

El Cronicón

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IF YOU DON'T LIKE PIÑON, YOU MUST BE A NUT....

As a child and adult, I have many memories of picking piñon - roasting, cooking, eating it and smelling the piñon wood burning. My now adult son wrote a story in his 3rd grade class about his first piñon hunt, and how he bargained with a squirrel by offering him his lunch; a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the squirrel's winter stash. I hope this article brings back your own memories and that it also enlightens you about the piñon nuts.

*"One secret of life is that the reason life works at all is that not everyone in your tribe is nuts on the same day.
Another secret is that laughter is carbonated holiness" Anne Lamott.*

We are nuts over our volunteers. I hope you enjoyed your family, friends and laughter this summer.
Lorraine Dominguez Stubblefield, President

Moctezuma Born of a Piñon Seed by Juan Estevan Arellano

(Sept 17, 1947 - Oct 29, 2014)

He was the ultimate expert on New Mexico acequias; author, poet and farmer from Embudo, he knew our land and water better than anyone else.

Mention the word piñon (also spelled pinyon) to a native New Mexican and immediately the word conjures up all sorts of images. The first that comes to mind is that of sitting on a bench in the resolana (south face of building) in the fall nibbling on the small brownish nuts, enjoying the last remaining days of a beautiful Indian summer with the leaves turning different hues of color before winter arrives. In winter, there is no better way to spend the day than to sit in front of the fireplace smelling the wonderful aroma of burning piñon wood while savoring the taste of piñon and carne seca, beef jerky.

Piñon is a seed that fuels the popular imagination. The late Cleofes Vigil from San Cristobal in Taos County would say that piñon could be addictive. Laughing, he added as he would crack open a piñon, "este piñon no lo deja a uno ni platicar," (this piñon doesn't even allow you to carry on a conversation) because one can't eat piñon and talk at the same time.

The image of enjoying piñon is timeless. However timeless these images may be, piñon has long been in existence within the area now known as Mexico and the southwest. The existence of piñon along the historic Camino Real de Tierra Adentro is in fact so old a story that it belongs to legend.

This writer's mother, Lucia, who was born in El Guique near present day San Juan used to say that Moctezuma was born from a piñon seed. It was part of the folklore of her upbringing. The story says that a bird, the "piñonero," had carried the seed following the Camino Real to Mexico City where Moctezuma was born. The piñonero's home was the mythical Aztlan, somewhere in the greater Southwest, and within the boundaries of the Colorado piñon.

The first Spanish dictionary, “Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española,” by Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco of 1611, says that “piñon” is “la fruta del pino,” and “piña,” “la nuez del pino donde nacen los piñones,” and a paste of piñon and sugar is known as “piñonate.” The word comes from the Latin, “pinus, us, et pinus, pini.” So when the Spanish first encountered the piñon tree in the Americas, it reminded them of home because it was from the same family as the Iberian piñon tree and thus the name piñon was instituted in the Americas. Pine nuts are called piñones in Spanish and pinoli (locally also pinoccoli or pinocchi - Pinocchio means in fact 'pine nut') in Italian. In the US, they are also known as Indian nuts, as they are mainly harvested by Native American tribes especially the Navajo. To the Tewas this tree and its nut is known t'o.

Unlike other crops introduced by the Spanish settlers, piñon is a native of the Americas but it also grows in Europe and Asia usually in altitudes between 4,500-7,500 feet. This is usually the same elevation most of the acequias (traditional irrigation canals) in New Mexico and throughout the world are found. If there is piñon, there is also bound to be acequias, carrying water to sustain agriculture.

In Europe, pine nuts come from the Stone Pine (*pinus pinea*), which has been cultivated for its nuts for over 6,000 years, and harvested from wild trees for far longer. The Swiss pine (*pinus cembra*) is also used to a very small extent. In Asia, two species are widely harvested, Korean pine (*pinus koraiensis*) in northeast Asia and chilgoza pine (*pinus gerardiana*) in the western Himalaya.

