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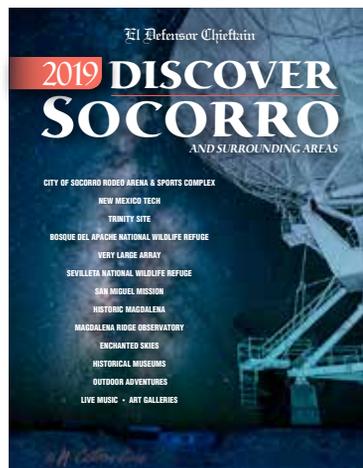
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El Defensor
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Socorro is a close-knit but welcoming community. People here are never in too much of a hurry to stop and chat for a moment, and always have a smile and a wave — even for those they don't 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, eater-



Photo submitted | El Defensor Chieftain

ies, 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 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 Socorro County Farmer's Market.

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

Visitors return to Magdalena each year to celebrate 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 is joined on South Baldy by the Magdalena Ridge Observatory Interferometer, which will eventually

■ See **Adventure** Page 6



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Adventure

from PAGE 5

combine 10 smaller domed telescopes. When complete, the 10 telescopes of MROI will be arrayed in a Y-shape and is expected to achieve a resolution 100 times greater than the Hubble Telescope on distant objects.

A few more miles west on the Plains of San Agustin lies the impressive National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Karl P. Jansky Very Large Array. The self-guided tour and gift shop is popular with visitors.

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



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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 ruins of the 165-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 County adventure.

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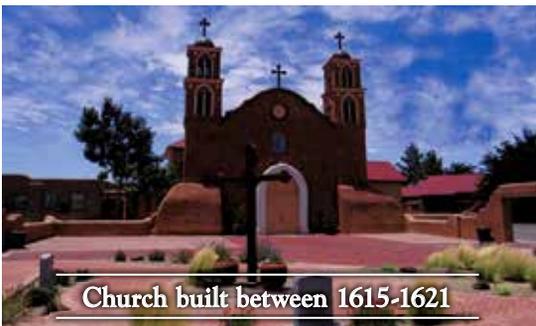


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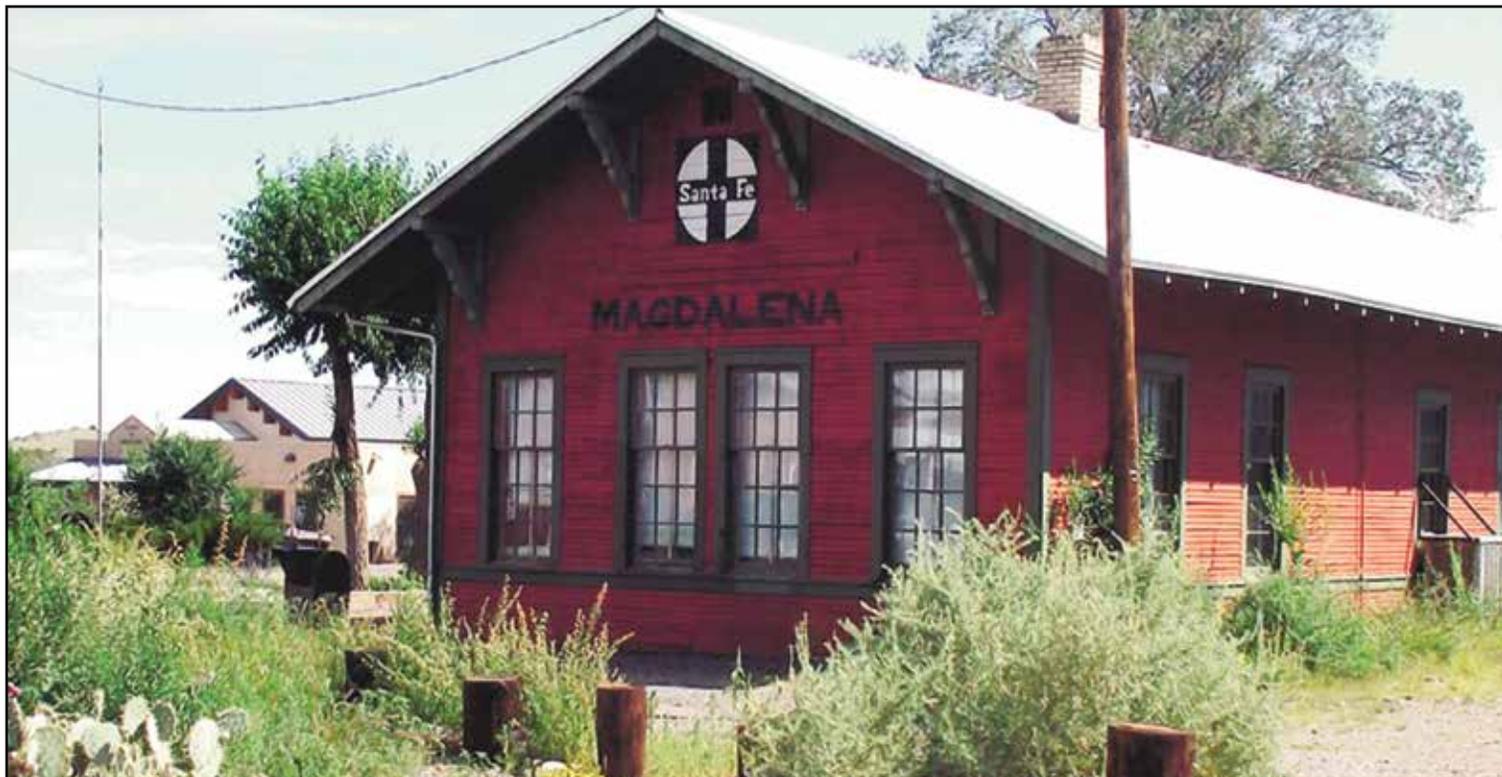


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Magdalena: A bustling Old West Town

The combination of a growing art scene, star gazing events and western culture are making Magdalena a destination spot for visitors. Several fine art galleries in this mountain village bring art lovers back every year. La Posada Art Gallery and Gifts on First Street and Hills Snyder's "kind of a small array" on North Main are the newest additions to Magdalena's burgeoning art community, which includes Warehouse 110 on North Main, Blue Canyon Gallery on Highway 60, and Village Press Print Studio, which also houses an espresso/cappuccino bar, at 500 First Street.

The 26th Annual Enchanted Skies Star Party, 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.

The history of Magdalena, New Mexico, begins with the discovery of lead and zinc in the 1860s in the Magdalena Mountains all the way up



Photo submitted | El Defensor Chieftain

to the present day with its growing reputation as a destination for amateur astronomers seeking dark skies.

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.

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 drive trail was 5 to 10 miles wide and extended about 125 miles west from Springerville. In 1971, truck and semis supplanted transport by train

Magdalena

from PAGE 8

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 still stand intact on North Ash St. in Magdalena, although the railroad tracks have long since been removed.

