

Therefore, the two attorneys concluded Socorro County is not and never was a legal part of the state of New Mexico, and possibly not even the United States.

The next issue of the Socorro Chieftain announced these findings under the headline: “Socorro May Establish New Free State.”

The editor at the time speculated this could mean Socorroans were due a full refund of federal and state taxes since 1912 statehood. Without taxes, there would be a dramatic drop in the prices of liquor, cigarettes and automobiles to boost Socorro's struggling economy.

He reasoned that with no taxes, Socorro would be a “free state” in which to live. The term “Free State of Socorro” quickly stuck as area newspapers picked up the story.

A phenomenon unique to Socorro was born. Over the following weeks, both newspapers in town — the Socorro Chieftain and the Spanish language El Defensor — published lengthy articles inciting the townspeople.

Letters supporting secession from across the country were also printed.

The people of Socorro had no intentions of seceding from the Union.

They agreed they were all Americans and wanted to remain Americans. The

“Free State” referred to taxes, not U.S. citizenship, although it provided some long-awaited leverage.

All Socorro wanted to do was get the attention of lawmakers in Santa Fe; little tax money was being returned to the county.

Socorro gave a convincing impression of forming a sovereign republic by erecting a Port of Entry on U.S. 85 (now I-25) and charging 25 cents to pass through the county. Passports and citizenship certificates were printed. For one dollar, you could become a citizen and travel the county's highways for free.

This got Santa Fe's attention. It also got the attention of the rest of the country, climaxed by a three-page feature article in Life magazine in June.

Almost overnight, Socorro went from an obscure desert town to a tourist destination. The Free State of Socorro lasted into 1955.

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Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array

The Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array is the world's most famous radio telescope, an iconic sight of 27 giant dish antennas rising spectacularly from the high desert of the Plains of San Agustin west of Magdalena.

For more than four decades, the VLA has been a premier tool for researchers from around the world who seek to advance our understanding of the Universe. Scientists have used the VLA to make landmark discoveries across the entire range of astronomical specialties, and its many scientific contributions are found throughout modern astronomy textbooks.

In addition to its scientific importance, the VLA has captured the imagination of filmmakers, photographers, artists, and writers. Images of the VLA regularly appear in feature films, documentaries, commercials, magazines, newspapers, and advertisements around the globe.

This is the iconic installation used for backdrops in the movies.

It was the setting for much of the 1997 film "Contact" starring Jodie Foster, as well as "2010: The Year We

Make Contact", "Independence Day" and "Armageddon" among others.

Thousands of tourists from dozens of countries make the VLA a travel destination every year.

The VLA was dedicated in 1980 and provided new and unmatched research capabilities to the world's astronomers. In 2012, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) completed a decade-long upgrade project that completely transformed the VLA, turning it into an advanced technological marvel with vastly more powerful research capabilities.

The 230-ton antennas, as much as 22 miles distant from each other, all work together as a single scientific instrument, able to make previously impossible discoveries. The VLA is helping scientists address some of the greatest challenges of 21st-Century astrophysics, including deciphering the origins of stars and planets, the formation of the earliest galaxies in the young Universe, and the still-unknown nature of Dark Matter and Dark Energy.

Visitors can learn about the history,

technology, and scientific accomplishments of the VLA and enjoy the spectacle of the antennas and facilities of this unique site that continues its decades-long service at the frontier of science, blazing new trails of human knowledge.

The Visitor Center features an award-winning film narrated by Jodie Foster, plus exhibits describing radio astronomy and the VLA. A self-guided walking-tour path features large, informative signs and takes you to the base of one of the giant dish antennas.

The path also leads to a unique, walk-through sundial that incorporates elements of radio astronomy and astronomical history. Leashed pets are welcome along the walking tour path.

The VLA is 50 miles west of Socorro on U.S. Highway 60. Signs mark the route to the Visitor Center. The VLA is open daily from 8:30 a.m. until sunset. The VLA Gift Shop is open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. daily except on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years Eve. For more information, call the VLA Visitor Center at (575) 835-7410, or visit www.nrao.edu.



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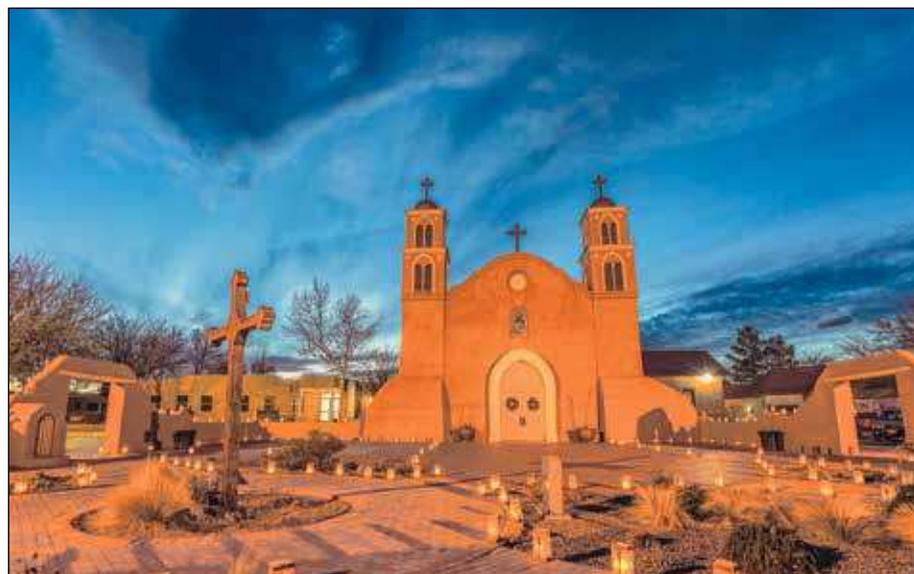
San Miguel Mission

Founded 403 years ago, San Miguel Catholic Church could rightfully claim to be one of the oldest churches in the United States. San Miguel has a unique history, recognized by the Catholic Church as the Nuestra Señora del Socorro (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) mission not long after Don Juan de Oñate led a caravan of Spanish soldiers and colonists up the Jornada del Muerto, which became known as El Camino Real.

The main body of the church, which is the part built between 1615 and 1626, seats about 250 people, although many more would attend services in the early 1880s when there were no pews and the people either stood or knelt on the floor. In 1853 another wing was built unto the church and this accommodates another 150.

Founded by two Franciscan priests traveling with Oñate in 1598, the mission now known as San Miguel Church (built over the mission's original foundation), gave the city of Socorro its name. Since it was first built in 1615, San Miguel Church has stood for 403 years at the center of the community.

The mission was abandoned during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and because of



Colleen Gino | For El Defensor Chieftain

repeated Apache raids it was a few years before the church was restored, eventually being renamed to honor the Archangel St. Michael under miraculous circumstances. Father John Anasiudu refers to San Miguel Mission as the mother church of Socorro County, and it represents the faith and life of the Catholic Church.

San Miguel has 850 registered parish-

ioners and oversees the area mission churches — Polvadera, San Antonio, Magdalena, Lemitar, Luis Lopez (the Mission of San Jose), Alamillo, Riley, Kelly, and the Newman Center on School of Mines Road near New Mexico Tech.

The three day San Miguel Fiesta will be held Friday through Sunday, Sept. 28-30.

Salinas Pueblo Monument

Located in the far northeast corner of Socorro County, Gran Quivira is one of three pueblo ruins that make up the Salinas Pueblo Missions, a National Monument.

Abo, Quarai and Gran Quivira were home to a people who lived in stone, apartment-style complexes for centuries until they abandoned the area in the 1670s.

They forged a stable agricultural society and participated, through rule and ritual, in the cycles of nature.

These Pueblo Indians were a mix of two ancient southwestern cultural traditions — the Ancestral Puebloans, or Anasazi, and Mogollon — whose roots date back 7,000 years.

When the Spanish came to the area some 400 years ago, they worked to Christianize the natives and had missions built at each pueblo.

At Gran Quivira two mission sites can be found, although one was never completed.

Remnants of kivas, used by the native people in practicing their own religion, are located nearby.

Gran Quivira, also known as Las Hermanas, is located about 20 miles south of U.S. 60 on Highway 55.

A visitor center for the Salinas Missions is located at the turn-off in Mountainair.

For more information, call 505-847-2585 or visit www.nps.gov/sapu.



