

# See **ALBUQUERQUE** NEW MEXICO

*Mountainair - Socorro*



• SATURDAY • SEPTEMBER 13, 2008 •

## SOUTHWEST DETOURS



## ROADSIDE CULTURE OF NEW MEXICO



Albuquerque

Barelas  
Neighborhood



Belen

Mountainair

Abo



Lemitar



**Mountainair  
- Socorro**  
SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2008

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Socorro



SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY

# SOUTHWEST DETOURS



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– Socorro**

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## Introduction

*With ancient roads, fiberglass families, a ranch of silhouettes, a man and his monkeys, rattlesnake eggs and heaps of fresh melons, Tour 2 offers a trek down New Mexico's lesser-known sections of Route 66 and the always underplayed U.S. 60. We start on a section of Route 66 abandoned over 70 years ago and end up on New Mexico's oldest highway – and in between, pure roadside attraction.*



## Tour Itinerary

**Start at Hotel Blue – SCA conference hotel  
717 Central Avenue NW, Albuquerque**

The Hotel Blue opened in June 1965 as the **Downtowner Motor Inn**, offering “ultra-modern accommodations” with a heated pool and free “TV-HiFi.” In October 1972, the motor lodge became a Quality Inn, and was converted to the Ramada Inn–Downtown in 1977. For the next two decades the facility changed names and owners, finally acquiring a new paint job and identity as the Hotel Blue. Unfortunately lost are the original signage and exterior decorative scheme, featuring desert colors and Native American motifs.







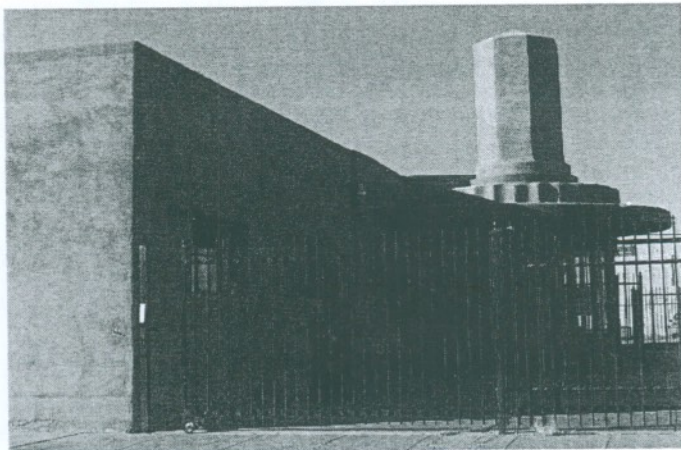
**South Fourth Street (Route 66):  
An Ancient Drag**

At the big yellow fork starts a relic section of pre-1937 Route 66 that cuts through the Barelmas district, Albuquerque's oldest neighborhood. Barelmas began as the San Nicolas Land Grant, granted by the Spanish Crown in the 1600s to several prominent New Mexico families. The landscape moved from agrarian to industrial with the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) railroad in 1880. Hundreds of would-be workers descended on Barelmas to toil at the railroad's huge repair shops to the west. With the influx of workers – mostly Anglo, Hispanic, German and Italian – the area bustled with new commerce and housing. In the early 1900s Barelmas Road, part of

the old Camino Real trade route between Mexico City and Santa Fe, carried early auto highways, including New Mexico's State Highway 1 and the transcontinental Ocean-to-Ocean and National Old Trails Road. In 1926, Barelmas Road (now South Fourth Street) converted to U.S. 66/85. New gas stations and auto dealerships popped up along South Fourth, turning it into a thriving commercial strip.

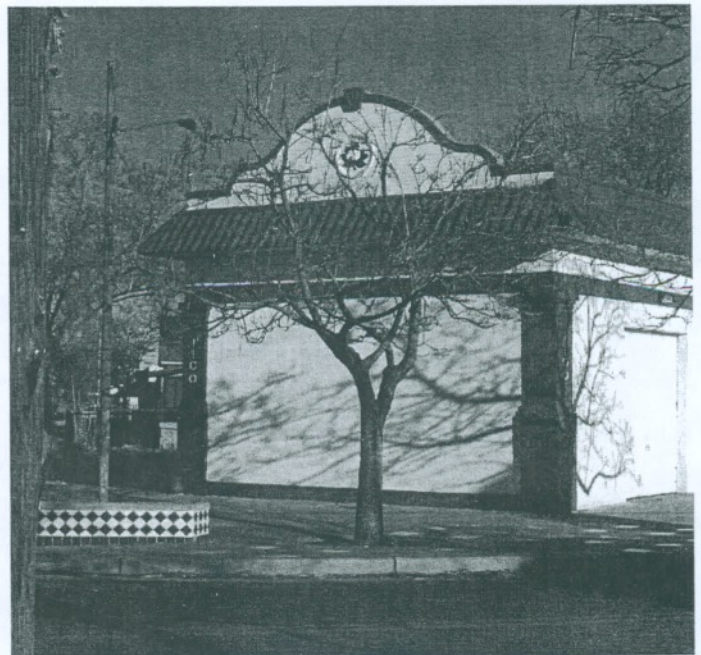
The switch from steam to diesel trains in the 1950s devastated the neighborhood. A 1970s Urban Renewal project that demolished most of its adobe homes and the nearby construction of a sewage treatment plant nearly killed it.

Things started to turn around in the 1990s when Barelmas became a historic district and South Fourth underwent a streetscape improvement plan. Relics of the auto era include the **Red Ball Café**, a 1930s café that sold five-cent Wimpy burgers and reopened in the 1990s as a chile and hamburger





*Tour #2: Mountainair - Sorocco*



hangout; the 1939 Model Food Market (now **Ruppe Drugs**), an emporium of herbs, saints and old-school beauty products; the former **Hi-Way Service Station**, a 1930-31 Mediterranean-style bungalow (today an arts center); the Mission-style **Magnolia Service Station** (1931, with service bays added in 1942); the **Duran Motor Company** (1940-42) featuring a stout octagonal tower,

and the **Moderne residence and office** of Pervian-born Dr. Lautaro Vergara, built 1942-46, and featuring rounded corners and a porthole window. The Barelas Coffee House, a once coat-and-tie restaurant, and currently a must-be-seen place for Albuquerque politicians. A new appreciation of the Mother Road continues to sustain this ancient neighborhood.