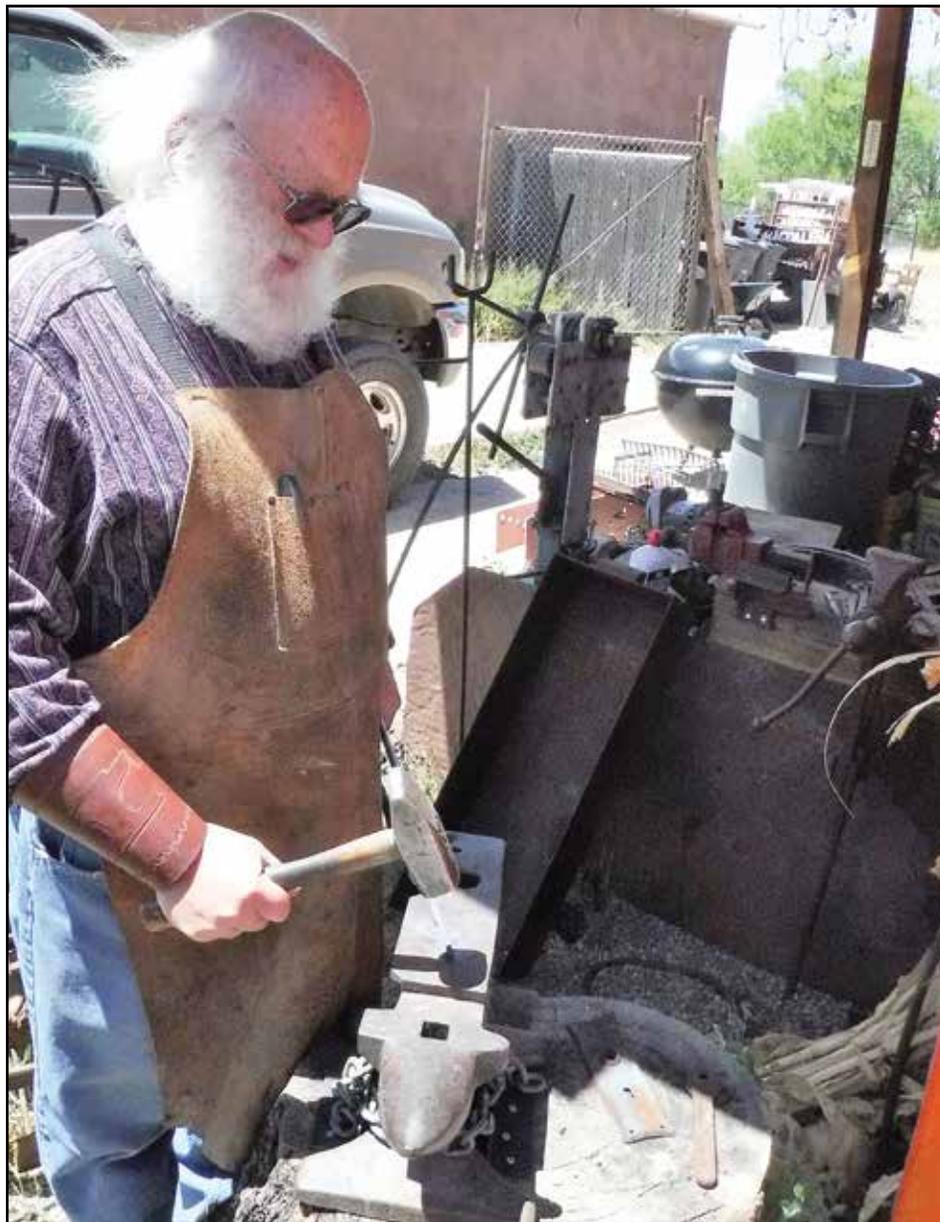
But Magdalena also owes its origins to the mining industry. The ghost town of Kelly, three and a half miles south of Magdalena, was once the center of mining in the area, and boasted a population of 2,000, supported by the numerous mines in the Magdalena Mountains. The Kelly Mine, named after Andy Kelly when the town was not much more than a mining camp, was the most productive, and its headframe still stands.

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 collection holds photographs, memorabilia and artifacts donated by residents that tell the story of miners and 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 mercantiles that once lined the main thoroughfares.

Today, Magdalena is a quiet village of roughly 900 residents. Its history, galleries, dark skies and outdoor recreation opportunities make it a popular tourist destination.

There are several eateries from which to choose and overnight



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accommodations from two motels, as well as nicely furnished B&Bs.

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 numerous 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.

Magdalena celebrates its history

as an Old West mining and cattle-shipping center with the Frontier Festival, held over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, June 1-2. The event features two full days of historical exhibits, kids' games, horno baking, Dutch oven cooking and much more, including live music and a faux gunfight, Old West style. A highlight would naturally be a walk through Magdalena's past in the Box Car Museum, accessed from the original Santa Fe Railroad loading dock at the Magdalena Public Library.

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

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Socorro County is rich with history

More than two centuries before Christopher Columbus' fabled sojourn to the New World from Spain, Piro Indians — the southern-most Pueblo tribe — inhabited nearly two dozen villages along the Rio Grande from San Marcial to La Joya. The Piros, 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 Piros.

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 Piros 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. 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



Photo courtesy of Socorro Historical Society

Community

from PAGE 12

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.

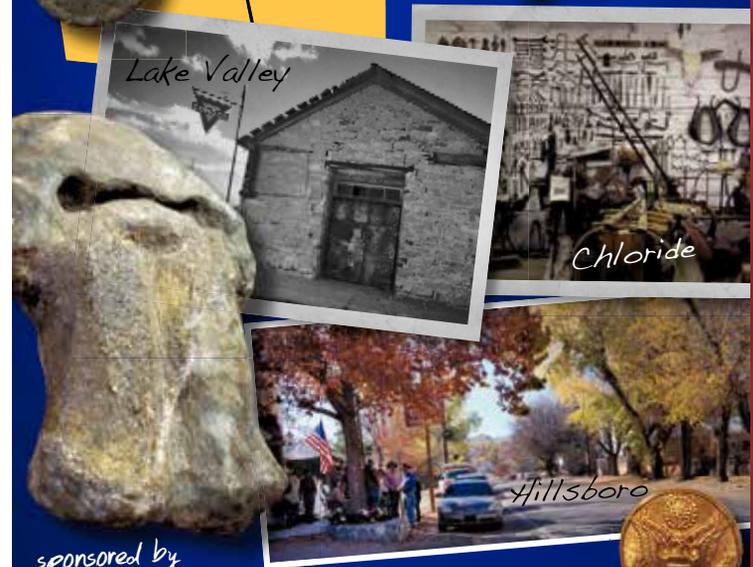
The area's rich and varied history has spawned a number of annual celebrations that continue to grow in popularity, many of which can be found throughout this guide.

Socorro's Free State of Mind

This year marked the 66th anniversary of the "Free State of Socorro" — a movement, started by accident, that

■ See **Community** Page 14

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Photo courtesy of Socorro Historical Society

Community

from PAGE 12

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 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.

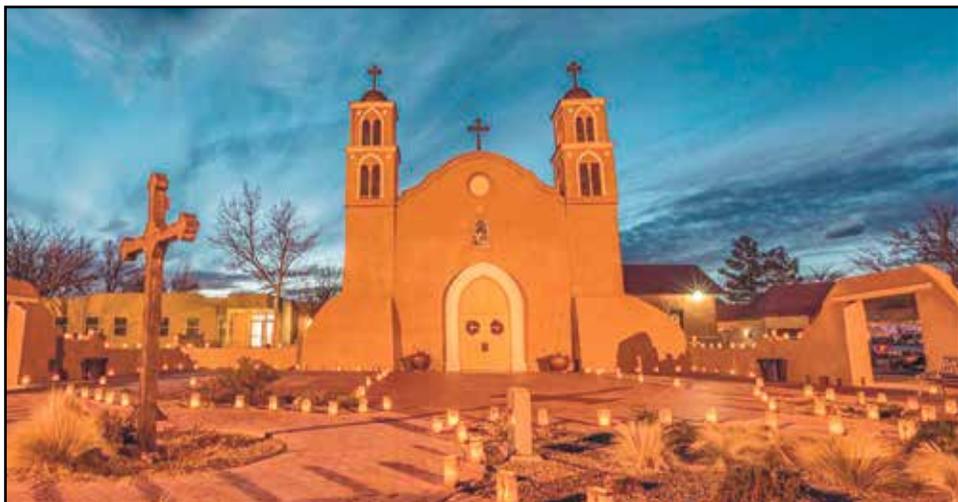
The friendly people of Socorro County welcome you to our part of the world, whether you are here to enjoy the Land of Enchantment or the sovereign Free State of Socorro.

San Miguel Mission among oldest churches in U.S.

Founded 421 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 Senora 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,



Colleen Gino | El Defensor Chieftain

San Miguel Church has stood for 404 years at the center of the community.

The mission was abandoned during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and because of repeated Apache raids and it was a few years before the church was restored, eventually being renamed to honor the Archangel St. Michael under miraculous circumstances. The church's priest, 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 parishioners and oversees the area mission churches. The three day San Miguel Fiesta will be held Friday through Sunday, Sept. 27-29.