Scott Turner | El Defensor Chieftain



Scott Turner | El Defensor Chieftain

New Loma Theater

Manzanares Street had the feel of a movie premiere on a Friday night in early November 2017.

All that was absent was the red carpet as the city of Socorro welcomed back its movie theater.

A large crowd was on hand for the street party before the showing of Thor: Ragnarok that included food, music and a ribbon cutting. The New Loma Theater reopened after being closed since 2014.

Socorro Mayor Ravi Bhasker voiced a hope the theater would help revitalize the area around Manzanares Street that leads up to the Plaza.

"We're very happy to see the Loma open, and the equipment that they've got, the 3D digital camera I think is going to be a huge upgrade," Bhasker said. "I just hope the crowds keep on coming. They can come and enjoy food, go over to the Cap (Capitol Bar) and then come back and watch a movie. I think it's going to be terrific. We have to support it, that's the big thing."

First State Bank also played an important role. New Mexico Tech signed a five-year lease from First State Bank for \$10 a year for the building.

"I am thrilled with the turnout," New Mexico Tech President Stephen Wells said of the grand opening. "Not only do we have this tonight, we had a full house with the students last night. We showed it to our students. We're just happy for our students and the community."

New Mexico Tech purchased the 3D digital camera, which allows the theater to run first run movies, which was not the case when it closed in 2014.

The New LOMA Theater

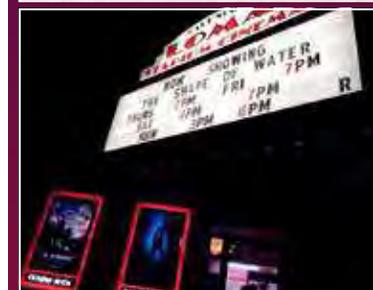
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New Mexico Tech

Heralded as one of the premier research universities in the U.S., New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, referred to locally as New Mexico Tech, was founded in 1889 as the New Mexico School of Mines. As the largest employer in the county, it is an important economic cornerstone to the area in addition to being a provider of world-class education.

The student population at Tech was 2,200 as of the Fall 2017 semester. Graduate and undergraduate degrees are offered in biology, engineering, math, physics, astronomy, computer science, earth sciences, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and more. A new building devoted solely to chemistry – named after retired school President Dan Lopez – opened for classes and research in 2017.

Stephen Wells succeeded Lopez as president in the summer of 2016.

Sometimes referred to, in jest, as a “research institution with a university attached,” the university has more than a dozen research divisions that allow for ground-breaking science to be conducted, rivaling research at much larger universities. New Mexico Tech has also been



New Mexico Tech photo

referred to as the “MIT of the Southwest.” The Magdalena Ridge Observatory and Interferometer on South Baldy Mountain in the Magdalena Mountains provide cutting edge astronomical research opportunities. Langmuir Lightning Lab, also on

South Baldy, is a world-class facility for studying thunderstorms and other atmospheric phenomena.

The largest research division at Tech is the Energetic Materials Research and

■ See **Tech**, Page 19

Tech

Continued from Page 18

Testing Center, which also conducts anti-terrorism training and land mine detection. Socorro residents are accustomed to earthshaking explosions and deep booms coming from the center’s 40-square-mile field laboratory surrounding ‘M’ Mountain. EMRTC has the ability to conduct tests involving over 20,000 pounds of explosives. EMRTC was also been a favorite setting for the television series “Mythbusters,” whose hosts and crew have made several trips to Socorro. In 2017, the peaks and valleys surrounding ‘M’ Mountain was chosen for the filming of the Warner Bros. blockbuster movie 12 Strong because of its resemblance to the rugged terrain of Afghanistan.

New Mexico Tech is well known among scientists, engineers and corporations, and that reputation gives Tech graduates an advantage in the job market, often with higher-paying salaries. A finding released by the U.S. Department of Education showed that four year graduates of the university earn an average salary higher than all other institutions of higher learning in

New Mexico.

While education and research are top-notch at Tech, other opportunities for students and community members exist in abundance. The school has more than 40 clubs and organizations catering to such interests as rock climbing, caving, skiing, off-road cycling, dancing, rugby, storm chasing and more.

The Performing Arts Series at Tech brings musicians and artists from around the world to the Macey Center, where more than a dozen shows are performed each year for students and the public at large.

Tech’s year-round swimming pool and full-featured gym are available to students and faculty. The university’s outdoor facilities include a rock-climbing wall, tennis courts and intramural fields.

Tech also offers classes to the general public through its Community College program. Offerings include, but are not limited to: fine arts such as photography, ceramics, woodworking, glass and metal arts; fitness classes like zumba-aquatic and aerobics; martial arts classes in karate, taijutsu, kung fu and tai chi; and dance classes for country-western as well as belly dancing.



Scott Turner | El Defensor Chieftain

To find out more about New Mexico Tech, visit www.nmt.edu.



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Mineral Museum

Socorro has a treasure chest at the corner of Bullock Avenue and Leroy Place, but it's not filled with the likes of pearls or jewels or gold coins. The chest is, instead, a museum at the Bureau of Geology and the treasure is one of the most unique collections of rocks and minerals in the United States. So rare is the collection it was given the honorary title "Coronado's Treasure Chest" by the New Mexico Cuarto-Centennial Commission in 1939. Gold, silver, and precious gems, the objects of the Conquistador's travels and travails, glitter on glass shelves next to other spectacular mineral forms.

The Mineral Museum in the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources' building on the New Mexico Tech campus is a rockhoulder's dream and features more than 15,000 specimens, with a special emphasis on minerals found in New Mexico.

Highlights include a collection of gold, silver and precious gems as well as excellent samples of the rare Smithsonian from the Kelly Mine at Magdalena and a stunning ultraviolet mineral exhibit.

Historic tools and equipment used in the mining industry throughout time are displayed in the main gallery. Other



exhibits include meteorites; fossils; thematic displays illustrating the mineral wealth from the Las Cruces, Silver City, Bingham, Magdalena, Golden, Dixon and Grants areas; and more.

Visitors may also purchase particular specimens. Proceeds from the sales are used to purchase new materials for the

museum.

In addition to the display gallery, the Mineral Museum maintains a large reference collection for scientific research. Access to the reference collection can be arranged by contacting the museum curator, mineralogist Virgil Lueth.

One of the museum's missions is to help members of the general public identify rocks and minerals.

"If you find an interesting rock, bring to me. It's part of my job description," Lueth said. "The museum serves an inspiration to people devoted to rock-hounding."

The 39th annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium is scheduled for November 10-11. This annual forum held at the Macey Center is for both professionals and amateurs interested in mineralogy.

The Bureau of Geology is located at the corner of Bullock Ave. and Leroy Place. Open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call 575-835-5490 or visit geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/.

Besides the main facility in Socorro, the Bureau has a satellite office in Albuquerque and a small office in Carlsbad.

El Defensor Chieftain

Performing Arts Series

Deemed the "coolest" program in the city of Socorro, New Mexico Tech's Performing Arts Series brings the local community together and has something for everyone who is interested in music, theater, dance and more.

The dozen shows, as well as the five free concerts, are chosen each year with a little bit of everything in interest.

Shows are always a big hit in Socorro, with hundreds of people of all ages and from all backgrounds populating the audience. And because of the wide variety of performances, more and more people from the surrounding area-Los Lunas, Belen, Truth or Consequences and Bosque Farms-are attending shows.

The Performing Arts Series has been described as a diamond in the desert, and both performers and audience members agree that it brings in some of the best performance variety in the region.



PAS organizes a huge July 4 celebration with music, family activities and a spectacular fireworks display. New Mexico Tech also supports the PAS with the Presidential Chamber Music Series, hosted by violinist Willy Sucre who performs with string quartets, piano sextets and piano quartets.

PAS is partnered with the Socorro

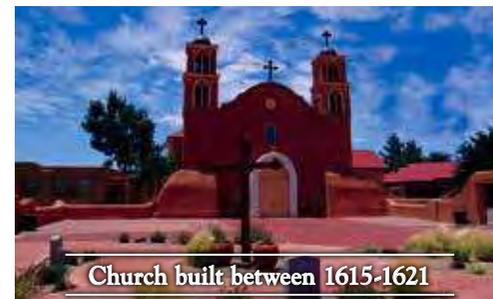
Consolidated School District, Magdalena Schools and Alamo Navajo School board to bring educational youth performances and workshops to all of the communities.

For those looking for entertainment before the show, Tech Club Macey is a social gathering opportunity held prior to each show with food and drinks for those who are 21 and older.