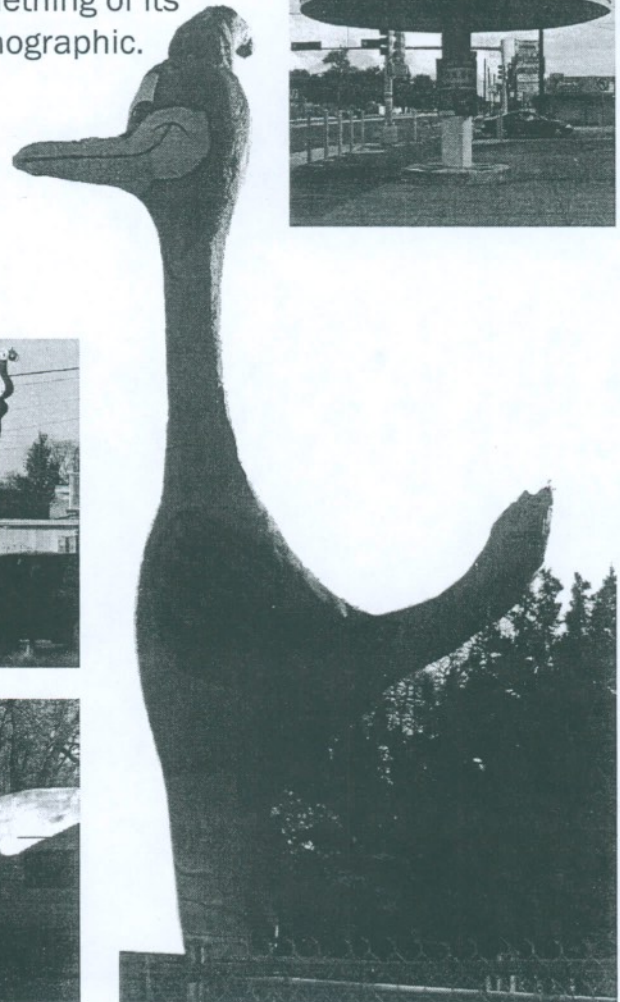
## Isleta Boulevard

A polyurethane **roadrunner** modeled after the Warner Brothers' character, a rotting wooden camera atop a shuttered photo studio, a stucco lizard crawling across a taco shop, a blue castle made of plywood...these are the new roadside attractions along this long-abandoned stretch of Route 66.

Following the course of the Camino Real, U.S. 66 covered this corridor between 1926 and 1937 before realigning onto Central Avenue to the north. Few highway resources are left – a **hidden tourist court**, now a private home, sits behind a cyclone fence and heavy shrubbery. Also along the route is a **Dairy Queen** topped by a bright horizontal roof-mounted neon sign, and **Blake's Lotaburger**, a regional burger chain founded in 1952, with 75 locations in New Mexico today. Blake's draws in customers with free-standing internally-illuminated signs featuring a top-hatted man standing on footless lollypop legs.

Near the end of the strip is a mushroom-shaped shelter in front of the nearly 100-year-old **Mushroom Store**. Built in 1930, the "mushroom" ornamented a gas station, store and nightclub run by the Baca family. The design won a \$500 prize that year in a contest held by a national petroleum magazine to honor the most unique gas station.

Today, the old road is thronged by brightly painted taco shacks, muffler repair shops, chile stands and churches (Healing Waters Ministry and Mending Broken Hearts Ministry) that tell something of its demographic.





## Tour #2: Mountainair - Socorro

### Belen: Waiting for Costner

Belen, a rough-and-tumble agricultural town and county seat, dates to 1740, when Don Diego de Torres and Antonio de Salazar successfully petitioned the Governor of New Mexico to establish a land grant by the name of Nuestra Senora de Belen. At the time of granting, Belen consisted of two competing communities: a Hispanic village and a *genizaro* settlement made of formerly enslaved Hispanicized Indians. In 1746 the *genizaros* challenged the Spanish land grant, claiming prior occupancy, but their lawsuit was disregarded by the authorities. The *genizaros* stayed on and the two groups coexisted. At one time the Belen grant included eight separate plaza communities.

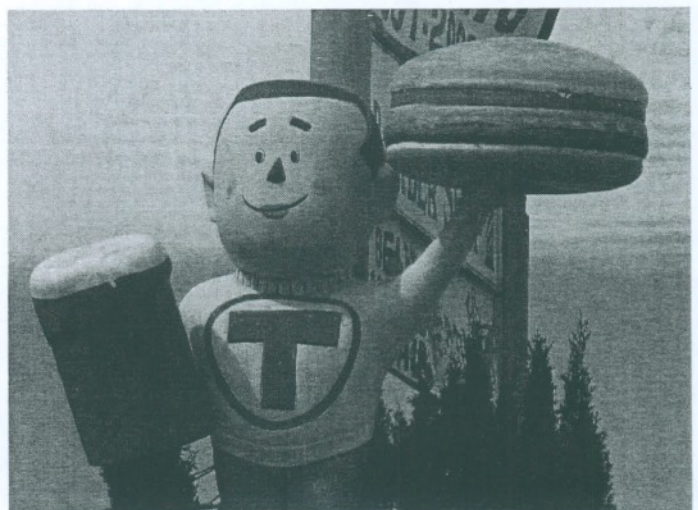
Belen hit the big time in 1907 when the Belen Cut-Off brought the railroad. Dubbed "Hub City," it became a division point on the AT&SF and later a stopover on the Ocean-to-Ocean and National Old Trails Road highways. With changes in railroad technology and a general downturn in agriculture, Belen saw a decline in the 1980s. Facing an increasing stock of vacant buildings, the city turned to a clear-the-blight mentality.

Hope, however, arrived in the early 1990s when internationally renowned artist Judy Chicago and her husband, photographer Donald Woodman, purchased and restored the 1907 Hotel Belen. Everyone looked to the artists to become a catalyst for downtown revitalization. But further decay, and even vandalism to the restored hotel, began to once again sour hopes. "We should get rid of the eyesores in town so we all benefit," said the-then head of the Chamber of Commerce in 1999, instigating an accelerated program of demolition.