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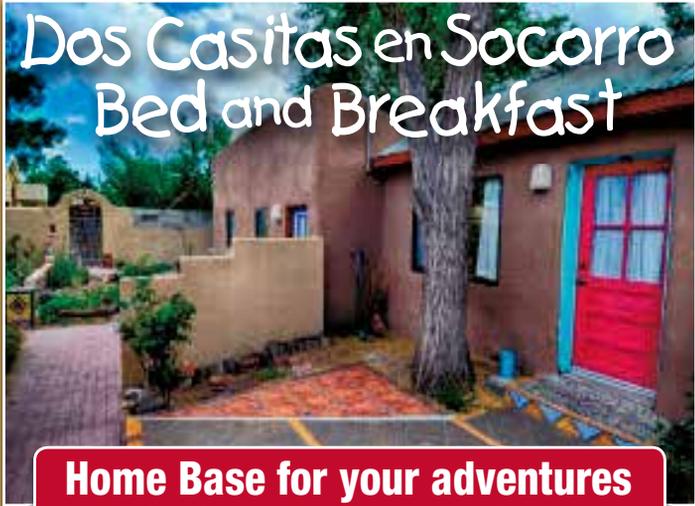
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John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

San Antonio: Birthplace of Conrad Hilton

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, San Antonio, New Mexico has achieved certain renown worldwide.

A quiet farming and ranching community 10 miles south of Socorro, San Antonio is transformed every fall into a birder's paradise with the annual arrival of hundreds of flocks of sandhill cranes and thousands of snow geese at the National Wildlife Refuge. During the third week in November, visitors from every continent flock to the area for a week-long tribute to birds of every feather, nesting in hotels, motels, bed and breakfast establishments and guest-houses for miles around.

One of San Antonio's most successful businesses have been open at least as long as the refuge, if not longer, and although they draw their fair share of eco-tourists, it's gastro-tourism that has really put them in the international map.

Since the 1940s, when J. Robert Oppenheimer and other physicists working on the Manhattan Project at the nearby Trinity Site on White Sands Proving Grounds stopped at the Owl Café for meals and a cold beer, San Antonio has been known as the go-to place for a world-class green chile cheeseburger. For decades, hungry travelers in the know have planned their itineraries to arrive at the Owl in San Antonio just in time for lunch or dinner.

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.



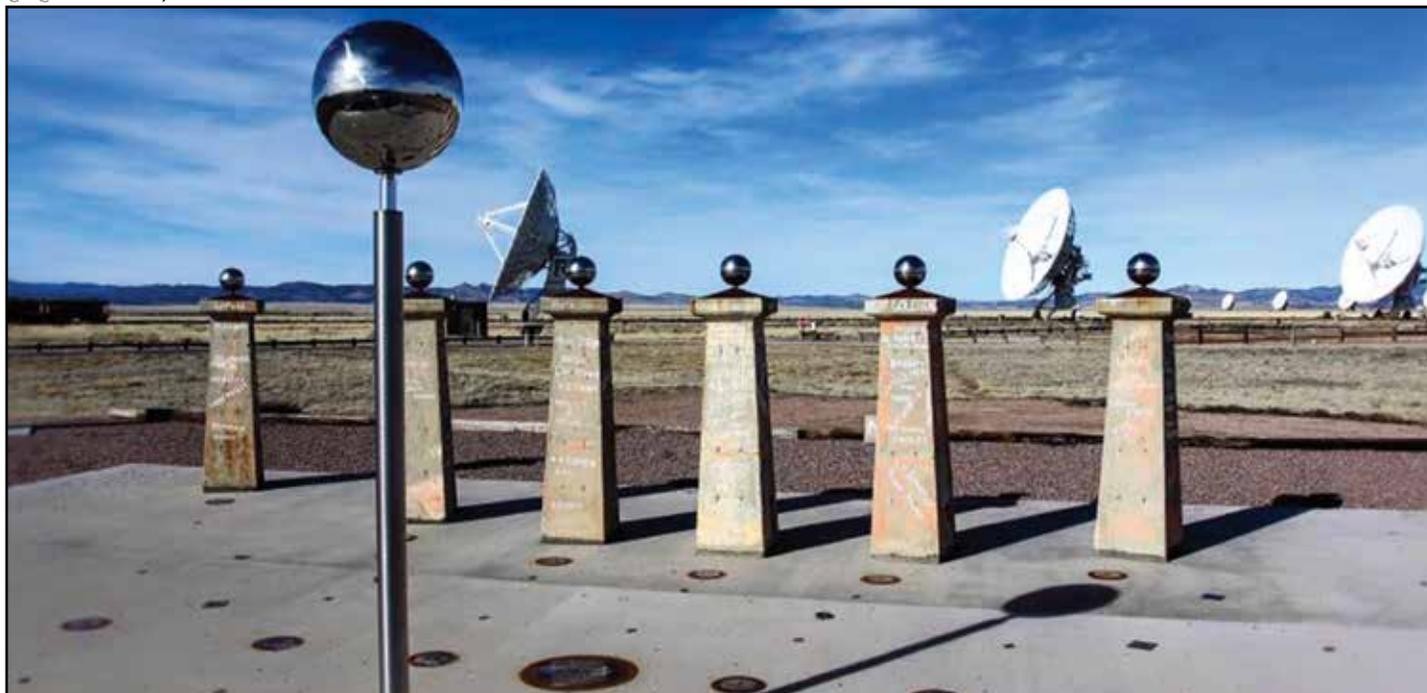
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John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array

The Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array – commonly referred to as the VLA – 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 almost 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 in its widest configuration, 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 his-

tory, 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 45 miles west of Socorro on 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.

New Mexico Tech is “MIT of the Southwest”

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.

Although the student body hovers at around 2,000, 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 Daniel Lopez – opened for classes and research in 2017.

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 also has been 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 New Mexico Tech is the Energetic Materials Research and 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



Photo submitted | El Defensor Chieftain

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.

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

SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATHEMATICS

WHY STEM?

Employment in **STEM** occupations grew much faster than employment in non-**STEM** occupations over the last decade, and are projected to grow by 8.9 percent from 2014 to 2024, compared to 6.4 percent growth for non-**STEM** occupations.

STEM workers command higher wages, 29 percent more.

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Top 2% among all universities in Computer Science and in the **Top 2%** in Physical Sciences.

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John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

Mineral Museum is community's hidden gem

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 Smithsonite 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 rockhounding."

The 40th annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium is scheduled for November 9-10. 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/.

Performing Arts Series is diamond in the desert

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 celebra-



tion with music, family activates 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.

NMT golf course is one of best courses in state

Nestled within the beautiful desert landscape of New Mexico lies a vibrant piece of green behind New Mexico Tech University. The Tech Golf Course sits at the base of Socorro’s famous “M” Mountain and is open year round.

The course is 18 holes with the front and back nine being separated by Canyon. A driving range that can accommodate up to twenty golfers at a time is attached next to the clubhouse.

A nationally regarded golf challenge also resides at New Mexico Tech. Known as the Elfeño Baca Shootout, the course boast a one hole par-15 throw down that begins at the top of a hill next to “M” Mountain. Golfers begin by hitting off of a wooden T area and must make their way down to town while maintaining awareness of where their ball has landed.

Known for its rolling hills and changes in elevation the course is generally considered shorter by golf standards. That allows visiting players to work on their short and mid range game. But do not be mistaken, coming to play will require your full set of clubs with the variety of holes sur-



Photo submitted | El Defensor Chieftain rounding you.

Three of the 18 holes at New Mexico Tech are par fives. Starting on the front nine is a 457 yard challenge which is a

full 100 yards shorter than the longest hole on No. 5. At a daunting 559 yards and its right dog-leg turn players must decide to play it safe by laying up or shoot for the stars over a treacherous patch of desert terrain.

The course measures in at 6,668 yards, is a par 72 in total, carries a 71.0 rating at a slope of 129 for gentlemen, and a 69.7 rating at a slope of 125 for ladies.

Before or after your round the “M” Mountain Grill is the perfect place to wind down and take in the afternoon sunset. Serving mostly American style foods, a variety of beers are available depending on your taste. Both indoor and covered outdoor seating is provided.