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Jonathan Miller | El Defensor Chieftain

Rodeo and Sports Complex

Socorro's state of the art Rodeo Arena is one of the county's newest attractions, and it officially opened its doors in 2017 with the Clint Benjamin Rope for Hope last February.

As one of Socorro County's most prominent spectator attractions the Rodeo Arena, located in south Socorro just off Highway 60 on the road to Magdalena the arena seats 800 people and will eventually be expanded to around 2,000 seats. The entrance is off Park Street at the Socorro Fairgrounds.

The arena is handicap accessible and features a covered roof.

Much of the funding for the project was originally spearheaded by former New Mexico Speaker of the House Don Tripp and New Mexico State Senator Howie Morales.

"It's a fabulous installation," Tripp said. "What they've done has been tremendous."

Over the past year the facility has

played host to several events, including the New Mexico High School State Rodeo, the regional World Series of Rodeo and several horse-mounted shooting events. The \$2.5 million facility was funded in part by a Lodger's Tax loan and features 98 covered horse stalls.

The project, which had been five years in the making also has stables built to accommodate 100 animals and the site features 50 RV hook-ups with free Wi-Fi access.

The stables were recently used to house horses for the movie "12 Strong", which utilized several local Socorro County extras and premiered in January.

Parts of the movie were filmed at locations around Socorro.

Socorro Tourism Director Jim Dewey Brown said in 2017 that the reception to the arena has been a great one.

"The people who are coming here and using the arena, they love it," he said. "We've had people from a couple associa-

tions who said they'd like to have all of their events there."

The rodeo floor itself is 39,000 square feet with top of the line Priefert Roping Chutes.

While the arena was primarily designed for rodeo events Socorro, it could also host polo tournaments, motocross events, dog shows and outdoor concerts.

Roping events have already been held at the complex, which is also home to the Socorro Soccer Complex where the Warriors and Lady Warriors high school teams compete as well as American Youth Soccer Organization events.

The City of Socorro also plans on adding a playground to the already accommodating recreation area, which currently also features a snack stand and restroom facility.

The rodeo is hosting its second full schedule of events in 2018, including high school rodeo competition.

New Mexico Tech Golf Course



Considered by many to be a vibrant desert oasis, the New Mexico Tech Golf Course offers golfers of all skill levels a fun, challenging and scenic experience.

Set almost directly at the foot of "M" Mountain, the 18-hole championship course consists of rolling hills, breathtaking elevation changes and potent views of the Rio Grande Valley.

The course is generally considered a short one by golf standards, giving golfers the opportunity to work on their precision game, but varying fairway lengths also allow the big swingers to let loose with their drivers.

New Mexico Tech Golf Course features three par-five holes. Hole No. 1 is 457 yards from the white tee, and the championship tee is a full 100 yards farther than that.

Hole No. 5 is a true test of length and skill at 559 yards from the blue tee, and its wicked dog-leg right gives hitters a chance to lay up, play it safe, or go for glory over an unforgiving patch of scenic desert terrain.

Because of the course's variety, golfers will likely use nearly every club in the bag to navigate the links.

The 6,688-yard, par-72 course (5,887, 73 for women) carries a 71.0 rating for gentlemen at a slope of 129, and 69.7 with a 125 slope for ladies.

Golf Digest named the course one of America's 500 best places to play golf, as well as one of the 10 best public courses in New Mexico

For more information call 575-835-5335, or visit www.nmt.edu/nmt-golfcourse.

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Visit Socorro

The mission of the City of Socorro Heritage and Visitor Center is to create a publicly owned facility to preserve, display, and maintain valuable items of historical significance; therefore, our heritage. This is being accomplished by encouraging the locals of the area to bring forth historical items to add to our collection. We, at the Center, strive to form an open, welcoming atmosphere where residents and visitors are able to witness and view documents of historical significance to our community and surrounding areas. We would also like to create a place where school children are able to experience the history of our community and broaden their perspective of our city's lively heritage.

Finley Gym

Finley Gym offers a weight room, exercise equipment, basketball court, and a wide array of exercise classes and team athletics.

City of Socorro Walking Tour

The only district in New Mexico to be named a scenic byway, the SOCORRO HISTORICAL DISTRICT SCENIC BYWAY is steeped in culture. The City of Socorro Historic Walking Tour honors this byway.

The HISTORIC PLAZA is the center of the tour which is divided into three (3) historic districts: 1) San Miguel Church District; 2) Church-McCutcheon District; and the Kittrel Park-Manzanares District. Take time to walk or drive through the districts and drink in the rich culture and architecture. You will be glad you did!



All photos courtesy of:
M. Colleen Gino
See more @ www.flickr.com/inlightful

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First Saturday Star Party

New Mexico Tech Etschorn Observatory, Socorro, NM

Hammel Museum OPEN to the Public

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Farmer's Market – Weekly, April – October, Tuesday Evenings & Saturday Morning at the Historic Plaza

City of Socorro Events – March 2018:

NMRA Membership Drive Rodeo

Date TBA - 10:00 am, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

4th Annual Blues, Brews, & BBQs, TBA

Community Youth Fishing Derby

Saturday, March 17, 7:00 am, Escondida Lake

Bandoleros CMSA

Saturday, March 31 – Sunday, April 1, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – April 2018

Trinity Site Open to the Public

Saturday, April 7, 8:00 am – 2:00 pm, White Sands Missile Range, Bingham, NM

Grand Canyon Region College Rodeo

Friday, April 13 – Saturday, April 14, All Day, City of Socorro

Rodeo Arena and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, April 14, 10:00 am, Sedillo Park

New Mexico High School and Junior High Rodeo

Saturday, April 20 – Sunday, April 22, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – May 2018

Cinco de Mayo Celebration

Saturday, May 5, Time & Location TBA

World Series of Team Roping

Saturday, May 19 – Sunday, May 20, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Memorial Day Barrel Race

Saturday, May 26 – Monday, May 28, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – June 2018

NM Association of Counties Conference

Wednesday, June 20 – Friday, June 22, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Carson James Horsemanship Clinic

Friday, June 29 – Sunday, July 1, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – July 2018

26th Annual 4th of July Celebration

Wednesday, July 4, 11:00 am – 10 pm, Macey Center

World Series of Team Roping

Friday, July 13 – Sunday, July 15, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

El Fego Baca CMSA

Saturday, July 21 – Sunday, July 22, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – August 2018

Bandoleros CMSA

Friday, August 10 – Sunday, August 12, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

23rd Annual Socorro Chile Harvest Triathlon

Friday, August 3 – Saturday, August 4, 7:30 am, Sedillo Park

6th Annual Back to School Health Fair

Date TBA, noon – 5:00 pm, Finley Gym

Hot August Community Yard Sale

Saturday, August 25, 8:00 AM – noon, Historic Plaza

Socorro County Fair

Wednesday, August 29 – Sunday, September 2, Socorro County Fairgrounds

City of Socorro Events – September 2018

24rd Annual President's Golf Tournament

Thursday, September 13 – Friday, September 14, All Day, New Mexico Tech Golf Course

Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association –

9/11 Tribute & Celebrity Shoot

Friday, September 14 – Sunday, September 16, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

San Miguel Fiestas

Friday, September 21, All Day, San Miguel Mission

Captain Laura S. Haines M Mountain Fly-In

Saturday, September 22, 8:00 am – noon, Socorro Municipal Airport

Captain Laura S. Haines Memorial Barrel Race

Saturday, September 22, Afternoon, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

World Series of Team Roping

Friday, September 28 – Sunday, September 30, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

New Mexico High School Rodeo

TBA, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events – October thru December 2018

Socorrofest

Date TBA, October, All Day, Historic Plaza

NMRA Finals

Date TBA, October, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Turkey Bingo

Wednesday, November 21, 5:00 pm – 10:00 pm, Finley Gym

Annual Holiday Electric Light Parade

Saturday, December 1, 6:00 pm, Socorro, NM

Luminaria & Art Stroll

Saturday, December 1, 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, Historic Plaza

CITY OF SOCORRO





John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

Bosque del Apache Refuge

There may be a national wildlife refuge with more migratory birds than the Bosque del Apache.

“But I don’t know if there is one where you can see them up close like you can here,” Refuge Manager Kevin Cobble said. “The birds soar over the vehicles, and you’ve got the background of the Chupaderas in the distance.”