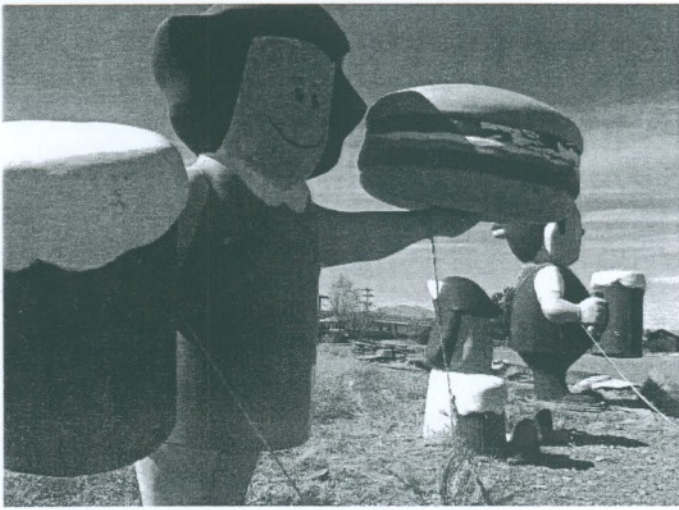
It would take the bubbly vision of Tinseltown to bring Belen's downtown back to life. Looking for a stereotypical brick commercial district, the producers of "Swing Vote" (2008) dressed up Belen to play Texico, NM. The town was the backdrop for Kevin Costner's turn as a lazy, beer-drinking everyman who is suddenly thrust into the world of politics. Sprinkling their Hollywood pixiedust, set technicians gussied up downtown, slapping on paint and adding new architectural trim. Their work has sparked new interest in the old commercial district, but locals are thinking the interest will fade before the new coat of paint.

### *The Burgers: A Family Divided*

In his pep squad sweater and crisp blue pants, Belen's **Teen Burger** proudly hefts a frosty mug of root beer and an oversized burger. This all-American stands sentry at the entrance to Circle T Plaza (523 S. Main, Belen), a collection of strip shops featuring a nail salon, boot repair and a barber. Teen Burger grew up miles away in a Denver suburb, a member of one of several hundred food-happy A&W Burger Families. But about







25 years ago, Phil Tabet, owner of the local Circle T Drive-Inns, purchased the family and relocated them to Belen.

Teen Burger started his new life as a mascot for the original Circle T Drive-Inn on Main Street, a Belen institution that started serving up tasty green chile and cheese hamburgers in 1948. The rest of his family – Papa, Mama and Baby – sat on the roof of another Circle T, several miles away. The family was broken again five years later when everyone but the teen moved 36 miles south to tiny Lemitar, just north of Socorro, where **Papa, Mama and Baby Burger** now gaze cheerfully across Interstate 25.

In 1963, A&W introduced the Burger Family to correspond with a new menu offering burgers to match each family member's appetite. Papa, with his wide girth, loved the double-cheeseburger, while Baby munched on a teeny patty. International Fiberglass – the makers of the famous Muffler Men – cast the figurines. A&W Canada added Grandpa Burger, though he never made it to the states. The lovable family got booted out of the restaurant franchise when A&W Beverages introduced a new mascot in 1974:

the cuddly Great Root Bear. A small diaspora occurred as the burger families were moved and parted out for use at miniature golf courses, lesser-known burger joints and into private collections. Coincidentally A&W reintroduced the Burger Family menu in 2006, but only the artery-clogging Papa Burger is offered today.

### **NM 47: Sunshine Paradise**

On a windswept plain stretching from the Manzano Mountains to the Rio Grande sat two huge Spanish-era land grants, lightly settled and ready for exploitation. In early 1960s, land developers rushed in, subdividing the sand and sagebrush-studded landscape into tidy half- and one-acre lots. Advertising heavily in newspapers on the east and west coasts, the Horizon Land Corporation, which owned a quarter of Valencia County, inveigled the naïve to invest in the “Biggest Land Bargain in All of U.S.A!” The competing American Realty and Petroleum Company ran full-page Sunday advertisements, selling the same land as a bit of “Sunshine Paradise.”

Their come-ons promised a future community rivaling Albuquerque – or just simply a quick return on the buck: “We all know someone who knows someone who just sold some land and made a huge profit on the deal.” The only problem was a common one for the desert: no water. But that didn't stop the admen, who envisioned the parched plains graced with “lakes, rivers and rushing streams.” Thousands bought this desert dream, sinking their nest eggs into a scrubby half-acre lot of barren scenery.

Novelist Stan Steiner exposed these companies and their competitors, writing in a 1962



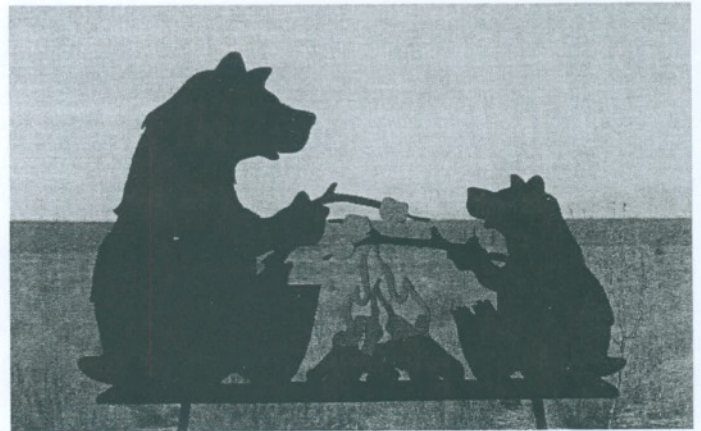
## Tour #2: Mountainair - Socorro

Nation article: "Given the romantic dreams obtainable for \$10 down and \$10 a month, the generous ethics of newspaper advertising departments and the facilities afforded by the U.S. Post Office, the sales of desert wasteland, by mail order, have burst into a boom that would have made old Doc Holliday, of Tombstone, envious."

Of course Horizon Land Corporation never lived up to its promises - today there is no water, no utilities and really no roads. A few folks plunked down homes, but they're miles apart from each other. To the west on New Mexico State Highway 304, elaborate subdivision entry gates open to nothing but miles of wild brush and the occasional trailer.

### *Charlie Poore's Silhouette Ranch*

Making up for this void is **Charlie Poore's Silhouette Ranch**, parked midway on NM



47, between Belen and its junction with U.S. 60. Steel silhouettes - most commonly a leaning cowboy about ready to spit - are clichés in the west. First fashioned by welders, the cowboys, galloping horses and bemused steers clutter almost every rural community between Texas and Montana. But some have lent an artistic touch to the craft.

Charlie Poore began on this track seven years ago "by accident" when he started making standard-issue silhouettes - really plywood cutouts - of cowboys and western scenes. At the urging of his grandkids, he expanded his repertoire to include dinosaurs, zoo animals and sports figures. Now nearing 100 cutouts, his menagerie runs from Biblical tableaux to a Wal-Mart tractor and trailer trucking across his south meadow. Poore, retired from Mountain Bell, makes his silhouettes from patterns or original ideas when he "starts getting thinking about something." The wind plays havoc with the woden figures, knocking down the designs, and sometimes sailing them into the air. "Got a buffalo down," his wife, Muriel, can be heard to remark as she spends a good deal of her morning righting the figures and picking up wind-delivered trash.