Golf Digest named the course one of America’s best Golf Destinations, as well as one of the 10 best courses in the state of New Mexico.

Beginner and Intermediate golf classes are available on Tuesday and Thursday. For more information about booking a round or other special events call 575-835-5335 or visit their website at www.nmtgolf.com.



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Rodeo arena is city's prominent attraction

After opening the gates in 2017 the Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex has established itself as one of the premier destination spots for not just local but also national competition in New Mexico.

The arena boasts a 39,000 square foot soft dirt area for competitors to throw down and has grown in seating capacity with an estimated 1,500 plus in their stands on the west side of the partially covered arena. Normal concessions as well as local food trucks are available weekly for events. For visiting competitors there are 98 covered horse stalls, 50 designated RV parking locations, 30 of which have amp, sewer and water services. Free Wifi is also available.

In 2018 the arena hosted their biggest show to date. The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) came to town to cap off the Socorro County Fair during a two day showdown in multiple events. It was the final leg of the Turquoise Circuit branch of the PRCA before the tournament finals in Prescott Valley, Arizona.

“Thankfully there were no hard injuries for the riders,” Brown said. “The crowd got to see some great action from these athletes in every category. I wish that I wasn’t so busy

Rodeo

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during this event and could get on a horse and give these guys a run for their money. My enjoyment during a tournament such as this makes all the hard work myself and the amazing staff here worth it.”

With the development and growth of the arena several younger wranglers have been given the chance to compete nationally and further their careers roping and shooting. Socorro also hosts one of the top high school rodeo events in New Mexico. The state championship event lead to Magdalena’s Jaxson Mirabal being elected as one of four Vice Presidents of the National High School Rodeo Association.

Not limited to just rodeo events, an array of other events take place in the complex. Musical acts preform before, during and after competitions. Fun things for the kids such as piglet judging, face painting and rodeo clown performances offer families several things to do depending on the occasion.

Off of highway 60, the rodeo arena is not the only place to enjoy entertainment in the complex. There is a convention center to the north, four large soccer fields of green to the east and a long 4K course off the beaten path for running, hiking, biking or walking.

The complex’s 3rd Annual Rope For Hope tournament kicked off things in the 2019 calendar year. Roping and Barrel Racing competitions take place frequently throughout the year in between professional showdowns. If you would like to make arrangements to participate in an event or look to organize one contact Jim Dewey Brown and his staff at 575-835-8927 or email them at tourism@socorroNM.gov.



Staff Photo| El Defensor Chieftain

Socorro Heritage and Visitors Center



Residents, visitors, and tourists are able to obtain valuable and helpful information from our hospitable Visitor Center.



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Socorro

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VISIT SOCORRO

The mission of the City of Socorro Heritage and Visitors Center is to create a publicity 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.

City of Socorro Walking Tour

The only district in New Mexico to be named a scene byway, the Socorro Historical District Science 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 (3) historic districts: 1) San Miguel Church District; 2) Church-McCtcheon District; and 3) 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!

City of Socorro

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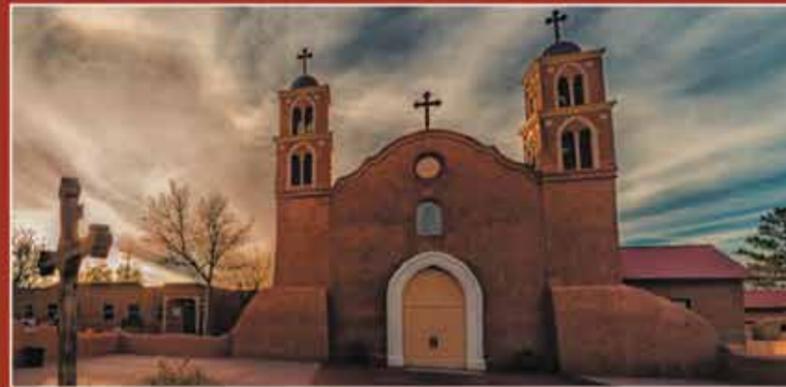
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Enjoy:

Peruse the attractions and events that we have to offer and you'll find yourself deciding to stay a little longer than you may have planned.



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(taking place first Saturday of each month):

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Karl G. Jansky Array, Datil, NM

First Saturday Star Party

New Mexico Tech Etscorn Observatory Socorro, NM

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City of Socorro Events - March 2019:

Gala of Royal Horses

Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 17, 3:00 pm, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

NM Territory CMSA

Saturday March 23 - Sunday, March 24, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - April 2019:

New Mexico High School and Junior High Rodeo

Friday, April 5 - Sunday, April 7, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Community Youth Fishing Derby

Saturday, April 13, 8:00 am, Econdida Lake

City of Socorro Blues Festival

Saturday, April 13, 3:00 pm, Socorro Plaza

Socorro Bass Club Veterans Fishing Derby

Sunday, April 14, 8:00 am, Escondido Lake

Grand Canyon Region College Rodeo

Friday, April 19 - Saturday, April 20, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Bandoleros CMSA

Saturday April 27 - Sunday, April 28, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - May 2019:

NM Territory CMSA

Saturday, May 4 - Sunday, May 5, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Cinco De Mayo Celebration

Saturday, May 4, Time TBA, Socorro Plaza

NMRA Membership Rodeo

Friday, May 10 - Sunday, May 12, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Jaelyn's Barrel Bash

Saturday, May 18, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - June 2019:

NM Territory CMSA

Saturday, June 1 - Sunday, June 2, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Trudy Freeman Memorial 4D Barrel Race

Friday, June 14 - Sunday, June 17, All Day City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - July 2019:

4th of July Parade

Thursday, July 4, 9:00 am, Plaza to Macey Center

27th Annual 4th of July Celebration

Thursday, July 4, 10:00 am - 10:00 pm, Macey Center

Bandoleros CMSA

Saturday, July 6 - Sunday, July 7, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Dave Farr Memorial Team Roping

Friday, July 12 - Sunday, July 14, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

NM Territory CMSA

Saturday, July 20 - Sunday, July 21, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Lynn McKenzie Barrel Racing Clinic

Saturday, July 27 - Sunday, July 28, Time TBA, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - August 2019:

Bandoleros CMSA

Friday, August 16 - Sunday, August 18, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Community Yard Sale

Saturday, August 24, 8 am, Socorro Plaza

Socorro County Fair & PRCA Rodeo

Friday, August 30 - Saturday, August 31, Socorro County Fair Grounds & Rodeo and Sports Complex

Socorro County Fair Parade

Saturday, August 31, 10:00 am, Sedillo Park to Plaza

City of Socorro Events - September:

Bruton Memorial Youth Rodeo

Sunday, September 1, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

NM Territory CMSA

Saturday, September 14 - Sunday, September 15, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Captain Laura S. Haines M Mountain Fly-In

Saturday, September 21, 8:00- 12:00 pm, Socorro Municipal Airport

Captain Laura S. Haines Memorial Barrel Race

Saturday, September 21, Afternoon, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

San Miguel Fiestas

Friday September 27, 2019 - Sunday September 29, 2019,
All Day, San Miguel Mission

World Series of Team Roping

Friday, September 27- Sunday, September 29, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

City of Socorro Events - October thru December 2019:

New Mexico High School Rodeo

Date TBA, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

SocorroFest

Friday, October 4 - Saturday, October 5, All Day, Socorro Plaza

NMRA Finals

Saturday, October 12 - Sunday October 13, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Extension Horse Expo

Saturday, November 2, All Day, City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex

Festival of the Cranes

Wednesday November 20, 2019 - Saturday November 23, 2019, All Day, Bosque Del Apache

Luminaria & Art Stroll

Saturday, December 7, 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm, Socorro Plaza

Annual Holiday Light Parade

Saturday, December 7, 6:00 pm, Sedillo Park to Plaza



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Visitors flock to Bosque del Apache Refuge

There may be a national wildlife refuge with more migratory birds than the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, “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, execu-



tive 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 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 observing 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 spot-

■ See **Visitors** Page 28

An advertisement for M Mountain Coffee. The background is a photograph of a mural on a building. The mural depicts a mountain range with a large 'M' on the peak, and two people in the foreground. The text of the advertisement is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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Visitors

from PAGE 27

ted 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 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 hours 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

■ See **Visitors** Page 29

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Visitors

from PAGE 28

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, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Service Manager Chris Leaser said. 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.