It’s because of the close encounters that more than 100,000 visitors flock to the refuge along with Sandhill cranes, the snow geese, ducks and other birds for events such as the annual Festival of the Cranes in November each year.

“There’s nothing like seeing a lot of cranes flying over the road about 70 feet above the ground,” Cobble said.

“It seems like the birds have gotten used to having people watching them,” adds Deb Caldwell, executive director of the Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

The first cranes are spotted on the refuge at the beginning of October, and the numbers steadily build, Cobble said.

The number of visitors also builds as

Festival of the Cranes Nov. 14-17

Socorro County’s largest annual event, the Festival of the Cranes, is a celebration of the sandhill cranes’ return to winter habitat at the refuge. Other guests of honor include the blue heron, Canada geese, light geese, bald eagles, American coot, owls, swans, American white pelicans and others. More than 100 educationally-focused events — from hands-on workshops to informational presentations — are held continuously over the course of the five-day festival.

the cranes arrive. The numbers peak with the Festival of the Cranes. But a large number of visitors are usually around during Thanksgiving weekend.

And birders can be found observ-

ing the cranes until they depart in early spring.

There are plenty of areas for visitors to view the birds from observation decks to ponds and fields that are accessible from the tour loops. Volunteers who are birding enthusiasts will be on hand on the decks to assist visitors with their viewing of the wildlife. Optic equipment is available on the decks for use during the festival.

Other wildlife

Birds are not the only wildlife visitors can see on the refuge.

“People can see bobcats, coyotes and turkeys,” Cobble said. “Mountain lions have also been spotted on tours.”

Elk and mule deer may also be seen, although the elk are a little shy, refuge officials say.

“We’ve also had some people spot javelinas, which is a pretty unusual sight,” Caldwell said.

The Festival of the Cranes receives a

■ See **Bosque**, Page 27

Bosque

Continued from Page 26

lot of the attention, but refuge officials like to point out that there is plenty to see and do on the refuge throughout the year, and not just when the cranes call the refuge home.

The refuge offers tours and hiking year-round.

Auto Tour

- The tour loop is (approximately) 12 miles long, bisected by a two way road.

- The tour loop is open every day from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

- Unpermitted access in closed areas. This includes walking, biking, or driving. Please observe posted signs.

- Please drive carefully on gravel roads and stay on designated roads and turnouts.

- Auto Tour Loop roads are wide, so pull over to allow others to pass safely.

- The speed limit is 25 mph.
- Restroom facilities are available on the auto tour loop, concurrently with the tour loop is open.

- Potable water is not available on the tour loop.

Trails

- All trails are open every day from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

- Leashed pets are seasonally allowed on trails. During any time of the year, you may have your pet securely in your vehicle. There are tours at the 57,217-acre refuge every weekend. There are tours at the refuge Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in October through November.

In addition to the touring, the hiking and the festival, the refuge remains busy hosting school groups throughout the year.

The 1,200-member Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife play a major role in helping to create the education experience not only for stu-

dents in Socorro County, but around the state and region.

The friends groups helps provide travel funding for students from Dora, Raton, Toas and El Paso to spend a day on the refuge.

The Friends of the Bosque del Apache also raise funds for various habitat restoration and wetland projects on the refuge, which is important in an era budget cuts on both the federal and state level.

“There are a lot of research projects the Friends have helped us with,” Cobble said.

They’ve also raised money for various upgrades to the facilities on the refuge, including the installation of new interpretive signs along the trails and other tour sites.

And the number of members of the group might be a bit low. Included in the memberships are memberships for families and couples.

The refuge is also helped by an army of volunteers, some of whom are birders who stay through the winter season.

The refuge was created in 1939.

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Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge

Quail can be seen moving across the landscape.

A hawk soars overhead and then finds a tree to use as a perch.

Elk tracks can be followed leading to a water source.

A cactus can be seen blooming nearby.

Evidence of wildlife can be seen on most parts of the 230,000-acre Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is home to more than 1,200 species of plants, 225 species of birds, more than 50 species of reptiles, about 100 species of animals and 15 species of amphibians.

While a large portion of the refuge is a reserve as a habitat for the wildlife, there is still plenty for visitors to see on the refuge in northern Socorro County between Socorro and Belen. It is just off the exit on Interstate 25.

To start with, there are trails ranging from a half-mile to 3.5 miles at the visitor's center. Visitors can see a variety of birds and plants.

Visitors walking along the trail will also see different species of cactus in bloom, according to Jeannine Kimble, Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge Visitor Services manager.

"There are also some really great views," Kimble said of the mesas, mountains and desert terrain within view of the visitor's center.

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge Manager Kathy Granillo points out that a variety of lizards can also be seen along the trails.

Interpretive panels line the trails, providing visitors with information about the vegetation on the refuge.

"If you want to learn about vegetation, these trails would be a good start," Kimble said.

But access to the refuge isn't limited to the trails.

There is also the refuge's portion of San Lorenzo Canyon. It's possible to see elk — and even bighorn sheep — among the animal life there, according to Granillo.

The wetlands are also now open again to the public after work on the habitat of



Scott Turner | El Defensor Chieftain

endangered and threatened species along the Rio Grande such as the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

"The wetlands offer a wonderful opportunity to see several species of birds," said Granillo, who is also a birding enthusiast. "People can walk around. It's just a few clicks north of the Rio Saludo."

There are also other opportunities to tour other areas of the refuge — especially if you join the Amigos de la Sevilleta.

The Amigos de la Sevilleta (the refuge's friends group) host tours and events on the refuge during various times of the year.

The events include horseback rides, bird and canyon hikes, as well as opportunities for star, meteor and moon gazing. Tours are also offered to non-Amigos members.

Among the events held at the refuge includes the annual Butterfly Count. The refuge is one of only two places in New

Mexico where butterfly counts have been performed.

The Amigos support the refuge in fundraising, which is becoming increasingly important with decreasing government budgets, according to Coombs. They also do what they can to help the five-member staff of the refuge.

The Amigos help with education and research at the refuge, and work to preserve its natural and historical resources.

Members make the Amigos possible and membership is open to all. Amigos de la Sevilleta raises money through member's fees and special events. Grants and store sales also contribute. They help by volunteering in a variety of jobs at the refuge.

They help with public events such as tours, and bring special speakers to the refuge.

They help bring school groups by paying the cost of school buses. They pay for research equipment such as the radio tracking collars used by scientists at the refuge.

Fort Craig

For a glimpse into what it may have been like for a U.S. Cavalry soldier in the middle of the 19th century, a visit to the Fort Craig National Historic Site, 32 miles south of Socorro, may fill the bill. Named in honor of Mexican-American War casualty Captain Louis S. Craig, Fort Craig was established in 1854 and like other military outposts of its day was built to protect travel routes and settlements from Indian attacks. Fort Craig played a crucial role in Indian campaigns and in the settlement of the American frontier. Military excursions from Fort Craig pursued such notable Apache leaders as Geronimo, Victorio and Nana.

The location was chosen to guard both El Camino Real and the Jornada del Muerto, both of which were primary links between the Mexican port of Vera Cruz and cities of Albuquerque and Santa Fe.



Early on the fort was one of the largest and most important frontier forts in the West. Set in the rugged beauty of Socorro County, it was one of the eight forts situated along the primary north-south road in the Rio Grande Valley.

The fort was home to Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry and 38th and 125th Infantry, the predominantly Hispanic New Mexico Volunteers and New Mexico Militia, and household names like Kit Carson, Rafael Chacón and Captain Jack Crawford.

The fort is famous for the Civil War Battle of Valverde in 1862, the largest Civil War battle in New Mexico.

In 1885, with the Indian Wars essentially over, the fort was permanently closed. Nine years later it was sold at auction to the only bidder. It was later donated to the Archeological Conservancy and was transferred to the Bureau of Land Management in 1981, but nearly a century of looters, scavengers and nature have taken their toll on the site.

What remains of the fort can be seen at the BLM-managed site, off Exit 115 on Interstate 25.

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Hammel Museum

At one time, Socorro was known for producing the best beer in the state of New Mexico. The Hammel Brewery and Museum at the corner of Sixth and Vigil streets, formerly known as the Illinois Brewing Company, was built in the early 1880s.

Jacob Hammel immigrated from Munich, Bavaria in 1848. He was accompanied by his friend Eberhard Anheuser, who started a brewery in St. Louis. Jacob wanted to start his own brewery across the river in Illinois; the Illinois Brewing Company in Lebanon, Illinois. The Hammel family eventually headed west and re-established the Illinois Brewing Company in Socorro in the early 1880s.

