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Issue 2
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A NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE TAYLOR-MESILLA HISTORIC SITE

President's Chat

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

It has taken the past two years to form the current Board of Directors for the Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Site, and we feel very fortunate to have excellent members serving today. There are various skill sets required of civic association members, and these include organizational, educational, marketing, communication, artistic, business and financial. We thought our readers would be interested in who is serving on the Board and what experiences they bring.



Heather Pollard

Longtime educator and Friends Vice President Bob Wofford currently serves on the Las Cruces School Board. Secretary Tom Dormody is a college professor. Treasurer Chris May is a CPA and is assisted by Kathy Shannon, a bookkeeper. Diana Seward and David Medina fall under the finance category and Jo Galván Nash and Mike Cook are communication/marketing specialists. Sherry Hulsey and Diane Lilley share many years as public school teachers. Adrian Aguirre is an artist and animator. Leslie Cervantes was Chief of Staff to a university president and school superintendent. Attorney Marci Beyers and Nurse Susan Peters fall into many categories but let's add legal and medical. Joanne Achen and Mary Kay Papen are businesswomen and Mary Kay was a New Mexico State Senator for 20 years. As for me, experience in historic preservation and the arts.

What do we all have in common? An abiding affection for the Taylors and a fascination and dedication to historic preservation in Mesilla and the Borderlands.

If you wish to become a member of the Taylor-Mesilla Friends, please contact us at taylormesillafriends@outlook.com.

❖ Heather Pollard, President,
Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site

Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site Update

Exciting progress is unfolding across the site, and the team is energized to see these long-anticipated projects taking shape! With approvals from the Historic Preservation Department in place, key improvements are well underway. The inner courtyard has been relevelled, and repairs to the wine room and kitchen vigas are complete. ADA upgrades continue with ramps under construction and bathroom remodels in progress. The Barela building construction is ongoing, window tinting is now finished, and wood floor sealing is underway. A staff favorite — the turtle enclosure — now has secure new fencing!



Photo courtesy of Dept. of Cultural Affairs

Meanwhile, our interpretive team has been hard at work developing and formatting tours, programs, handouts, interactives, and more to enrich the visitor experience and support our mission. On the collections side, Yasmine, our collections specialist, has partnered with the Museum of International Folkart and Level Fine Arts Services in Santa Fe to re-install artworks and objects using upgraded hanging hardware—an important part of our preventative conservation efforts.

❖ Emily Wilson, Historic Sites Regional Manager

Taylor Family History Featured at "Taylor Talk"

A crowd of more than 70 turned out to hear the origin story of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site from three people who grew up in it. The fourth "Taylor Talk" was hosted on July 19 in the Mesilla Community Center. Three children of Mary and J. Paul Taylor — Mike, Pat and Mary Helen — offered insights, stories and family photos.

A photo of a teen-aged Mary Daniels in front of the Mesilla Plaza gazebo indicated her love of the town and it was her desire to raise her children there that brought the couple to their new home. Her passion for history and the borderland fueled the roots of the historic site. A photo of J. Paul as a child standing on a wooden crate to talk foreshadowed the public life that would lead him to enable the realization of the historic site, based on his background as an educator, legislator and regent for the Museum of New Mexico.

—continued page 2



Pictured above (left to right) Michael Taylor, Mary Helen Taylor Ratje, and Pat Taylor each shared historical and humorous stories of their upbringing in Mesilla. [photos - Jo Galván Nash]

Come to the next Taylor Talk

At the next Taylor Talk, Historic Site Interpretive Ranger Daniel Webb will present “From the Territory of Montezuma to the ‘Garden Spot’ of the Southwest: Visions of the Mesilla Valley Before Statehood.” It is scheduled for Saturday, October 18 from 2:00-3:00 PM at the Mesilla Community Center.

The purpose of the free Taylor Talk series is to highlight the history and culture of the Mesilla Valley. The talks are held quarterly by the Friends and staff of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site and are open to the public.

❖ *Tom Dormody & Susan Peters
Program & Volunteers Committee*

Taylor Talk (cont.)

“They had this idea from the 1950s,” Pat Taylor said about his parents’ idea of preserving their home, the Reynolds and Barela stores, and their collections of art and textiles for public display. Mike Taylor said the family explored different partner organizations before choosing the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) as the primary partner, entering an agreement in 2003. Support has grown and flourished since then, including from an advisory group, a friends of the site organization, state legislators, and DCA staff.

Restoration of the Taylor home began long before, as the kids remembered it being an ongoing project during their childhood. Pat Taylor credited local artisans Felipe Lucio, Bernardo Lopez, José Moreno and José Pacheco for their valuable contributions to restoration. For the kids, it was home. “The Plaza was our front yard and Mesilla was our backyard,” Pat said, remembering that he and his brothers served as altar boys at the nearby Basilica of San Albino, and the siblings carved initials on bricks on the north side of the church.