“There’s a lot of hands-on education going on,” Leaser said.

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 students 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.

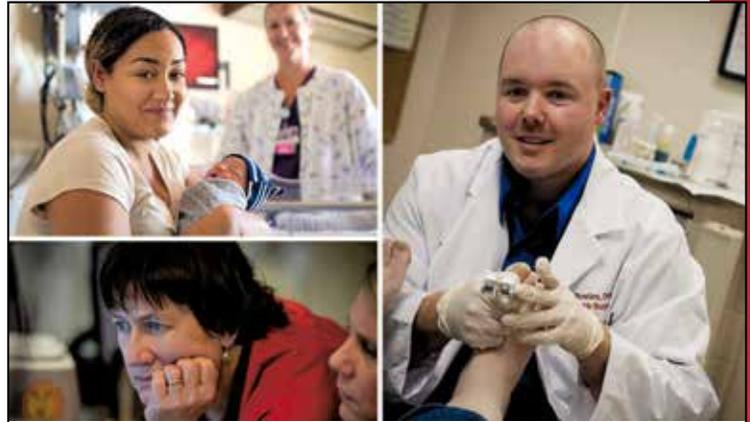
The Friends’ members come from every state except Idaho and Rhode Island, something that Caldwell hopes to change.

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 itself has a staff of 22, including some fire crew personnel who are based at the refuge, but also assist other refuges.

The refuge was created in 1939 and plays a valuable role in the local economy.



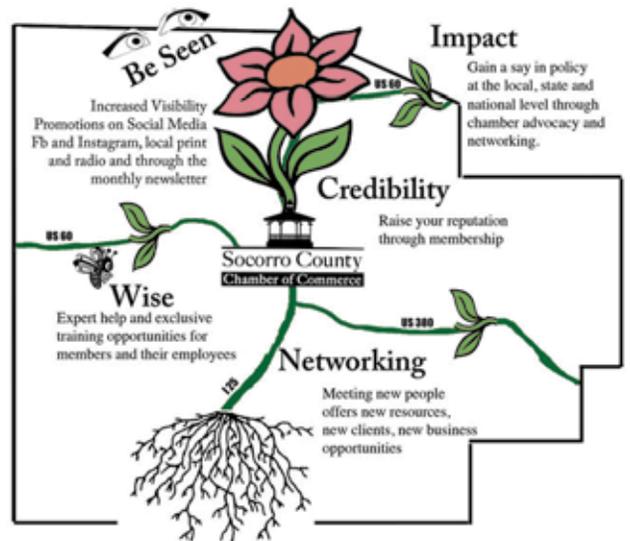
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Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge is largest in state

Evidence of wildlife can be seen on most parts of the 230,000-acre Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge along with over 8.5 miles of hike accessible trails. The refuge – the largest wildlife refuge in the state of New Mexico – is home to more than 1,200 species of plants, 251 species of birds, 89 species of mammals, 15 species of amphibians and 51 species of reptiles. While a large portion of the refuge is closed to the general public as a habitat for the wildlife, there is still plenty for visitors to explore on the refuge in northern Socorro County. Take exit 169 off of Interstate 25 and find out for yourself.

Trails range from a half-mile to 3.5 miles beginning at the visitor's center. Those new or familiar to the area will have a unique experience every time they visit. Hikers 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. “Mesas, mountains and desert terrain are 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.

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.

The wetlands are also now open again to the public after work on the habitat of 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 refuge's friends group. The Amigos de la Sevilleta hosts 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.

Other standard events include the San Lorenzo Canyon Geological Journey, the Life Givings Waters Wetlands guided tours, Bird Discovery and small game hunting. Visit their website at www.fws.gov/refuge/sevilleta/ for more information on activities. The visitor's center is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment with a guide.



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Visit the birth of the nuclear age at 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; ground zero of the first atomic bomb. 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 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 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 the U.S. Army's 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 6 and October 5. 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 hand-outs and will be allowed to drive unescorted the 17 miles to Trinity Site. The road is paved and marked.

Get a glimpse of life in the past at Fort 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. 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.

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 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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Garcia Opera House home to community theater

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 Shakespearean plays to modern comedies and dramas.



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Battle of Valverde recreated on banks of Rio Grande

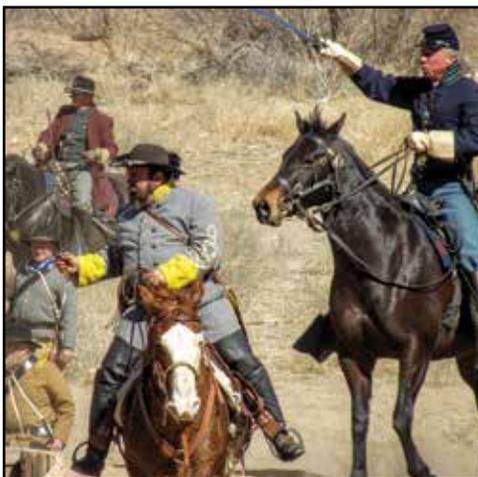
Every year in February a lesser known chapter of New Mexico history is recreated on the banks of the Rio Grande near Escondida; the Battle of Valverde, pitting the Union Army against Confederate invaders.

157 years ago the War Between the States had come to New Mexico. Socorro and nearby Fort Craig were in the cross-hairs, and by the end of that year New Mexico, Socorro County, and many of its citizens had entered the history books.

In early 1862 up to 2,600 mounted Texas soldiers under the command of Henry Hopkins Sibley stationed near Fort Bliss, Texas, crossed into New Mexico waving Confederate colors.

Thirty miles south of Socorro at Fort Craig, the U.S. Army was preparing for their impending arrival. Col. Edward Canby, commander of all Union forces in New Mexico, had shut down all army posts except Fort Craig and Fort Union, north of Las Vegas. The men and supplies from those closed forts were consolidated primarily at Fort Craig in Socorro County.

On Feb. 7, 1862, Canby received word that the Confederate Army was on the move. Over the next three days, the



entire Sibley Brigade was on the trail. All troops camped in the area, from San Marcial to Paraje were summoned to the fort, and overnight about 3,000 soldiers, many of them New Mexico volunteers under the command of Kit Carson, were crammed inside the newly erected walls of the frontier fort.