The Hammel Museum started out as a beer garden and progressed into a successful brewery.

A June 16, 1893, Chieftain newspaper article said the brewery produced

“the best beer made anywhere in New Mexico.”

Over its years of operation, the brewery evolved into an ice plant and soda bottling plant after Prohibition shut down beer production in 1919.

Although electric refrigerators were introduced in the 1920s, the ice plant continued to prosper. The Hammel brothers introduced cola drinks and bottled products for Pepsi Cola and 7-Up, as well as such beverages as Nesbitt and Grapette sodas.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, but the brewery never went back to the brewing business.

In 1986, Clarence Hammel donated the brewery, to the Socorro County Historical Society. The Historical Society has preserved the brewery as a museum, making it a “must see” attraction for visitors.

Eight rooms, each numbered, tell the history of the brewery that was a flourishing business for nearly a century. From the main office, where Hammel conducted business, to the mash room where the beer was made, the museum is a remarkable piece of history.

The Hammel Museum has dedicated one of the rooms to an exhibit created by Jon Spargo and the Socorro Train Gang. The Train Gang has recreated the feel of a historic train depot and has numerous artifacts and photos illustrating railroad history in Socorro County.

In an upstairs room is an electric train layout with diverse landscapes and historical sites.

The museum is open the first Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to noon. For more information, contact the Socorro County Historical Society at 575-835-3183 or visit www.socorrohistory.org.

El Defensor Chieftain

Garcia Opera House

During the 1880s, the discovery of lead and silver in the nearby Magdalena Mountains transformed the quiet town of Socorro with a few hundred people into a thriving center of commerce and industry with a population of more than 4,000.

The Garcia Opera House opened on Dec. 1, 1886, with an event advertised as a “musical festival composed of 100 musicians, followed by a grand dance and supper.”

Since that first spectacular extravaganza, the opera house has been the setting for a myriad of events.

For the last twenty years, the Socorro Community Theater stages an average of two productions a year in the historical opera house, from Shakespearian plays to modern comedies and dramas.



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Art Galleries

The Socorro area is home to a vibrant artist community.

More than a half-dozen galleries call the area home. Some such as Vertu Fine Art Gallery on the Plaza in Socorro and Warehouse 110 in Magdalena feature nationally recognized artists, as well as regional and local artists.

Some of the galleries feature shows and exhibitions throughout the year. Artists' work in a variety of mediums can be found in many of the galleries. Western art, Native American art, wildlife art are among the themes that can be found at galleries such as Vertu, Warehouse 110, Alamo Gallery and Gifts and the Socorro Framing Shop.

Artist works can also be found at various times of year in businesses in Socorro, Magdalena and Pie Town in nearby Catron County. The Gatherin' Place features an art gallery in addition to a restaurant where people can indulge



on the dessert from which the town gets its name.

Works by local artists can be found at the Socorro County Chamber of Commerce and El Defensor Chieftain. In

December, works by local artists are on display at business around the Socorro Plaza during the Luminarias, Art Stroll and Electric Lights Parade.

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Live music

The music scene in Socorro rivals those of many small cities. With weekly open mics, numerous performance venues, an annual music festival and a terrific Performing Arts Series hosted by New Mexico Tech, there's something for everyone.

The city is home to many great musicians and bands, including Rob Lopez and friends (hard rock/metal), Doug Figgs and Mariam (Western), The Remedy (variety), Roon (folk/rock) and Suavecito (variety).

The local scene

- **Sourdough** features an open mic and local groups.
- **The Capitol Bar** features regional blues and rock bands on weekends.
- **Sofia's Restaurant** has performances Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, as well as an open mic every Friday.

- **Bodega Burger Co.** has live dinner music on Fridays, and live bands.
- **Socorro Springs** hosts live music on weekends from time to time.
- And in Magdalena, the **Golden Spur Saloon** and **M&M Cafe** often feature live music on weekends. For those wanting to check out what's happening music-wise, www.socorromusic.com is always a reliable source.

Music year-round

- **The New Mexico Tech Performing Arts Series (PAS)** showcases well known and up-and-coming acts from all over the world. Performances take place in the Macey Center on campus. The remainder of this season's schedule includes acrobatics, dance and comedy with Jesus Munoz Flamenco on March 23 and State Ballet's performance of Cinderella on April 20. Visit www.nmtpas.org.

- **Tech Presidential Chamber Music Series** features classical performances by some of New Mexico's finest musicians.

• **Socorrofest** is a weekend music festival hosted by the city, featuring local, regional and national acts. The festival draws visitors from throughout New Mexico and beyond, and features both regional bands and local musicians playing a variety of genres – from country and Latin to folk and rock. Festivities begin Friday evening with a street dance on the historic plaza. The latter half of Saturday is filled with nonstop live music, performed from two outdoor stages, as well as from indoor venues around the city.

- **Tech's Fourth of July Celebration** features local and regional performers.
- The city's **Cinco de Mayo celebration** features live Spanish music.
- **Festival of the Cranes Arts & Crafts Fair** features live music to accompany the many arts and crafts vendors.

El Defensor Chieftain

Trinity Site

If you're lucky enough to be visiting Socorro on the first Saturday in April and October, you will have the opportunity to visit the birth of the nuclear age. The Trinity Site, on what is now White Sands Missile Range in the southeastern portion of Socorro County, is where the first nuclear bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945. That morning, at 5:29:45 a.m. Mountain War Time, the successful testing of the atomic bomb marked the beginning of the end of World War II.

The missile range is – understandably – closed to the public, but twice a year its gates are open for the Trinity Site's semi-annual Open House.

The 51,500-acre area was declared a national historic landmark in 1975. The landmark includes ground zero where the bomb exploded; the base camp where scientists and support staff were housed; the remains of one of the tower columns; and the Schmidt/McDonald ranch house



Scott Turner | El Defensor Chieftain

south of the site where the core of the bomb was assembled. In addition, one of the old instrumentation bunkers is still visible beside the road just west of

ground zero.

The bomb had been three years in the

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Exploring Dark Skies

The night skies over Socorro County include some of the darkest in the nation, which is the reason amateur astronomers plan vacations to take advantage of our dark skies, now protected from light pollution by a state law enacted in 1999.

The annual Enchanted Skies Star Party in Magdalena attracts amateur astronomers from across the region and features 4 1/2 days of night sky viewing, lectures and guided visits to the Magdalena Ridge Observatory, the VLA and astronomer John Brigg's telescope museum, the Astronomical Lyceum.

Located at an elevation of 6,580 feet, Magdalena is a genuine dark sky site with regular recording of 21.6-21.8 magnitudes per square arc-second. Sky and Scope magazine says this is arguably one of the darkest sites in the continental U.S., as well as one of the driest. There are many good observational reasons why NRAO's Very Large Array and Magdalena Ridge Observatory are located nearby.

In the city of Socorro, dark sky viewing is the order of business at Etscorn

Observatory on the New Mexico Tech campus. Telescopes include a 20-inch Dobsonian inside a 15-foot dome and a Celestron 14 on a Paramount GT-1100 mount. Built in 1993, the observatory is managed by the New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club and is surrounded by earth berms to minimize light pollution from the campus and town.

Etscorn Observatory is open to the public on the first Saturday of every month for Guided Night Sky Stargazing, as well as at many other times during the year.

Socorro County is home to two world class astronomical observatories, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Very Large Array and Magdalena Ridge Observatory. The Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array, one of the world's premier radio astronomy observatories, consists of 27 radio antennas in a Y-shaped configuration on the Plains of San Agustin fifty miles west of Socorro.

Its impressive dishes, at 82 feet in diameter, have been featured in several major motion pictures, including Contact,

Independence Day, Transformers and 2010, as well as a backdrop for numerous television commercials and television shows.

The VLA site and Visitor Center are open daily from 8:30 a.m. until sunset for a self-guided walking tour that takes you to a working antenna on the array. The Gift Shop is open daily from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Guided Tours are offered the first Saturday of each month.

For more information, call the observatory at 575-835-5101. Magdalena Ridge Observatory and Interferometer, whose mission includes not only astronomical research conducted by New Mexico Tech but also identifying Near Earth Objects (asteroids), is not open to the public, except for special programs and events.

Weekend workshops providing family-centered hands-on astronomy activities take place at various times during the year at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge and Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

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Trinity

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making.