The legacies of Mary, who hailed from near Smelertown in El Paso, and J. Paul, who was from the multicultural farming community of Chamberino, go well beyond the site. Mary published a history of Mesilla and her photography inspired her grandson, Paul Ratje, to become a successful photojournalist, who has been published in the New York Times and Reuters. J. Paul’s fingerprints are on state policy, public schools, NMSU and state cultural affairs.

❖ *Tom Dormody & Terry Canup, Program & Volunteers Committee*

Trainings for Volunteers Offered by DCA Staff

As construction continues at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site (TMHS) in Mesilla, NM, many volunteers are attending various trainings provided by the NM Department of Cultural Affairs. Alexandra McKinney, seen below, is spending a lot of extra time conducting thorough trainings that include everything from safety procedures to working with the public to important background about the unique buildings and the collections that will soon be on display.

The volunteers will be, or are already, filling non-paid positions ranging from working in the gift shop to giving interpretive tours for the soon-to-open museum. “We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone participating in the volunteer training,” said Emily Wilson, the Historic Sites Regional Manager for TMHS and Fort Selden Historic Site in Radium Springs. “Their time, energy, and support are invaluable as we continue to grow, improve, and share this space with our community.”



To become a volunteer, contact Alexandra (alexandra.mckinney@dca.nm.gov) and taylormesillafriends@outlook.com. Assistance is greatly appreciated for fun activities such as Family Festival Day in August, Día de los Muertos in November, Nacimientos event in December, Cinco de Mayo, tours of Mesilla, selling items from the Gift Shop, conducting research, and more!

❖ *Jo Galván Nash & Mike Cook (photo), Marketing Committee*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug. 23, Sat.: Taylor-Mesilla Family Day Fiesta on the Mesilla Plaza, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Stop at the Friends tents for a child-friendly trivia wheel, grab some water, and join the Friends. Enjoy plenty of entertainment.

Sept. 13-14: Diez y Sies de Septiembre Fiesta (Sept. 16th commemorating Mexico's independence), noon to 11:45 p.m., celebration on the Plaza. Stop by the Friends Gift Shop!

Sept. 23, Tues.: Mesilla Clean Up Day, 9 a.m.-noon, begins at the acequia/canal near Mesilla Town Hall, 2231 Ave. de Mesilla. If interested, contact Emily Wilson, emily.wilson@dca.nm.gov.

Oct. 7, Tues.: Academy for Learning in Retirement, 10:30 a.m., DACC East Mesa Auditorium; Emily Wilson & Alexandra McKinney discuss Taylor-Mesilla Site, via Zoom or live; only \$5.00; contact nmsu.alr@gmail.com.

Oct. 18, Sat: Taylor Talk, 2-3 p.m., Mesilla Community Center, 2251 Calle de Santiago. Presentation by Historic Site Interpretive Ranger Daniel Webb (see top of page); Free.

Nov. 1-2, Sat.-Sun.: Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), day-long event on the Mesilla Plaza. A cultural celebration with fun activities, music, and exhibits. Look for the Friends booth or come into the Gift Shop for items specific to the day.

Exciting News: Our Gift Shop is Expanding!

Soon, a new chapter begins for the Barela Store operated by the Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site

Since we first opened, the Gift Shop has grown into its small space, from a modest nook with shelves sparsely filled to a vibrant destination for locals and travelers alike. The expansion will be inspired by the simple desire to do more for the community: to bring a wider range of gifts, to showcase artisans, and to create a space where every visit feels like a celebration.

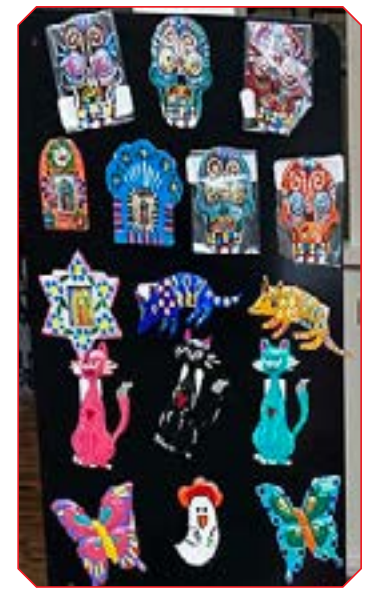
What's New? A Sneak Peek into the Expanded Gift Shop. Here's a glimpse of what you can look forward to:

- More floor space — we will move to the historic Barela Store next door to the Reynolds Store;
- Extended product range, from hand-crafted items from all over the world including nacimientos (nativities), textiles, folk art, jewelry, and pottery. We want our items to complement the historic home and resemble a museum-quality gift shop.
- We are hoping to expand our hours, **but we need more volunteers.** If you are interested, please contact Marci Beyer 575-621-1242 or Mary Helen Taylor Ratje 575-649-4603.