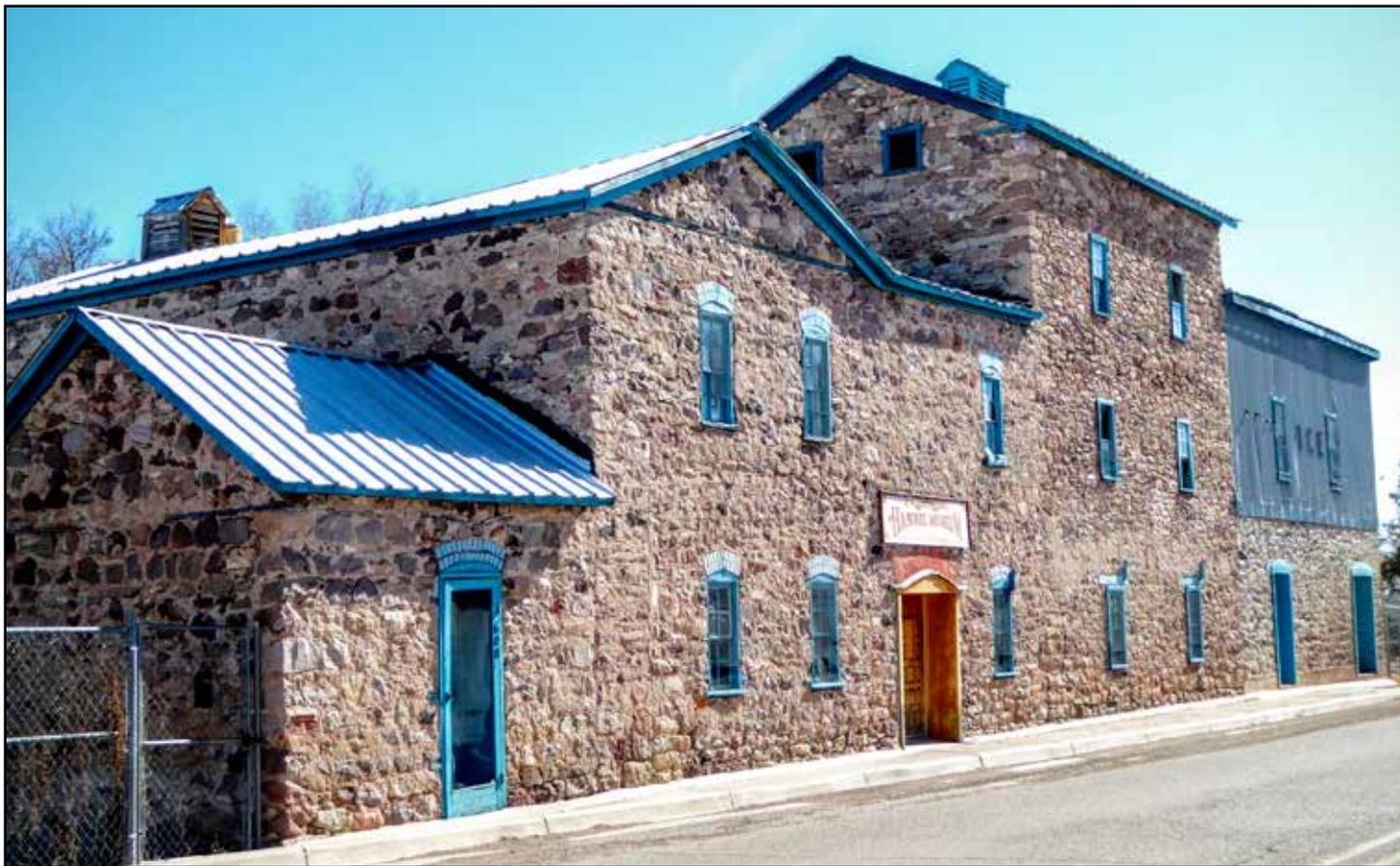
On the morning of Feb. 21, Sibley sent several companies of Texas Mounted Rifles up the Rio Grande to the Valverde ford. Canby sent several companies of Union soldiers and some New Mexico Mounted Volunteers, with a few pieces of

artillery to secure the river crossing. Both armies arrived at about the same time and the Battle of Valverde was on.

After the battle, both armies scoured the field, collecting their dead and wounded under the white flag of truce. Victory had gone to Sibley and the Texans, but they had lost control of the river and had not captured Fort Craig.

The Sibley Brigade, now low on food and supplies, began their march to Albuquerque and Santa Fe, stopping in Socorro on Feb. 24. That evening, they fired a cannonball over the town, which reportedly landed between the Plaza and San Miguel Church. The following morning, Union forces in the town surrendered.

The Confederates established a hospital on what is now Sixth Street to treat the Valverde wounded, and Socorro was occupied by the rebels for about nine weeks. However Union forces at Fort Craig had destroyed a number of Confederate supply wagons. What supplies remained were destroyed later at the Battle of Glorieta Pass and forced a retreat back to Texas that ended the Confederate push for military conquest of the West.



John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

Old brewery is now home to Hammel Museum

At one time, Socorro was known for producing the best beer in the state of New Mexico. The old brewery building stills stands at the corner of Vigil and Sixth streets, and now is the home of Socorro Historical Society and the Hammel Museum. The Hammel family's Illinois Brewing Company began operations in the second half of the 1880s.

Jacob Hammel emigrated 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.

D.A.V.

Chapter 24



Early pioneers worked land near Rio Grande

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.

These early settlers named their growing village "Plaza Limitar," derived from lemita, the berried squashbush abundant in the area at the time. Others say Lemitar is slang for "sticks" or "twigs." Over the years, the spelling has changed from Limitar to Lemitarcito to the present form, Lemitar. Regardless of the spelling, historical sources cite 1831 as the establishment of Lemitar as a village.

Lemitar's population was about 400 people in the 1860s. In 1854, the county seat for Socorro County was transferred from Socorro to Lemitar for undocumented reasons. By the 1860 census, Lemitar's 780 people outnumbered Socorro's 523 residents, which made Lemitar the largest town in Socorro County.

During this time, Lemitar was a post for the New Mexico Militia — volunteers under the approval of the American government for protecting the villages in Socorro County against marauding Apaches. The first U.S. Dragoons also quartered at Lemitar and Socorro to protect

■ See **Early** Page 37



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Early

from PAGE 36

travelers along the Camino Real.

When the railroad arrived in the Socorro area in 1880 Lemitar farmers could quickly ship their goods to market. This created an unexpected market in Lemitar — grapes. Lemitar quickly became one of the largest vineyards in New Mexico. By 1890, more than 100,000 grapevines were producing grapes for distant markets and local wineries. This lucrative industry came to an end in 1895, when a Rio Grande flood devastated the area. Today, there are a few remnants of these historic vineyards.

In the 1950s, farmers discovered cotton grew quite well in their silt-covered fields, and Lemitar became somewhat famous for its pure white cotton. This ended when the Lemitar cotton gin went out of business. The old cotton mill still stands north of the Lemitar Roadrunner Truck Stop.

In 2010 the 185 year-old adobe La Sagrada Familia Catholic Church suffered irreparable damage when its west wall collapsed after a violent rainstorm.

The rebuilt church was rededicated by the former Archbishop of Santa Fe, Michael J. Sheehan, in 2015.

Polvadera is known for acres of good farmland

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

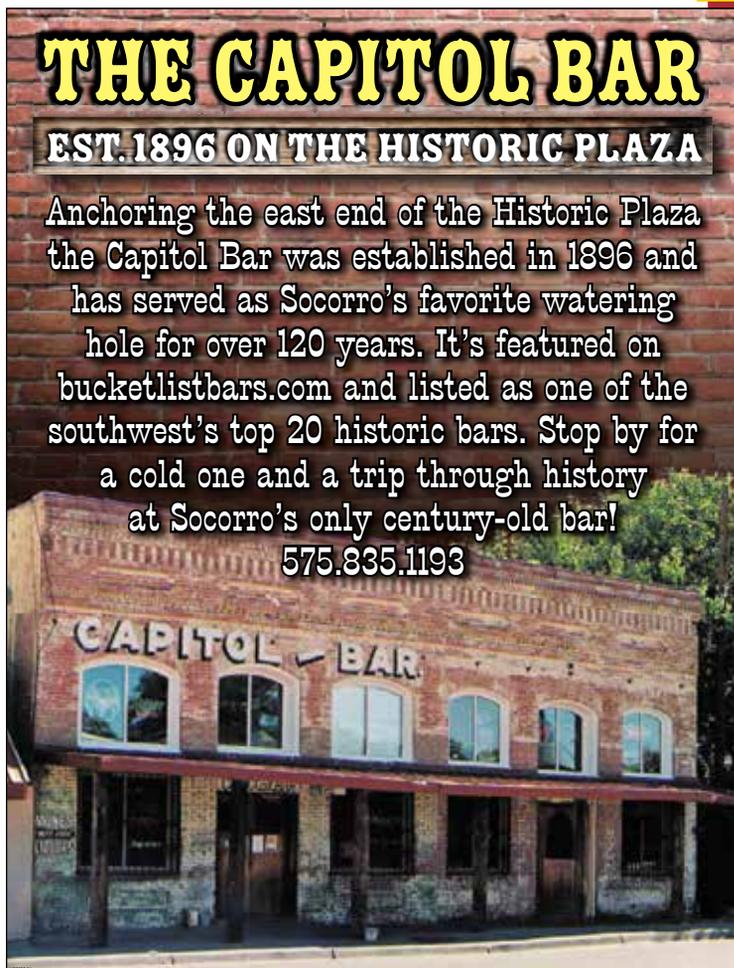
In 1680, all of the people in the Socorro region, both Spanish settlers and the Piro Indians, abandoned their homes and pueblos and fled to El Paso at the beginning of the Pueblo Revolt.