From a list of eight potential test sites in California, Texas, New Mexico and Colorado, what was to become known at the Trinity Site in Socorro County was chosen. The area was already controlled by the government since it was part of the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range, which was established in 1942 as its artillery and bombing practice area. The Chihuahuan Desert provided isolation for secrecy and safety, but was still only about 230 miles from the Manhattan Project's headquarters at Los Alamos.

Although what had taken place at Trinity Site was not revealed until after the weapon was used against Japan, the explosion was felt 160 miles away and windows were broken out as far as 120 miles away. Army officials told the public that a munitions storage area had accidentally exploded at the Alamogordo Bombing Range.



Many residents of nearby San Antonio and Socorro still remember that morning, when the ground shook and the sky turned red.

A monument and various artifacts associated with the test are available for viewing, such as a sample of Trinitite, a glass-like substance left behind when the sand fused together from the heat of the blast. Trinitite contains several radioactive elements and is an alpha and beta particle emitter.

Radiation levels at ground zero are low — only 10 times greater than the region's natural background radiation, on average. A one-hour visit to the inner fenced area will result in a whole body exposure of one-half to one millirem. To put this

in perspective, a U.S. adult receives an average of 360 millirems every year from natural and medical sources. The American Nuclear Society estimates on average people receive between 26 and 96 millirems every year from the sun and about 40 millirems every year from food.

Trinity Site is open twice a year to the public for a walk-through visit, on the first Saturday of April and October. 2018 Open House dates are April 7 and October 6. There is no admission fee for this event, and no reservations are required.

Visitors must have a REAL ID card, passport or military ID to enter.

From Socorro visitors can enter through White Sands Missile Range's Stallion Range Center, which is five miles south of Highway 380. The turn-off is 12 miles east of San Antonio. The Stallion gate will be open 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visitors arriving at the gate between those hours will receive handouts and will be allowed to drive unescorted the 17 miles to Trinity Site. The road is paved and marked.

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Outdoor adventures

With its serene and captivating landscape Socorro, Magdalena, San Antonio and their surrounding areas are pristine for those interested in hiking, biking and climbing, and have attracted outdoor enthusiasts from all around the Southwest.

For the mountain biking enthusiast trails like Hop Canyon No. 25, Socorro Singletrack and the Chupadera Crossing Loop offer riders off all skill levels a chance to get out and test their biking skills.

Hop Canyon No. 25 is a 4.2 mile singletrack that features a 124-foot ascent and a more than 2,100-foot descent located off North Baldy Peak, south of Water Canyon Campground.

The trail can be ridden in both directions and is most enjoyable as a downhill trail and is typically ridden as a loop starting up Trail No. 25A, connecting to North Baldy Trail No. 8, then down Trail No. 25.

The trail has a good flow, is easy to follow, and is a ripping good time.

From the top of the trail, there is a meadow crossing and a short climb to the start of the switchbacks. The switchbacks are generally well maintained and wide enough for bicycles. The tread of the trail alternates between rocks and packed pine needles. Be mindful of the rocks, there have been plenty of pinch flats and cut side walls on this ride. The trail gets looser as you approach the final switchbacks leading to the parking lot.

Socorro Singletrack ascends to a plateau with flowing turns and great views of "M Mountain" and the Rio Grande valley. The terrain is moderate with good switchbacks. The only technical challenges are occasional arroyo crossings and trail sections with loose gravel.

The 11.2 mile track is typically locked during non-business hours. Unless you are located in Socorro, the best option is to take I-25 Exit 152 Escondida and then head south on the road to the trailhead. If you are in Socorro, it may be more convenient to park south of the gate and ride



Jonathan Miller | El Defensor Chieftain

north 1/2 mile to the trailhead rather than driving all the way around.

In all Socorro County has at least 11 trails rated anywhere from a blue square to a black diamond to cater to bikers from novice to skilled.

Overall the county is home to more than 200 miles of established trails that beckon lovers of the outdoors through mountain forests, river valleys, canyons and deserts. Even more options for non-motorized off-trail exploration are abound in the Bureau of Land Management and National forest back country.

For additional trail guides and excursion ideas also see the Magdalena Chamber of Commerce website at www.magdalenanm.com.

For those interested in rock climbing, Box Canyon located on Highway 80 between Socorro and Magdalena is a popular and scenic spot.

The area offers primitive camping and parking and spots for RV's, and is free and open to the public year round.

Pit toilets are available but there is no reliable water source.

The small canyon offers novice and experienced climbers several lines on both the east and west faces, and fauna

like big horned sheep can offer those interested in photography surreal photographic opportunities.

The area also offers room for ATV and horseback riding.

For those who wish to take in some local sports, the New Mexico Tech Rugby Club competes during the fall and the spring seasons on campus.

The Pygmy Rugby Club competes against teams like New Mexico, New Mexico State and the University of Texas at El Paso, in addition to many others. In 2015 the Tech ruggers won the Rio Grande Rugby Union collegiate championship.

For more info on the NMT rugby team visit www.nmt.edu.

For the avid hiker or climber, Socorro County also offers several options.

San Lorenzo Canyon

Located 15 miles north of Socorro San Lorenzo Canyon is a popular hiking, camping and biking destination. The wide channel narrows to a spectacular high-walled canyon. Interesting side canyons, some with springs, allow for plenty

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Outdoor

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of riding and hiking opportunities. The road eventually ends at a rock pour-off, and an easy scramble up that pour-off affords the hiker a scenic walk farther up the canyon that features a perennial spring that waters the sand below.

To access the canyon take the west frontage road from the Lemitar exit (mile 156) on Interstate 25 and continue roughly five miles to a well maintained dirt road to access San Lorenzo Canyon via a dry, sandy track that nearly any vehicle can navigate in good weather.

Ladron Peak

Ladron Peak is a rugged, 9,200-foot high double peaked and isolated mountain west of Bernardo.

The rough and long cross country rumble goes up a rocky and slippery terrain and is suitable for experienced, strong hikers.

The Ladrones Mountain Range is rumored to have been a hiding place for bandits, as ladron is the Spanish word for robber.

These days the summit presents a true challenge for hikers, and those who elect to attempt the hike are encouraged to study the Ladron Peak seven minute quadrangle map located at the

■ See **Outdoor**, Page 40

Michael



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Camping under the stars

With more than 800,000 acres of U. S. National Forest and Bureau of Land Management areas located within the immediate vicinity, the Socorro area allows campers a substantial variety of opportunities. Camping is allowed anywhere on National Forest and BLM land, except near lakes and streams. A few commercial campgrounds offer alternative accommodations.

Water Canyon

Water Canyon — arguably the most popular camping and picnicking spot — is about twenty minutes west of Socorro on Highway 60. Many trails start off near the Water Canyon campground, offering spectacular views and seasonal bird-watching and wildflower viewing. The campground, accessible via graded dirt roads, is open from April to October, and has 14 sites for overnight camping and one reservation-only large-group site that can accommodate up to 70 campers. Although there is no water at the campground, there are pit toilets at the picnic area. Horses are



Robyn Harrison | For El Defensor Chieftain

permitted.

Springtime Campground

Springtime Campground is located on the east side of the San Mateo Mountains. There are six campsites, all with log shelters, tables and fire pits. Water and rest rooms are available. The campground has two large horse corrals; however, the

spring-fed horse water tanks may be dry in the summer. The campground is the starting point for hiking, horseback riding and backpacking up an established trail to San Mateo and Apache Kid peaks in the lightly-used Apache Kid Wilderness area. Twenty-nine Yard Spring is the only reliable water source on the San Mateo Peak trail. To get to Springtime Campground,

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U.S. Geological Survey site before heading out.

To access one of the hike's jump off points exit I-25 at Bernardo (mile 175) 30 miles north of Socorro. Proceed southwest on old Highway 85 from Kiva RV Park, then cross the bridge over Rio Puerco.

Take County Road 12 west from the locked gate, and around 22 miles later take another left and proceed half a mile to the water tank.

From there the hike to the peak is a steep and rigid three miles.

Again, this trail is for the experienced hiker.

Polvadera Peak

A popular destination for Socorro hikers is the 7,200-foot high Polvadera Peak located on BLM land northwest of

Lemitar.

The summit provides a pristine 360 degree view of the surrounding landscape including the Rio Grande Valley and several nearby mountain ranges.

The shortest and most convenient route to the peak begins at a microwave tower visible from the Lemitar exit off I-25.