## **U.S. 60: Up and Over the Range**

Constructed between 1903 and 1907, the Belen Cutoff over the Abo Pass eliminated much of the AT&SF's inconvenient ascent over the lower shoulders of the Rocky Mountains.

AT&SF gained entry into New Mexico in 1878, entering the state from the east down the harrowing Raton Pass. With stubborn 3% grades, Raton Pass required double-headed trains to make the climb. Without abandoning the Raton route, AT&SF, along with competing rail lines, started to explore a longer, easier route through the Eastern New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle to meet its main line in Kansas.

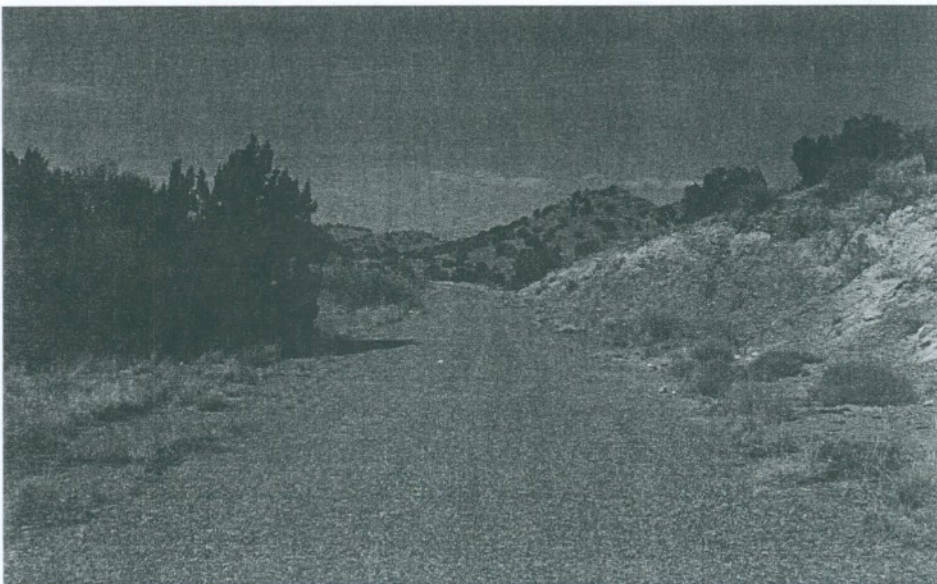
As they surveyed the range, Abo Pass emerged as the most convenient crossing. Construction began early in 1903 as hundreds of workers blasted through the mountain. The "Rich Man's Panic" later that year halted work on the mountain pass until late 1905. The cutoff opened for commercial trains on December 18, 1907 and accomplished its goal of eliminating heavy grades.

The heaviest climb along the 278-mile route is the slight 1¼% ascent from Belen to the pass. The new pass shouldered the heavy freight traffic between Chicago and Los Angeles, and shot The Scout, The Missionary and the San Francisco Chief over the scenic range. The named auto trails soon followed, with the Atlantic-Pacific, Ozark Trails and others using the pass to establish a middle route to beat roads to the north and south. Today, the railroad is being double-tracked as part of AT&SF's super mainline between between Chicago and the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Nearly 200 trains rumble through the pass daily, carrying everything from toilet paper to Toyotas to America's Heartland.



## **Abo Pass Highway**

Always playing second fiddle to the Mother Road, **U.S. Route 60** got its start in New Mexico as the Abo Pass Highway. Named after a Pueblo Indian trading route, the highway came about in the mid-1910s as a way to link Clovis to Socorro. By the mid-1920s, the highway had expanded east into Oklahoma and Kansas, promising a hard-surfaced link to civilization. "All it takes to make a Christian or a believer out of a county

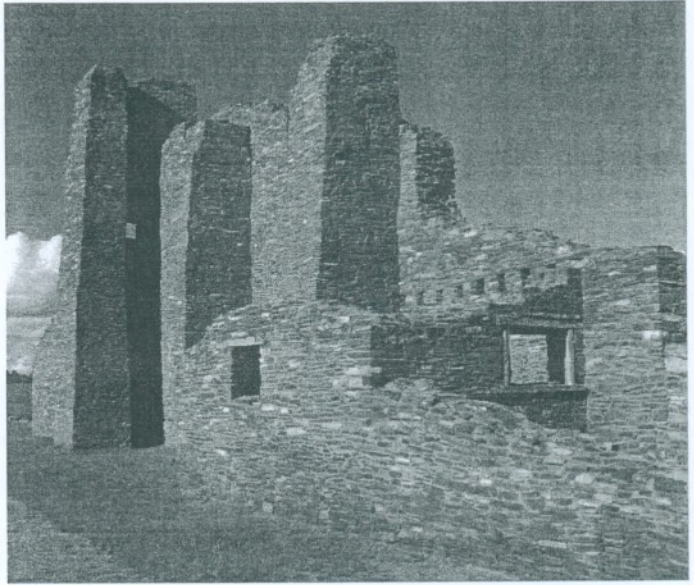




## Tour #2: Mountainair - Sorocco

commissioner or other road authority, is to take him on a trip through the east, where all the main roads are hard-surfaced, then bring him back to the dirt roads of Kansas and Oklahoma," declared a booster at the 1922 Abo Pass Highway convention.

The Abo Pass Highway folded sometime in the mid-1930s, just as U.S. 60 came on line as a transcontinental route joining Virginia Beach, Virginia to Los Angeles. Taking up the reigns, the U.S. Highway 60 Association, Inc., of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, promoted the new numbered highway as an alternative – the “scenic route” – to Route 66, selecting “Stick to 60” as their slogan. In the 1980s, individual states decommissioned long stretches of U.S. 60, including several hundred miles between Lexington, VA and Evansville, IL, and its entire span across California. New Mexico is the only state where one can still drive a continuous two-lane alignment of U.S. 60.



### Mission of San Gregorio de Abo

Rising from a brow on a hill surrounded by cliffs of red sandstone, the **Church at Abo** is one of three Colonial missions administered by the National Park Service. Built c.1630 by Fray Francisco Fonte, San Gregorio de Abo served as the administrative center for the southern missions, including Quivira and Quarai. Made from locally quarried sandstone, the towering 40-foot butressed chapel walls dominated the pueblo next to them.