Families from Belen and Tomé were the first pioneers to venture back into the region in the early 1800s. The Piros never returned and settled in the Las Cruces area.

The San Lorenzo Land Grant, upon which Polvadera is built, came to an end in 1898. Upon 1912 Statehood, the private land ownerships were honored; the rest of the grant became state land. Years later, ownership of San Lorenzo Canyon was transferred to the Bureau of Land Management and land along the river given to the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

To this day, many of the descendants of pioneer families in Polvadera believe some of their land was stolen from them and cite the Treaties of Hidalgo and Guadalupe as evidence.

The region was known for grapes and wine, however constant floods down the Rio Grande periodically destroyed thousands of acres of good farmland and vineyards. Polvadera, like neighboring Lemitar, was always hard hit since so much of the farmland was only a few feet above the river level. Although the people of Polvadera seemed to always bounce back with their wines following a flood, it was Prohibition in 1920 that brought a centuries old industry in the area to an end.



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Ghost town of Kelly once was mining center

It was once the heart of mining in Socorro County. Although there's not much left of it, Kelly, New Mexico, 3 1/2 miles south of Magdalena, was once a bustling mining town with schools, banks, grocery stores, saloons, churches, and a clinic serving a population of well over 2,000 residents.

All there is to see of the town now are stone foundations, stone walls and remnants of concrete sidewalks. Evidence of mining operations still remain above the ghost town with the famous Traylor shaft headframe of the Kelly Mine still standing, with the refractory, boiler and assay building nearby. 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.

People started flocking to the area in the early 1880s after lead, zinc, and silver were found in abundance on the slopes of the Magdalena Mountains. Ore taken from the many mine shafts was transferred by a special tram down to Magdalena where it was

loaded onto cars of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railway and delivered to smelters in Socorro.

By 1910, Kelly was one of the state's most active mining centers. The Tri-Bullion company was producing heavily, and man named C.T. Brown was said to be shipping about 2,500 tons of lead and zinc monthly from his lease.

The high spirits in Kelly were dampened in May, 1910, when a miner was entering Kelly Mine through the tunnel and a rock struck him on the head, causing a deep gash in the front of his skull. Rushed to an Albuquerque hospital by train, he died shortly after his arrival. This is significant in that over the years, from the 1890s into the 1950s, there were relatively few deaths in the mines at Kelly. Far more perished in the coal mines down at Carthage, southwest of Socorro, than the hard rock mines at Kelly.

The June 25, 1910, edition of The Chieftain newspaper contained a summary of the activity at Kelly: "The old Kelly mine has produced enormous tonnage of carbonate ores ... the new Graphic Mill has been completed and

running two weeks ... the Cook lease has also opened up a 4-foot shoot of lead and zinc carbonate ores ... The German company has completed the installation of the new compressor and a mile of new pipe ... the Tri-Bullion mill is running night and day ... the Grand Tower property is still making good production of sulphides and will be milled instead of shipped. Not a vacant house or idle man in camp at the present. Many new houses have been erected, but still insufficient to supply the demand."

By 1947 the rich ores played out and the population dropped to zero. Most of the wood frame houses and structures were dismantled and laboriously moved the three miles down the hill to Magdalena.

The zinc carbonate Smithsonite, named after James Smithson, the founder of the Smithsonian Institution, was later mined from tailings piles by the Sherwin Williams paint company for its distinctive green color.

Concrete foundations of the Graphic Mill still exist where Hop Canyon Road splits with Kelly Road on the way up to the mining district.

Exploring the dark skies in Socorro County

When the sun goes down, the sky lights up.

Not with streetlights, but with stars, planets, galaxies and constellations. 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 the Enchanted Skies Star Party.

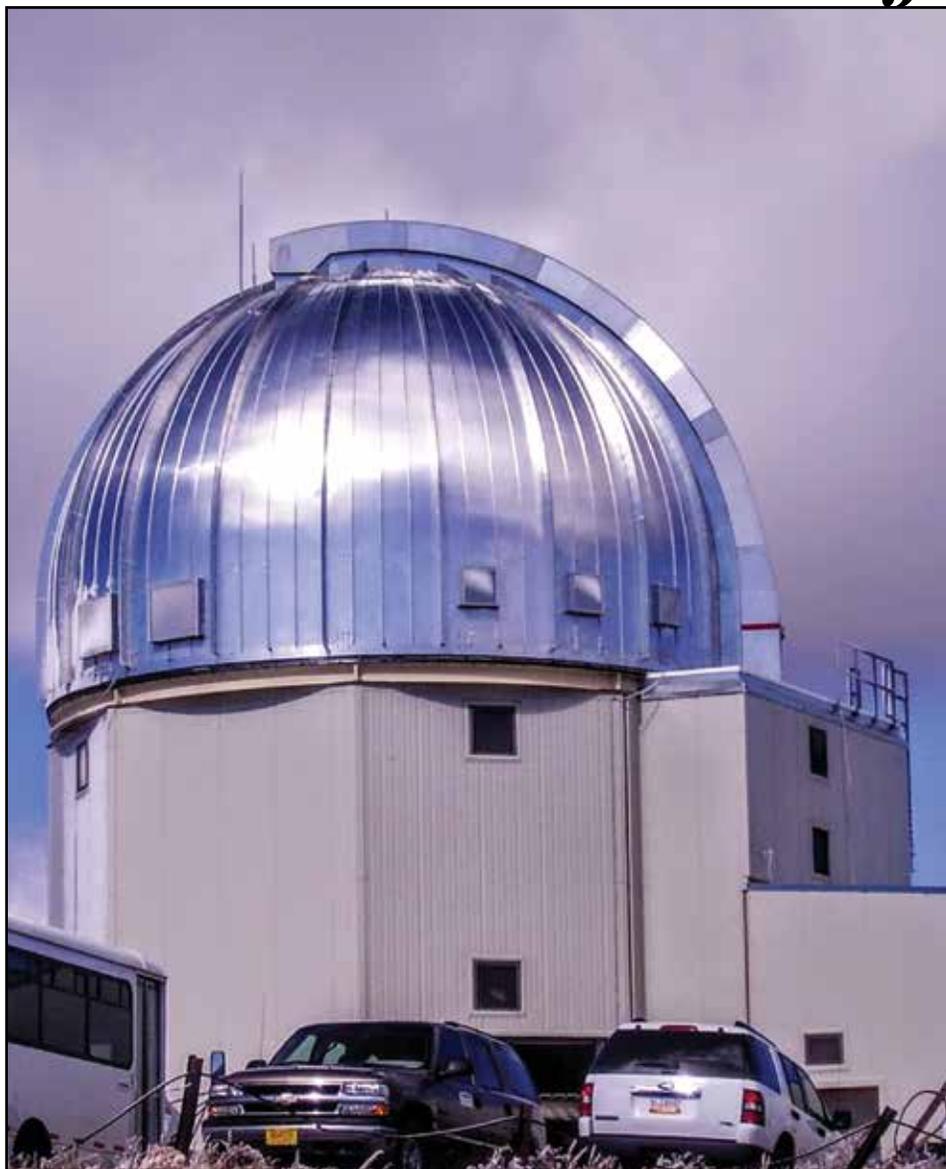
The annual Enchanted Skies Star Party in Magdalena attracts amateur astronomers from across the region and features 4 1/2 days of night sky viewing, lectures and guided visits to the Magdalena Ridge Observatory, the VLA and astronomer John Brigg's telescope museum, the Astronomical Lyceum. The 2019 Enchanted Skies Start Party is scheduled for Oct. 22-26.

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, now protected from light pollution by a state law enacted in 1999, 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



John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

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.

Salinas Pueblo Missions is National 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.

Just down the road is 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.

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Plenty of music

The music scene in Socorro County 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 local scene

- 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.
- Sofia's Cafe also has live music on the weekends.
- And in Magdalena, the Golden Spur Saloon and M&M Cafe often feature live music on weekends.