From there head north on the west frontage road past Durkin Diesel to a chain link gate with a yellow BLM sign. GO left through that gate onto a dirt road suitable for most high clearance two wheel drive vehicles, and head north following the power line road. Unless you own a vehicle suited for strenuous off-road use park at the tower and proceed on foot up the arroyo and up an old jeep track to a ridge just east of the actual peak.

Strawberry Peak

This is an eight to 10 mile hike to the top of the 7,100-foot high reddish volcano plug located between Polvadera Peak and

'M' Mountain.

It ends with an arduous run to the top, but the scenic view and eccentric new-age memorabilia at the summit make the effort more than worthwhile.

The only public access is via the Socorro Singletrack bike trail which heads northwest from East Road.

San Mateo Mountains

The huge and sparsely used San Mateo Mountain portion of the Cibola National Forest is still a part of the Magdalena Ranger District.

While there are plenty of off-trail hiking opportunities in the region a popular choice is Trial No. 43, which leads hikers from Springtime Campground to the summit of San Mateo Peak at an elevation of more than 10,000 feet.

The summit offers views of the surrounding ranges and valleys below.

Springtime Campground is accessible from I-25 south of Socorro from old Highway 85 and Forest Road 225.

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Camping

Continued from Page 40

drive south from Socorro on Interstate 25. Exit at Milepost 115, south of San Antonio. Proceed south on N.M. 107 and Old Highway 85 (N.M. 1) to Forest Road 225 (a graded dirt road).

Hughes Mill

Hughes Mill, south of Bear Trap on Forest Service Road 549, offers pit toilets, camping, picnicking areas and trailer parking. A stream is nearby, but it is not a reliable water source. Horses are allowed, but there are no horse facilities. No established trails are in the area.

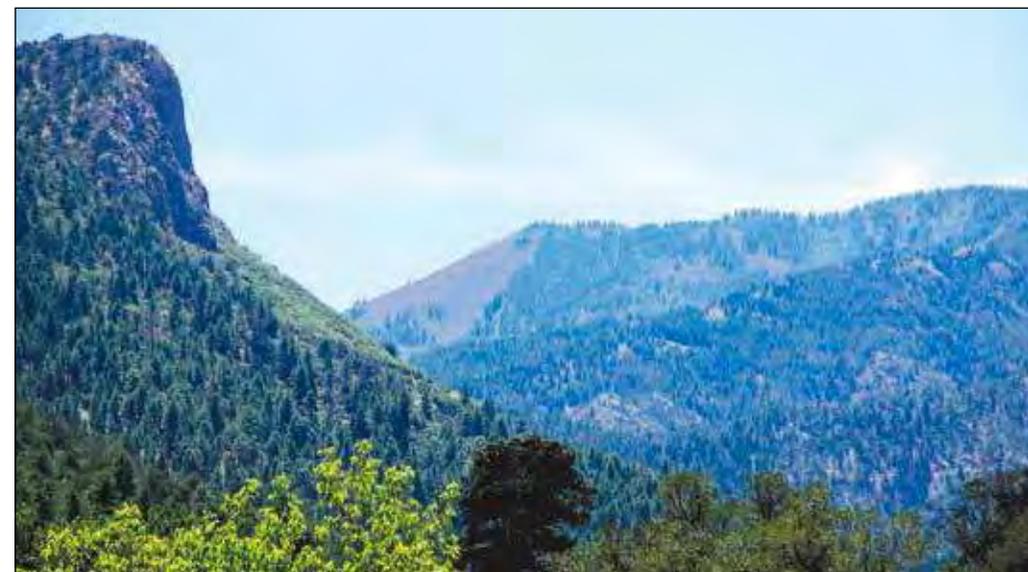
Datil Well Campground

Datil Well Recreation Area Campground, one mile west of Datil on Highway 60, includes one of 15 water wells along the old Magdalena Livestock Driveway. The old cattle trail was established in the 1800s and stretched 120 miles from Springerville, Arizona, to Magdalena, New Mexico.

The area includes three miles of hiking trails in piñon-juniper and ponderosa pine woodlands, with scenic views of the Plains of San Augustin and the Very Large Array radio astronomy dishes. There are 22 individual campsites, all with picnic tables, barbeque grills and fire pits. The 12 individual and group sites have shelters for shade. Restrooms and drinking water are available. \$5 fee per night. For a group site, call 575-835-0412.

Bear Trap Campground

Secluded Bear Trap campground, located at 8,000 feet in the rugged San Mateo



Mountains, has pit toilets, camping, picnicking sites and trailer parking. Access is via a primitive road, but high-clearance, two-wheel-drive vehicles should have no problems in good weather. There is no potable water source at the campground.

Horses are allowed, but there are no corrals nor water tanks. Campers can drive, walk or bike up a primitive road to the 10,000 ft. summit of Mt. Withington.

Luna Park Campground

Luna Park Campground at the south end of the San Mateo Mountains, is accessible from Springtime Canyon via a rugged, primitive road.

It has three sites with tables and fire pits, but there are no toilets, water nor horse facilities, and not much shade. No established trails are in the area.

Escondida Lake

The county park is complete with tables, a group shelter, bathrooms and a playground, and offers RV hookups and tent sites. Visitors can hike in the bosque and along the river, or relax and fish at the campground's stocked lake.

For more information, call 575-835-2041.

The Socorro Box

The Box Canyon Recreation Area (the Socorro Box), about seven miles west of Socorro on Highway 60, offers primitive

camping and parking for RVs. The Box Canyon Recreation Area is free and open year round. Pit toilets are available, but there is no reliable water source. Activities include rock climbing and hiking as well as ATV and horseback riding.

THE CAPITOL BAR

EST. 1896 ON THE HISTORIC PLAZA

Anchoring the east end of the Historic Plaza the Capitol Bar was established in 1896 and has served as Socorro's favorite watering hole for over 120 years. It's featured on bucketlistbars.com and listed as one of the southwest's top 20 historic bars. Stop by for a cold one and a trip through history at Socorro's only century-old bar!

575.835.1193

Socorro County Communities

Thirty miles north of Magdalena on Highway 169 is the Alamo Navajo reservation, a chapter of the Navajo Nation. Alamo's Navajo name is T'iis Tsoh, after a cottonwood tree that marked a spring where the Diné coming back from Fort Sumner were attracted by the flowing spring and protective isolation of the area. That small band settled here rather than keep walking all the way to Window Rock, Arizona.

Today, roughly 2,200 residents live on the reservation and many of them carry on the traditions and language passed down from their ancestors. The bloodlines of the people living at Alamo are largely mixed. The territory once roamed by the Apache Indians and settled by the Navajo overlapped and intermarriage between the tribes occurred. Some residents of Alamo claim to be direct descendents of the great "war shaman" Geronimo. The Alamo people hold a celebration of their culture and customs each October. Alamo Indian Days are typically held the weekend before Columbus Day. There's a parade, Indian market, pow-wow, traditional Navajo singing and drumming and dancing, lots of comfort food, arts and crafts and the Miss Alamo Indian Pageant.

Lemitar

The history of Socorro County wouldn't be complete without mentioning the early families and farmers who broke and worked the land along the Rio Grande. In the 1820s, many settlers ventured along the river north and south of Socorro looking for good farm land.

By the mid 1820s, farming settlements were cropping up along both sides of the river.

Some of these settlers established farms about six miles north of Socorro. Word of the good farm land must have gotten out, because by 1831 additional families had moved to the area.

The descendents of these families remain to this day in Lemitar.

Polvadera

Polvadera is a rendition of the Spanish word polvoriento or pulverdero meaning



John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

"dusty" or "pulverized dirt." It is believed the name Polvadera may also be based on the name of an old Piro Indian pueblo in the area of a similar-sounding name.

Pulvidero, along with Socorro and Luis Lopez are the oldest documented "New World" settlements in Socorro County.

San Antonio

Referred to by many as the gateway to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and by others as the home of the world's greatest green chile cheeseburgers, the unincorporated village of San Antonio has achieved a certain notoriety worldwide.

For decades, hungry travelers in the know have planned their itineraries to arrive at the Owl Bar, rated by O Magazine as the place to stop in New Mexico, in San Antonio just in time for lunch or dinner.

And the Buckhorn across the road has been rated as serving the 7th best burger in America by GQ Magazine.

Birders are also known to flock there along with the cranes.