Franciscans used the mission to convert Tompiro Indians to Christianity. The ministry was short-lived, as the Indians left the area in the 1670s to take refuge in villages along the Rio Grande. In 1853, Major J.H. Carleton, making an expedition to the area, came upon the ruins near twilight. He described the site as containing a feeling of “sadness and gloom” and cold wind that “appeared to roar and howl through the roofless pile like an angry demon.” During the early days of auto tourism travelers were much more confident exploring the mission ruins, often taking home bits of pottery and stone as souvenirs.





## **Mountainair: Pinto Bean Capital of the World**

Situated at the bottom of the once-fertile Estancia Valley, Mountainair is a town stuck between the plains and the mountains. There is nothing mountain-like to its air, which is usually parched and smelling more of sagebrush than pine.

Mountainair got its start in 1901 when John W. Corbett, a newspaper publisher from Kansas, and his partner, Colonel E.C. Manning, surveyed a 120-acre townsite. Although the future town was nowhere near industry or natural resources, Corbett and Manning anticipated a boon brought on by

In the 1930s, the town touted itself as the “Pinto Bean Capital of the World.” And indeed, its elevators shipped thousands of pounds of beans to distant markets. Obsessed with the legume, the local newspaper frequently printed recipes, working pintos into every conceivable food offering. After harvest, the town celebrated with the annual Bean Festival and Rodeo, including the crowning of a local lass as the “Bean Queen.” But tough, prolonged draughts starting in the 1940s withered crops, and sent hundreds of farmers to nearby cities.



Like many rural towns in New Mexico, Mountainair ceased growing after the 1950s. Surviving buildings from the early period include the old Abo Hotel, the ruins of a **rock motor court**, the 1934-36 WPA-financed Mountainair Municipal Auditorium and adjacent Pueblo Deco fire station,

the completion of the Belen Cutoff. With the arrival of the railroad, the town became the site of an annual Chautauqua conference – the only one in New Mexico – which ran until 1917. The Abo Pass Highway and tourists visiting the nearby missions sparked commerce along Broadway (U.S. 60), as courts and service stations opened.

and the former Farr Elevator and Gustin Hardware – an old-time hardware store complete with mounted trophy heads and hundreds of gimme caps dangling from the ceiling.



## Tour #2: Mountainair – Sorocco

### Clem “Pop” Shaffer – Folk Art Explosion

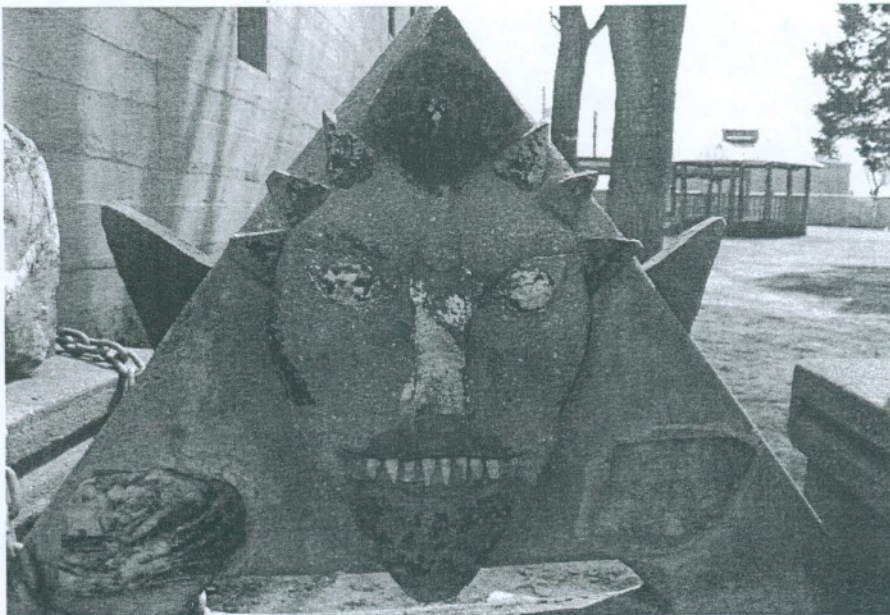
Little did he know, Clem Shaffer, the village blacksmith of Mountainair, would create a lasting folk art environment populated by strange critters made of stone, wood and concrete, and a Pueblo-Deco hotel, all dipped from his bright imagination. Pop, as the locals called him, didn’t reveal his propensity for making art until late in life. For his first 40 years, Pop concerned himself more with making a buck rather than teasing strange creatures from contorted branches and flakes of stone.

Born July 26, 1880, in Harmony, Indiana, the 13th child of a blacksmith, Clem followed his father’s occupation. With his first wife Pearl, Shaffer moved to Lawton, Oklahoma, and then to the New Mexico territory (with the territory turned green by several years of freakish good rain, thousands like the Shaffers rushed in). Arriving in Mountainair right on the heels of the railroad, Shaffer opened an implements store on Main Street, just down from the railroad depot, and worked as the village blacksmith.



*Shaffer Hotel: The Most Unique Hotel in the World*

With the arrival of the auto, Shaffer opened a garage, and convinced by “traveling men” for the need of accommodations, built a hotel above it. The original **hotel** (west) seemed rather conventional: a two-story, concrete building displaying a symmetrical façade with little ornamentation. But to this plain box, Shaffer added in 1929 a second story addition to the east containing a dining and additional rooms that changed the face of his business. Using malleable concrete, Shaffer decorated the façade with a Native American inspired frieze



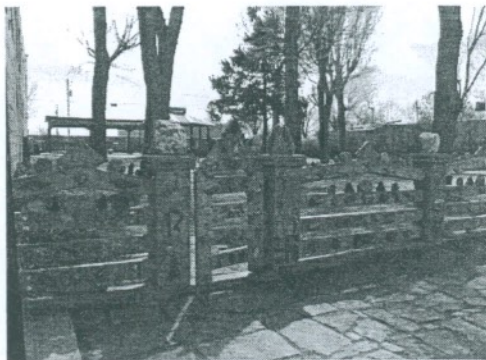


## *Society for Commercial Archeology Southwest Detours*

of geometric designs and bold forward and reverse swastikas, at that time a symbol of good luck and success.