Today, pine nuts from Asia are found in markets of northern New Mexico, but like chile, a norteño can immediately tell the difference between a piñon from Ojo Caliente and one from China, though they are marketed as Mexican piñon, grown along the Camino Real.

In North America there are three main species of piñon: Colorado piñon (*pinus edulis*) found mostly in north central and northwest New Mexico; single-leaf piñon (*pinus monophylla*) found in southwestern New Mexico - in the Mimbres Valley - and Mexican piñon (*pinus cembroides*) of northern Mexico around Valle Allende and Santa Barbara among other similar elevations. This one has a very hard shell and is almost impossible to crack open.

The best known of all piñon trees along the Camino Real in northern New Mexico is the Colorado piñon or two-needle piñon (*pinus edulis*). It occurs at moderate altitudes from 5,000 to 7,200 ft., rarely any lower than 4,500 ft., nor higher than 9,000 ft. It is widespread and often abundant in this region, forming extensive open woodlands, usually mixed with junipers, known locally as both cedro (cedar or Spanish juniper) or sabina (alligator juniper).

It is a small to medium size tree, reaching from 10-40 feet tall and with a trunk diameter of up to three feet, rarely more. The seeds are one quarter to half inch long, with a thin shell, a white endosperm, and a vestigial wing; they are dispersed by the piñon jay, which plucks the seeds out of the open cones. The jay, which uses the seeds as a food resource, stores many of the seeds for later use, and some of these stored seeds are not used and often grow into new trees.

Colorado piñon was described by George Engelmann in 1848 from collections made near Santa Fe, New Mexico on Alexander William Doniphan's expedition to northern Mexico in 1846. Mexican pinyon was the first piñon pine described, named by Zuccarini in 1832. The seeds are widely collected in Mexico, being the main pine nut in the region but to the “Norteño” in New Mexico, they don't compare.

During the mid-nineteenth century many piñon groves in both New Mexico and Mexico along the Camino Real were cut down to make charcoal for ore-processing, destroying the traditional lifestyle of the Native Americans who depended on them for food. When the railroads penetrated these areas, imported coal supplanted locally-produced charcoal. The destruction of large areas of piñon forests in the interests of cattle ranching is seen by many as an act of major ecological and cultural vandalism. Colorado piñon is also occasionally planted as an ornamental tree and sometimes used as a Christmas tree.

In the US, bad land use practices both by the government and private individuals have led to the destruction of millions of acres of productive piñon woods by conversion to grazing lands or overcrowding. These issues, combined by draught stress, have led to the beetle

infestation that has attacked the piñon since the turn of the century. In China, destructive harvesting techniques (breaking off whole branches to harvest the cones) and cutting of the trees for timber have led to losses in production capacity. The same has happened in northern New Mexico with the advent of the power saw.

Following the re-establishment of piñon woodlands, many ranchers became concerned that these woodlands provided decreased livestock forage. Efforts to clear these woodlands, often using a surplus battleship chain dragged between two bulldozers, peaked in the 1950s, but were subsequently abandoned when no improved forage resulted. The destruction of large areas of piñon woodlands in the interests of mining and cattle ranching is seen by many as an act of major ecological and cultural vandalism.

The Harvest

Pine nuts are the edible seeds of these pine trees. There are about 20 species of pines that produce seeds large enough to be worth harvesting; in other pines the seeds are also edible, but are too small to be of value as a human food. The edible seeds, pine nuts, are extensively collected throughout its range; in many areas, the seed harvest rights are owned by Native American tribes, for whom the species is of immense cultural and economic importance.

Among “piñoneros” (those that harvest the nuts), when there is plenty of piñon, the very small piñon are left behind for the wildlife, especially the raton coludos, or squirrels, and the piñon jay (*gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) or “pájaro piñonero” who compete with humans for the nutritious nuts. The piñon jay is a bluish-grey colored bird with deeper head coloring and whitish throat with a black bill, legs and feet. At times people strike it rich when they encounter a nest full of piñon, which people then replenish with corn or other grains for the squirrels to survive on through the long cold winter. This is a tradition that goes back in time and has its origins in the dicho, saying, “para vos, para nos y para los animalitos de Dios,” for us, for them and for God’s other creatures.