It's a connection reflected in the names of businesses, such as the San Antonio Crane Mexican Restaurant and the Bosque Birdwatchers RV Park, or in their seasonal operation, such as the Casa Blanca Bed and Breakfast, which is only open from October to April.

San Antonio is the birthplace of Conrad Hilton, one of New Mexico's earliest legislators and founder of the Hilton hotel empire.

Hilton was one of the original legislators in the newly formed state of New Mexico.

His name can still be seen "C Hilton 1903" carved on the wall of what was once the schoolhouse, since then a mechanic's garage, and now a barn.

Catron County

It's been called New Mexico's secret treasure. It's Catron County; a destination for lovers of the outdoors, offering an unparalleled experience for hiking, camping, fishing and even big game hunting. With Gila National Forest encompassing a large part of the county, no other region in the state can come close to the clean air, dark skies and abundant wildlife that Catron County offers.

Catron County plays a large part of Socorro's history, since it was a part of Socorro County until 1921. From the nation's largest cattle drive to miners and gunslingers Catron's history is the embodiment of the American West. There is much to see and do in this "undiscovered" corner of New Mexico, from the pies of Pie Town to one of the best preserved ghost towns of the west, Mogollon.

Mogollon, off Highway 180 south of Reserve, was settled in the 1880s in support of the gold and silver mines bordering Silver Creek Canyon, and in its boom days boasted a population of over 1,500. Many of the original structures still stand, including the Silver Creek Inn Bed and Breakfast which was renovated in 1980.

A few miles going east from Mogollon in Gila National Forest's White Mountains is scenic Snow Lake providing camping and fishing in a beautiful spot at an elevation of 7,313 feet.

While you're in the neighborhood, check out The Catwalk National Scenic Trail high above Whitewater Creek, a challenging one mile trail along the historic water line route from the 1890's.

The community of Pie Town on Highway 60 has gained national attention in the last few years not only for its

unique name, but also for the friendly people and, of course, pies. In spite of having no gas station or motel, Pie Town features three places for pie, The Pie-O-Neer, Pie Town Café and The Gatherin' Place. Every year on the second Saturday in September is the Pie Town Pie Festival which attracts hundreds of visitors and has been covered by television networks and national magazines like National Geographic.

One visitor was quoted as saying he drove all the way from Portland, Oregon to Pie Town just to buy a New Mexican Green Chile Apple Pie.

People can go back in time with a visit to the Town of Gabriella, which is just a few miles south of Datil.

The town is modeled after cattle towns of the Old West. Re-enactments of shoot-outs are held in the town during the warmer months.

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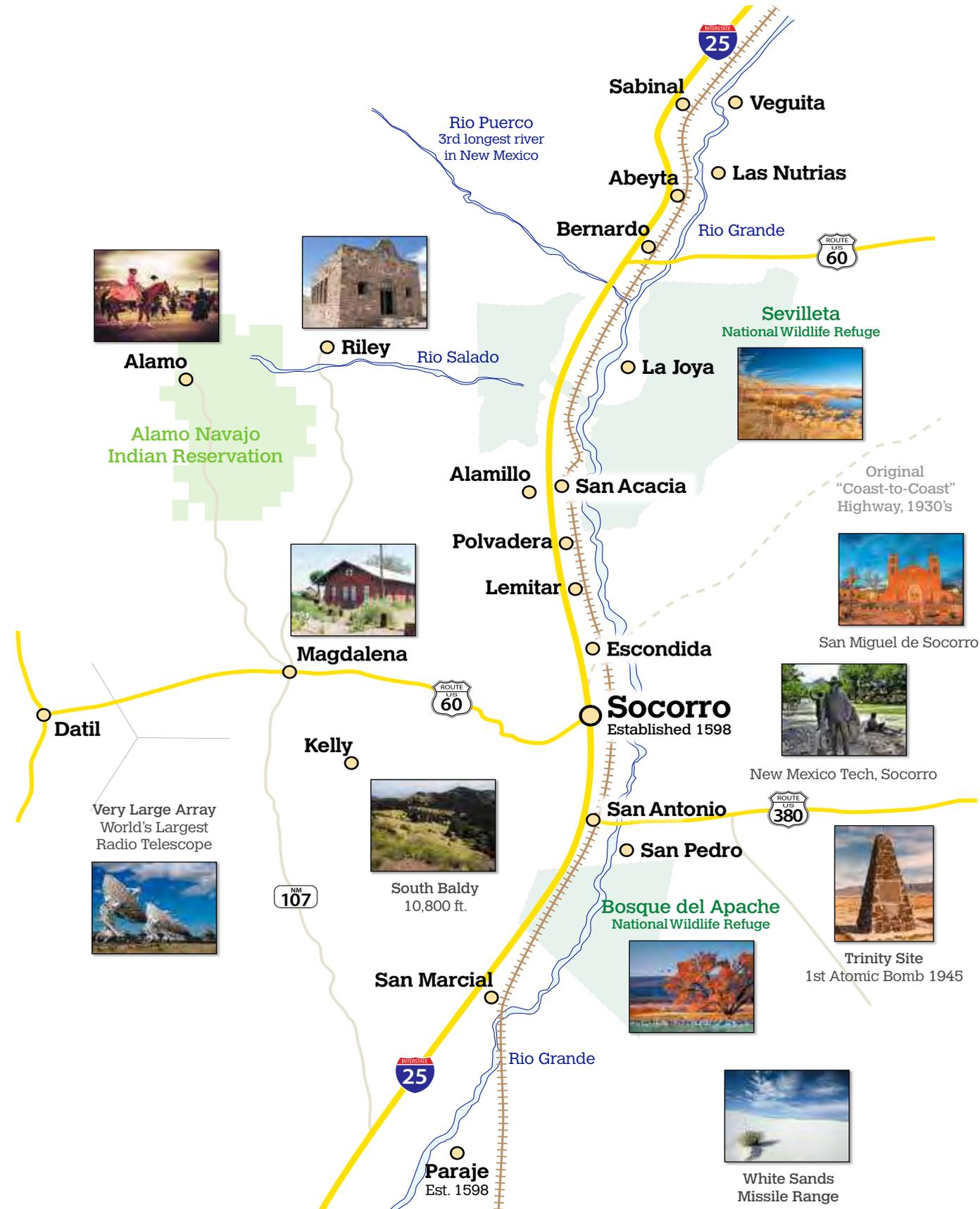


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Geronimo Springs Museum

Just down the road from Socorro in Truth or Consequences is the Geronimo Springs Museum.

The Geronimo Springs Museum has for over forty years been a repository of local history, displays, and educational information.

A showcase for Sierra County and the area, this entity strives to make available permanent and rotating displays which enhance a visit to the Southwest, as well as encouraging other ventures while here: hot baths, ghost towns, the lakes, Art Hop, scenic drives, galleries, rodeos, and so much more. An average of 1,000 people a month from every state, as well as many other countries, arrive to enjoy the community. One of the areas of the museum showcasing Apache history includes a life-size wax statue of Geronimo, as well as information regarding other notable Native American figures such as Victorio and Lozen.

Baskets made of sweetgrass are

included, and two cradle boards—one very old, and another made only a couple of years ago—are on display.

The museum's "Mountain Spirit Dancer" display begins with a painting by famed Chiricahua Apache artist Allan Hauser, followed by a drawing and a sculpture by Harlyn Geronimo, as well as a "computerized" version—an excellent example of cultural history shown in an effective timeline display.

Heritage Room

The historical murals by well-known local artist Delmas Howe provide a wonderful portrayal of Apache chief Geronimo, the Spanish conquistador Juan de Oñate, "cowboy chronicler" Eugene Manlove Rhodes, and famed Mexican General Pancho Villa.

Bronze sculptures of the same well-known figures surround a small fountain in the room's center. These bronzes were

created by Hivana Leyendecker, a native New Mexican sculptor.

The portrayal of Preacher Lewis, Eugene Manlove Rhodes, and the Apache Kid are shown in a special display adjacent to the Delmas Howe murals.

Other features

The museum's Homestead Room features items dating back to the 1800s, including fashionable women's clothing, items used for homemaking, a small school desk, photographs of early families, and several personal possessions of Sadie Orchard. The museum features both indoor and outdoor exhibits dating back to prehistoric times to the ranching days. Pottery used by the Native Americans in the area is on display, along with tools from the area's ranching days.

The museum is located in Truth or Consequences. Take exit 79 off Interstate 25. It is located at 211 Main Ave.




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