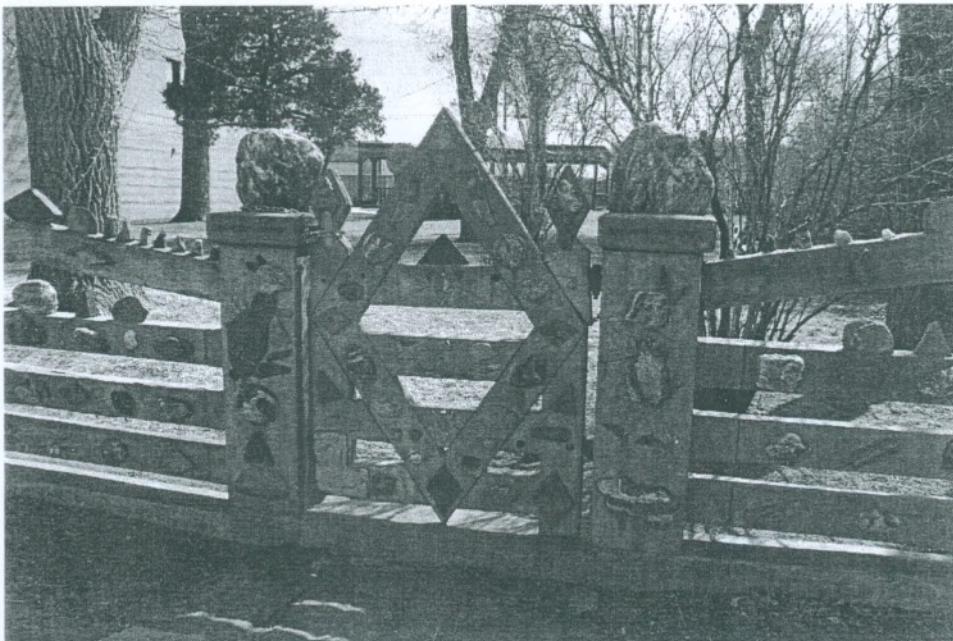
But Shaffer's real folk-art flag came out in the dining room with an explosion of color and design. On the ceiling, Shaffer and his family emblazoned the Cellotex panels with bold red, white, blue, yellow and black Indian symbols: thunderbirds, snakes, turtles, lizards, waterbugs. The chandeliers are made up of spikey-backed animals – coyotes, horny toads, who knows – crafted out of jigsawed wood. Thunderbirds, reverse swastikas and an assortment of ersatz Indian symbols brighten the dainty light boxes.

The paint did not stop with the ceiling; each chair got coated in five colors, and the tables brightened with geometric bases. Though the claim was a bit hyperbolic, Shaffer billed his business as “the most unique hotel in the world.”



Pop added a concrete and stone fence to the west in 1931. The fence depicts a menagerie of creatures, including a giraffe, a fish, an ostrich, various hump-backed creatures, and Shaffer's constant motif, a devilish face, menacing from the top of the gate.

When Pop died in 1964, his second wife Lena operated the hotel for six more years and then sold the building. The hotel went through various uses in the 1980s, even serving as the headquarters for the National Park Service Salinas Pueblo Missions unit between 1981 and 1992. In 2001, it went into foreclosure and sold at auction on the steps of the county court-





## Four #2: Mountainair - Sorocco

house after a failed attempt to unload it on eBay. Today, a new owner has reopened the 32-room hotel and the dining room. It still pulls in people off the highway, and recently hosted a convention of paranormal "ghost hunters."

### *Pop Shaffer's Rancho Bonito*

In the late 1930s, as he was nearing retirement, Shaffer bought a former homestead one mile south of town settle down. Calling it Rancho Bonito ("pretty ranch"), Shaffer



slowly evolved the 240-acre tract of land into a retreat and workshop; it also served a practical purpose, supplying the majority of the food for the hotel. Shaffer added 300 trees and a fishing pond to the stark landscape. He then built a small barn that was like no other barn ever created. On the gable end, he painted a vibrant orange sunburst flanked by two thunderbirds and a smiling devil creature at the center. Below, a march of spears, two identical black cats and a pair of devil creatures with buckets complete the picture. Next, he added a one-room cabin painted primarily black, white, red and blue. And finally, a simple house adorned with strange rock creatures. To show his patriotism, Shaffer constructed a stone monu-

ment near the entry, dedicated to liberty. Affixed to a color-tinted panel of concrete, he added a thunderbird/eagle made of thin leaves of sandstone, and above, stone portraits of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and Teddy Roosevelt.

One day while sitting at his idyll, Shaffer saw in a distant tree a "calf" – a piece of gnarled branch that resembled a baby bovine. Looking around, he spied other animals in the woods: a giraffe, an octopus, a lion. And with this epiphany, Shaffer set out to create a menagerie of twisted wood animals, what he called his "monkeys." He initially set out to make 1,000 critters, though he only finished 300 before his death.

In 1940, Shaffer jumped aboard a train bound for Washington, DC, with 45 of his monkey carvings, with hopes of exhibiting them during National Art Week. With no connections, he was turned down. But by serendipity he met Eleanor Roosevelt, who, immediately after seeing his work, marched Shaffer and a few of his critters into the exhibit hall. For the favor, he gave Mrs. Roosevelt a knitting stand made of wood and gourds that resembled a goose. (Years later he sent President Eisenhower





a floor lamp carved of New Mexico algerita wood, and his wife, Mamie a Betsy Ross chair fashioned from old wagon wheels.)

His ranch became a tourist attraction along U.S. 60, attracting 12,000 visitors a year during its heyday. In 1942, journalist Ernie Pyle paid a visit to the hotel and the ranch. "If you ever drive out to the ranch, you'd better go to the doctor and get a shot of nerve pacifier first," Pyle wrote of his experience. "You're due for a shock when you pass through the gate. For there in the yard, thickly packed and galloping toward you, is the craziest, weirdest, crippledest, laughingest herd of nightmarish animals you could conjure up from your worst case of indigestion."

When Pop died in 1964, his wife sold most of his monkeys. Many ended up at The Thing in Benson, Arizona, where they were exhibited as "Texas driftwood." After several years of the ranch's decline, Dorothy Cole, a retiree from Denver who grew up on a ranch near Mountainair, purchased Rancho Bonito and lives in the old caretaker's house. Through a slow program of restoration and renewal, both the ranch and the hotel are giving back a glimpse of Shaffer's inspired whimsy.

### **Socorro: Help to Travelers**

The City of Socorro sits at the base of Socorro Mountain, a steeply pitched, craggy mountain to the west. Socorro, translated as "help," got its name from Don Onate who came upon the Piro



Indian pueblo of Teypana in 1598. He gave the area this name, because the Indians, in Onate's words, "gave us much corn." In c.1627 Friar Alonso de Benavides established a Franciscan Mission near the site of today's San Miguel Mission.