❖ *Mary Helen Ratje, Friends Gift Shop*



WE'RE OPEN
Thursdays through Saturdays
and on special occasions
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



*** FOR SALE ***

(Photos clockwise from top)

- ❖ Variety of fun magnets from San Miguel de Allende.
- ❖ Unique handmade bracelets.
- ❖ Postcards show photos of adobe brick work, the patio at the Historic Site, some of the art in the original Taylor home, and vintage and historic photos of Mesilla. The shop also has notecards with envelopes with photos by Dave Sorenson, a local artist and friend of J.Paul. They depict architectural features and artifacts. Sets of cards also are available by local artist Katharine Holmes.
- ❖ Colorful turtle ceramics.
- ❖ Tin-framed mirror, blown-glass hearts, and plenty of figurines.
- ❖ Hand-punched tin artwork by Albuquerque artist Laura Martinez. The shop has magnets, ornaments and retablos which are tin plates, hand-punched with images and icons of saints and angel affirmations. Look for cool images of Frida Kahlo on tin.



Thank You Faith

The Friends of the TMHS wish to thank retiring Board member Faith Hutson. She has served as Board Secretary for two years. Faith will continue to be a volunteer in the new historic site. We wish her well in her new adventures.



Attend and/or Volunteer for the NM-Arizona History Conference

Members of the Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site will be volunteering and attending the 2025 New Mexico-Arizona History Conference, Sept. 25-27, at the Las Cruces (NM) Convention Center. Tickets need to be purchased by Sept. 14.

The Friends organization will be a conference exhibitor, distributing information about the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. To volunteer at the Friends booth, contact taylormesillafriends@outlook.com.

Established in 1859, the Historic Society of NM is a nonprofit organization committed to preserving and promoting the history and culture of the state. The annual conference brings together historians, educators, students, and community leaders from across the region to explore and celebrate a shared heritage.

Dozens of sessions will be offered. [Click here for the conference program](#) and [conference fees can be reviewed here](#). K-12 teachers and students can attend for free.

To register: <https://hsnm.org/history-conference/>. Special hotel rates are available through September 11 at the Courtyard Marriott next to the Convention Center.

Become a Member of Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site

As the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site (TMHS) continues to be transformed into New Mexico's newest museum, the TMHS Friends organization is welcoming new members to join them in support of this one-of-a-kind project. For generations to come, the museum, interpretive center, and gift shop will preserve the vast collection of artifacts that represent a variety of cultures and traditions.

Suggested amounts:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student or Senior | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Patron | | |

MEMBERSHIP OR DONATION OPTIONS — Online or by Mail

- Join or donate with checks, major credit cards, or PayPal;
- Online, email: taylormesillafriends@outlook.com. A Board Member will then contact you to assist with your donation or membership.
- By Mail: Send your check payable to Taylor-Mesilla Friends to:
Taylor-Mesilla Friends, PO Box 1305, Mesilla, NM 88046

For additional information, contact: taylormesillafriends@outlook.com

New Executive Director Visits with Friends Board

La Posta de Mesilla offered a perfect venue for Board members of the Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site to visit with Anne McCudden, the new executive director of the NM Historic Sites. The 23 attendees included members of McCudden's staff who work at the Taylor-Mesilla and Fort Selden historic sites and representatives from the City and NMSU museums.

McCudden has 30+ years of experience in managing historic sites and cultural facilities. She began her new job in April. The New Mexico Historic Sites is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. "I enjoyed touring the site, the town of Mesilla and of course, meeting all of you," McCudden expressed.



Pictured above is Anne McCudden (far left), the new executive director, and standing is Friends Board President Healthier Pollard. McCudden is located in Santa Fe but will be a recurring visitor to Southern New Mexico.

FRIENDS EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:

Heather Pollard, President;
Bob Wofford, Vice President;
Tom Dormody, Secretary & Programs;
Chris May, Treasurer;
Joanne Achen, Membership Comm.

Jo Galván Nash, Marketing Committee.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Adrian Aguirre, Marci Beyer, Leslie Cervantes, Mike Cook, Sherry Hulsey, Diane Lilley, David Medina, Mary Kay Papen, Susan Peters, and Diana Seward.

ADVISORS: Joe Bullock, Biviana Cadena, Cynthia Garrett, Mayor Russell Hernandez, Mary Helen Ratje, Rosemary Stolberg, Michael Taylor, Wendy Taylor, and from the NM Department of Cultural Affairs Matthew Barbour, Alexandra McKinney, and Emily Wilson.