When first extracted from the pine cone, pine nuts are covered with a hard shell (seed coat), thin in some species, thick in others. The nutrition is stored in the large female gametophytic tissue that supports the developing embryo (sporophyte) in the center. They are not a true nut as (being a gymnosperm) they lack a carpel (fruit) outside.

Unshelled pine nuts have a long shelf life if kept dry and refrigerated but the shell must be removed before the nut is eaten; shelled nuts (and unshelled nuts in warm conditions) deteriorate rapidly, becoming rancio, rancid, within a few weeks, or even days in warm humid conditions. Pine nuts are commercially available in shelled form, but due to poor storage, these rarely have a good flavor, all too often already being rancid or vanas (empty shell without the nut inside) before they are purchased. People who are experienced piñon pickers can tell which are vanos because of their dull color and are left un-harvested. The most important species in international trade is the Korean pine, harvested in northeast China. In the United States, the piñon pines have traditionally been the most highly sought after for pine nuts.

It is also joked throughout northern New Mexico that during the harvest of the piñon nut from mid-September until the hunting season begins or the first snow covers the ground, people from out of state can’t figure out what people are doing kneeling under and going in circles around the piñon trees.

A typical October day in northern New Mexico for hundreds of years usually meant putting all the kids in the horse drawn wagon and more recently the Chevy pickup, along with a bag of dried jerky, some tortillas, plenty of water and heading to the nearest piñon forest for the day. Once in the monte, the dad and usually the elder sibling would gather a load of piñon wood while the mother and other siblings would harvest piñon and a big wad of trementina. Folklore also reminds people that piñon trees only produce every seven years, so people keep track of which piñon forests produce when and where.

Before the era of the power saws, the “leñeros” were conscious of their environment and of how they would harvest the piñon wood, usually taking only the dead branches or trees that had died. The type of wood preferred by all was called “piñon blanco,” or the piñon that

was dead but still standing and had lost its bark. The patina of the tree or branches was grayish in color and whitish on the inside instead of the typical yellow color of the green piñon. This meant that the wood was ready, naturally seasoned, to be used for firewood and that it would make plenty of brazas, embers, to hold over for the night.

Also, people would never think of cutting down the biggest trees for firewood because those were the trees that produced the best and most nuts. Every family could tell you where they found the best piñon and that usually was kept as a family secret.

Before most everyone had a pickup truck to go into the monte, someone from the community would volunteer theirs to drive community members in search of piñon. In lieu of money, the people would pay the truck's owner with piñon. At times people would camp in the monte for up to a week in order to harvest the piñon nut which is used in many ways in New Mexico cooking.

Same as the "Pájaro piñoeros," piñon pickers usually work in groups and there is always one person that keeps track of all the pickers for it is very easy to get "norteo" or disoriented when harvesting. It's not uncommon to find people that have gotten lost and are looking for a ride home or to their home base.

For hundreds of years the ritual of going for piñon, or to gather piñon wood, is repeated everywhere there are piñon trees along the legendary Camino Real, whether in Mexico or New Mexico by descendants of the first Spanish settlers and Native Americans, and more recently Anglos who have moved into the area.

The Use

The piñon tree is one of those trees that serve several purposes. Today the tree is used as a landscape element in many Southwest homes, but to the Native American and Indo-Hispano it has always been a source of food, fuel and the trementina, or sap, which is used for a variety of purposes including as a home remedy. Piñon is also used as currency. It was long used in cambalache or bartering, and for many it has been a source of income and economic development; both the nut as well as the wood.

Piñon trees along the Camino Real do not become visible until one gets close to Albuquerque when coming from the south but once in Santa Fe and up to Taos they are everywhere along the trail.