Socorro, organized as a plaza town, gained importance as a reliable source of water

at the end of the Jornada del Muerto – the "Journey of Death" – a treacherous and waterless stretch of the Camino Real. After American occupation in 1846, the town boomed with the discovery of gold, silver, lead and copper in nearby mountains.

In the early 1900s, automobiles descended on the quiet plaza community, turning it into a crossroads of competing transcontinental highways. Built in 1919, the Mission Revival-style Val Verde Hotel catered to travelers on the cross-country Ocean-to-Ocean Highway and hosted conventions of the Abo Pass Highway Association.





## Tour #2: Mountainair - Socorro

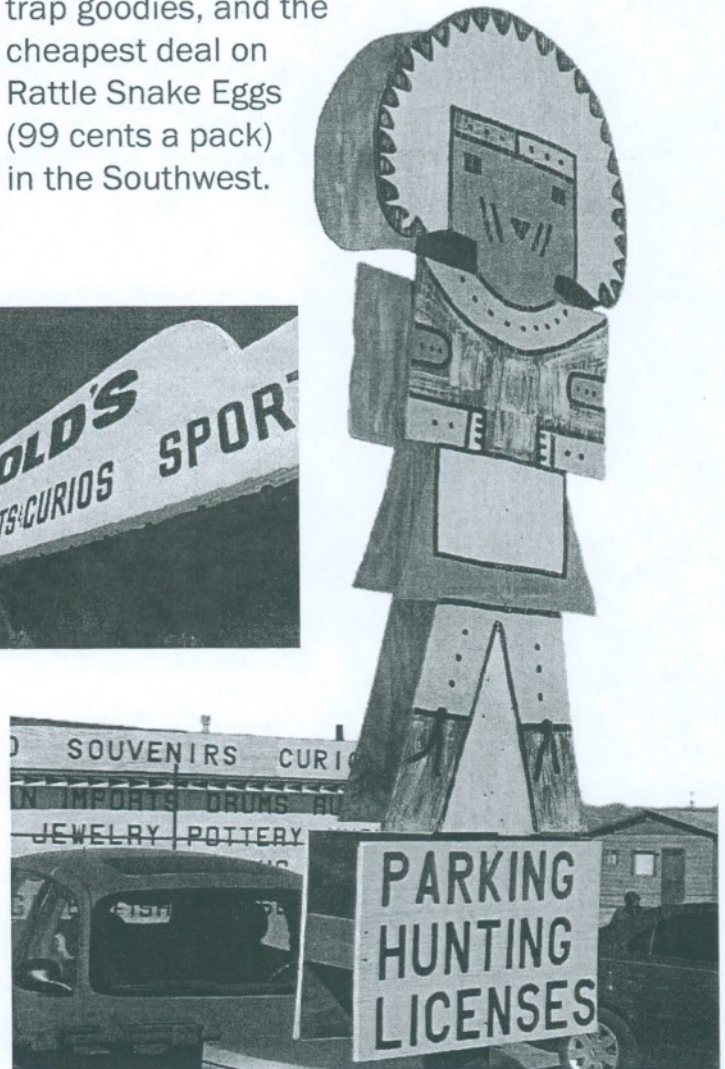


*Harold's Southwestern Gifts and Curios, 714 S. California Street, Socorro*

Owned and operated by Harold and Martha Baca, **Harold's Southwestern Gifts and Curios** is a grab-all, stuffed with real and ersatz Indian crafts, glow-in-the dark T-shirts, statues of saints and even buckets of night crawlers for fishing. A contractor by trade, Harold began the business in 1976. His uncle, who previously owned the building, ran a grocery and gas station (at various times Mobil and Conoco) there starting in 1947. Harold saw an opportunity to pick up tourists on U.S. 60 and turned the grocery into a one-stop curio. This is it: pure tourist-trap goodies, and the cheapest deal on Rattle Snake Eggs (99 cents a pack) in the Southwest.

Clustered along the plaza are the remnants of Socorro's early 20th century role as a commercial hub. "Jumbo," a fragment of a huge steel vessel that contained the first nuclear explosion at the Trinity Site, rests unassumingly on a rock pedestal. Beyond the plaza are side streets of adobe buildings, some stretching nearly a city block; and some listing toward the street.

Current U.S. 60 cruises down California Street, a four-lane highway framed by a mix of modern and old. The cotton candy **El Camino Real Restaurant** and frenetic **Roadrunner Lounge** signs brighten this sometimes-drab stretch of road.





## **New Mexico 1: The “Backbone Highway of New Mexico”**

This humble road following the west bank of the Rio Grande dates back to New Mexico’s colonial period, and was revived during the early 1900s to become the state’s first named highway.

During New Mexico’s territorial period, the government made only nominal investments into its nascent network of roads. The first road to receive any attention was the remnant of the Camino Real, the historic trading route between Santa Fe and Mexico City.

With the persuasion of good roads enthusiasts, the territorial government renamed it the New El Camino Real, and expanded its northern terminus to the Colorado border, with the expectation that other states would continue the work and eventually extend it from El Paso to Cheyenne, WY. With uniform designation of U.S. numbered highways in 1926, the ancient road became the southern link in U.S. 85, a 1,582-mile-long highway stretching between the Canadian border at Ambrose, ND and Las Cruces.

Between 1929 and 1930, the highway got an upgrade to meet the federal standards of the day. To celebrate its completion, then-Governor Arthur Seligman in 1932 made a 520-mile, border-to-border inspection tour of the “backbone highway of New Mexico.” With only 12 miles still in need of surfacing, Governor Seligman reported that “one can comfortably, rapidly and easily drive from Raton Pass on the northern border of the State, down the famous Camino Real, throughout its entire length of 520 miles to Anthony on the southern border, 21 miles north of El Paso, between sunrise and sun-

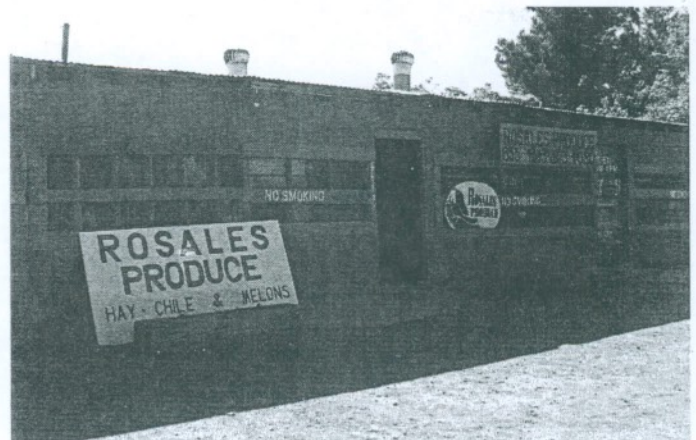
set.” Interstate 25 removed much of the old road, and now only a few segments between Belen and Truth or Consequences retain the feeling of New Mexico’s first road.