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.



John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

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.

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Photo submitted | El Defensor Chieftain

Alamo Navajo reservation covers 63,000 acres

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.

The reservation encompasses 63,000 acres in the northwest corner of Socorro County, an area that provides spectacular views of mountains, rolling hills and slanted mesas. Bordered on the south by the Gallinas Mountains, the landscape is dotted with chamizal and cactus, juniper and piñon trees.

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 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.

Sheep can be spotted grazing in secluded sections of the countryside, even on the north side of "Unnecessary Ridge" — so named in a previous era when it blocked access to a trading post. Shepherd markers still stand atop some peaks. Former homes (called hogans) and sweat lodges used for purification rituals remain scattered on parts of the reservation.

Other evidence of the past can be found in petroglyphs painted on rock bordering the Rio Salada. Fossils millions of years old are imbedded in rock and shark teeth have been found scattered over some of the land's flat, rocky floor.

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.

Isolation is felt to be the main drawback on the reservation. This has impacted on education and socioeconomic conditions of the reservation and created gaps between Alamo and the main Navajo Reservation, which is situated 220 miles southeast of the Navajo Nation capitol of Window Rock. Much of its development has come in recent decades, with the building of a modern school, courthouse, healthcare clinic and wellness center.

Alamo is served by KABR, 1500 AM radio, which provides information and entertainment in both English and Navajo to its residents.

As a chapter of the Navajo Nation, Alamo is governed much like a state in the United States. Decisions affecting tribal members and Alamo's infrastructure are made by elected officials at the Chapter House — the center of the reservation.

For more information on Alamo, call the Chapter House at 575-854-2686.

Socorro is home to 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 1-10 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 1-10, 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.

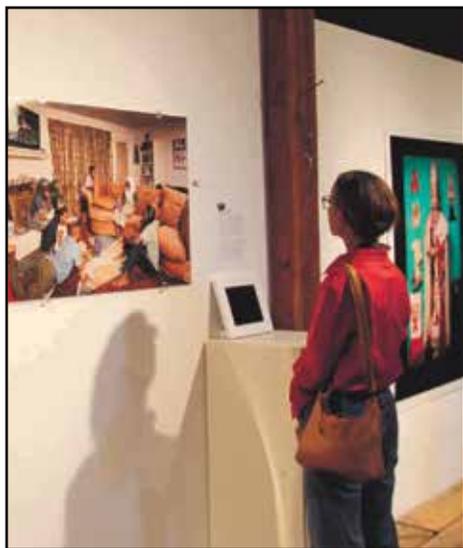
Works by local artists can be found at the Socorro County Chamber of Commerce and El Defensor Chieftain. In December, works by local artists are on display at business around the Socorro Plaza during the Luminarias, Art Stroll and Electric Lights Parade.

ALAMO GALLERY AND GIFTS

1008 N. California St.
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www.socorrocountyarts.com

A local arts cooperative with dozens of artists showing a variety of media, and information on El Camino Real. Free workshops are offered monthly. Open from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.



John Larson | El Defensor Chieftain

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Outdoor adventures abound in Socorro County

With its serene and captivating landscape Socorro, Magdalena, San Antonio and the surrounding areas are pristine for those interested in hiking, biking and climbing.

The county overall 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 the mountain biking enthusiast trails like Hop Canyon No. 25, Socorro Singletrack and the Chupadera Crossing Loop offer riders of 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 has a good flow, is easy to follow, and is an exhilarating 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 Interstate 25, Exit 152 at 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 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.



Staff Photo | El Defensor Chieftain

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 60 five miles west of Socorro 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.

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.

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

Escondida Lake

This lake/park offers fishing and camping, RV hookups, tent sites, bathrooms and potable water year round. Full hook-up sites (sewer, water, electricity) are \$18. Non hook-up sites are \$10, tent camping \$6, group picnic shelter fee \$25; reservations required.

From Interstate 25, take exit 152 east and continue north 1.4 miles at the bend

in the road.

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 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 suit-

Outdoor

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able 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 U.S. Geological Survey site before heading out.

To access one of the hike's jump off points exit Interstate 25 mile marker 175 at Bernardo. 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 Bureau of Land Management 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 Interstate 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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Lovers of outdoors will enjoy 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 charming mountain community of Glenwood is nearby with a cozy motel and places to eat, drink and shop. The annual Glenwood Dutch Oven gathering is held every year where dozens of participants show off their open fire cooking skills the way it used to be done. This year the cook-off is April 8 in Glenwood Community Park and the public is invited.

The Cosmic Campground, 12 miles north of Glenwood and 25 miles south of Reserve, has one of the darkest natural night skies on earth. Situated between the Gila Wilderness and the Blue Range Primitive Area, the Campground features a basic infrastructure to support campers, offering a 360-degree unobstructed view of the night sky. As the nearest signifi-

cant artificial light is 40 miles away in Arizona, Cosmic Campground was officially designated as an International Dark Skies Sanctuary in 2015.

Nearby Alma was the address of the renowned WS Ranch, whose hired hands included cowboys Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid and members of the Wild Bunch (when they weren't robbing banks or trains). History records Cassidy and his gang as being well mannered when in Alma.

Speaking of the 1880s, Reserve, the county seat, was the scene of the legendary shoot-out between self-appointed Socorro Deputy Sheriff Elfego Baca and some 70 cowboys from the WS Ranch and surrounding area. It seems Elfego was held responsible for the death of a cowboy connected with the arrest of an inebriated man for shooting off his pistol in a reckless manner in the street. Elfego took refuge in a small house nearby, and over the course of two days held off the angry mob, and although several hundred bullets were fired into the structure, in the end he emerged without a scratch. A bronze statue of Baca commemorating the event stands in the heart of Reserve.

The Village of Reserve – formerly Frisco Plaza – boasts a population of around 300 and is the center of Catron County government. It has restaurants, arts and crafts and the historic Uncle Bill's Bar, which first opened in 1878. The Catron County Fair is held in August of every year.

With trailheads accessing Gila National Forest, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and rock climbing are the order of the day for many residents of, and visitors to, Catron County.

The Gila Wilderness was established in 1924 as the first designated wilderness in the United States. Early in the 20th century, famed naturalist Aldo Leopold recommended a new idea; the preservation of large areas of wild country to be set aside from the impositions of man as wilderness. The forest boasts a rich history of the Mogollon and Apache Indians, Spaniards, Mexicans, ranchers, prospectors and miners. Apache tribal Chiefs Mangas Coloradas, Geronimo, and Victorio; and renowned lion hunter Ben Lilly are but a few of the personalities from the past that have left their mark in the Gila.

Ancient petroglyphs can be discovered while hiking Apache Creek Rock

Art Trail and Tularosa Box north of Reserve off Highway 12. The rock art you see today is the surviving remnant of a wealth of images created by Native Americans over the past several thousand years.

The 800-acre Quemado Lake Recreation Area, 20 miles south of Quemado has some of the best fishing in Catron County. The recreation area includes the 131 acre manmade trout lake with two ADA fishing piers, two boat ramps, seven developed campgrounds, one primitive campground, and links to more than seven miles of hiking trails. Just north of the lake is Snuffy's Sports HQ and Steakhouse.

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-Of-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.

Tiny Pie Town has also long been recognized as a popular stop for east-west travelers on Highway 60, but it also welcomes north-south hikers on the continental divide. The Continental Divide Trail extends 3,100 miles between Mexico and Canada. A popular rest stop for hikers is a curiously decorated log house called the Toaster House, so-named because of a dozen or so toaster hanging from the trees and fence surrounding the front gate.

A recent addition to Catron County's western heritage is the so-called Town of Gabriella, on 128 acres between Datil and Horse Springs off Highway 12 in the Tipi Ranches area. Gabriella is a recreation of a typical Old West town, complete with hotel, saloon, court house and storefronts, all reminiscent of classic television and movie westerns. The "town" is the culmination of a life-long dream of Larry Iams, who took five years to build it himself with the help of a friend. At various times throughout the year Larry hosts special events at the site.



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