### *Rosales Produce, Escondita on NM 1*

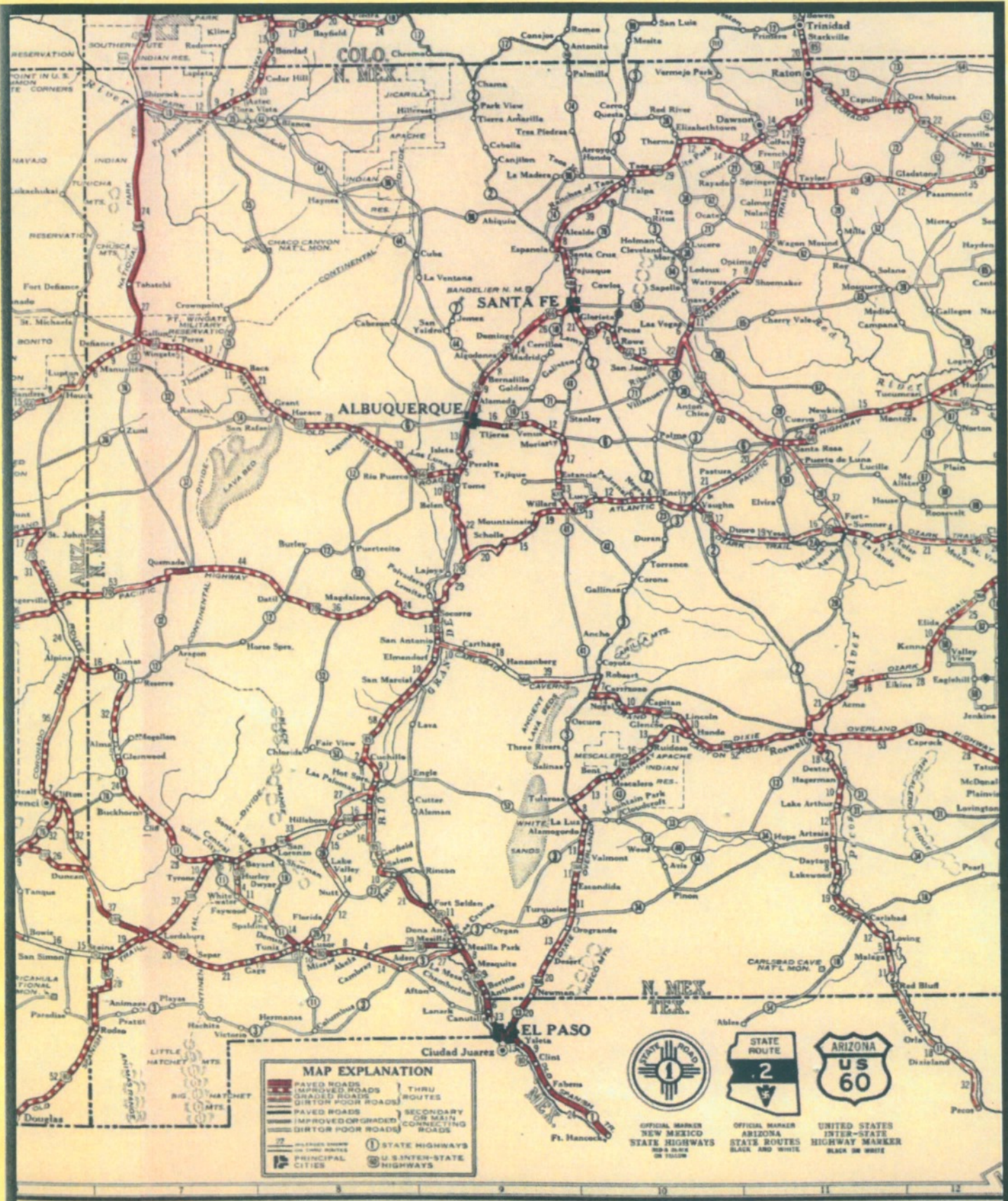
Tucked away in a nondescript wood-and-screen shed, **Rosales Produce** is rare example of the roadside fruit and vegetable stand. Once dotting New Mexico’s rural highways, roadside produce stands sold farm-fresh delights to locals and tourists alike. Texans thrilled to Hondo Valley apples at stands along U.S. 70, while those traveling U.S. 85 stopped for raspberries in the north and melons and pecans in the south.

The arrival of the interstates and the closing of the family farm worked together to shutter these outposts of informal commerce. Today, only a handful of roadside fruit and vegetable stands remain. At this time of year, Rosales is heavy with chiles, melons, cantaloupes and corn. Buy a few in a sack by the pound before this stand goes away.

### *Tour returns to Albuquerque via I-25*







**MAP EXPLANATION**

	PAVED ROADS		THRU ROUTES
	IMPROVED ROADS		SECONDARY OR MAIN CONNECTING ROADS
	GRADED ROADS		DIRT OR POOR ROADS
	DIRT OR POOR ROADS		STATE HIGHWAYS
	UNPAVED ROADS		U. S. INTER-STATE HIGHWAYS
	PRINCIPAL CITIES		



OFFICIAL MARKER  
NEW MEXICO  
STATE HIGHWAYS  
BLACK AND WHITE

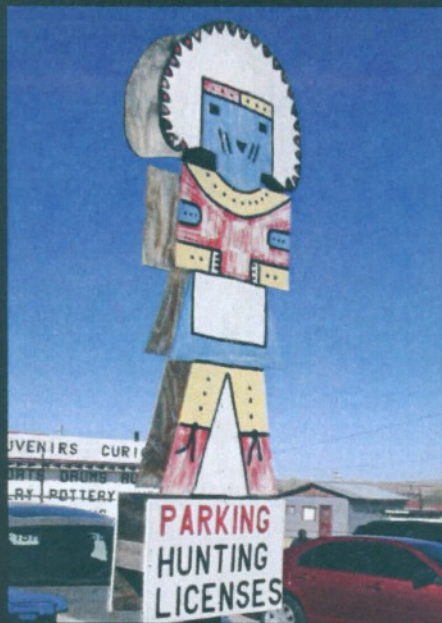


OFFICIAL MARKER  
ARIZONA  
STATE ROUTES  
BLACK AND WHITE



UNITED STATES  
INTER-STATE  
HIGHWAY MARKER  
BLACK OR WHITE





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