Since time immemorial, both in New Mexico as well as Mexico along the Camino Real the piñon nut has been used for cooking and baking. It is used in cookies as well as stuffed in trout to make it more flavorful and nutritious.

The firewood, besides being the preferred wood for its intense heat and aroma, also provides the best kindling to start fires, and its ocote (torch pine) is always set aside to be used in starting fires during cold winter mornings typical of northern New Mexico. Most people still prefer ocote to kerosene or other starter fluid to start a fire in the early morning of a cold winter day.

According to legend, Moctezuma, the Aztec king, was born from a piñon nut. The Camino Real, from the chinampas of Xochimilco to northern New Mexico provides a link between south and north, peoples, customs and traditions and the "pájaro piñonero," or Piñon Jay is the godfather not only of the Aztec emperor but also of this historic road.

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PAST MEETINGS/OUTINGS:

APRIL 14 - *Pláticas, Conversations About and Among Friends and Neighbors in Cuba, New Mexico* by Esther V. Cordova May

"The community of Cuba, NM, its institutions and economy are changing rapidly and radically. Our town is losing its former identity and its precious historical resources. Personally, I feel an urgent need to capture as much of our history as possible. I hope to share what I can from my

perspective in the form of pláticas. In Spanish, pláticas means conversation, talk or chat, as well as discourse or a communication of ideas or information.” Esther V. Cordova May (from Amazon website)

Esther Cordova May born in Cuba New Mexico was our April lecture guest. She is 82 years old and author of the books *Antes* and her latest *Pláticas*. Esther believes conversation is one of most intimate contacts there can be between people and facial expression and body language are necessary for a complete conversation. Modern texting and telephoning do not fit that definition. Conversations can be meaningful, sincere, empathetic, reassuring, comforting and even healing. Many of Esther’s conversations were first published in 2013 and 2014 in the local Cuba newspaper. These are recorded in her book *Pláticas* and include conversations about sadness and love in part 1, poems, eulogies, stories of people who have passed away are in part 2, and formal conversations most held at Historical Society in part 3.



Esther wants to record and save history of her community by recording those stories. The loss of two bright students who slid off the road on the way home and lost their lives has remained part of the history of Cuba because of pláticas. These stories make their community rich and unique. Esther is committed to recording this and other stories for future generations. After the tears, the pláticas and healing begin.

Text by Karen Lermuseaux

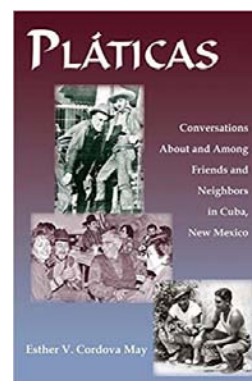


Photo credit: Virginia Ortiz

Book cover from Amazon

MAY 5 - “Geologic story of Sandia Mountain, the Rio Grande rift, the Valley and its River” by Dirk Van Hart, retired geologist

Dirk’s presentation was designed for the non-geologist, and as such presented geologic concepts and theories “visually”. The presentation covered the origin of Sandia Mountain with its granitic core, the Rio Grande rift (Sandia Mt’s “companion”) and the Rio Grande itself. The importance of the rift was placed in the larger context of western North America. And the Rio Grande’s 5-million year, step-by-step journey to the Gulf of Mexico was described, and specifically how the river has evolved in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo area over the past 800,000 years.



Photo credit: Virginia Ortiz

JUNE 8 - SCHS Tour of Casa San Ysidro, the Gutiérrez/ Minge House in Corrales - “In the early 1950s, Shirley and Ward Alan Minge took a late 19th century building in Corrales and turned it into a plazuela-style rancho to house their exuberant collection of New Mexico vernacular art.” <https://www.cabq.gov/culturalservices/albuquerque-museum/casa-san-ysidro>



After the tour was a lecture on early New Mexico furniture making.



L to R clockwise: Casa San Ysidro, the Gutiérrez/Minge House exterior; (inset) ornate tin art; kitchen; main hall leading to *plazuelo* (small square); built-in wall *trastero* (cupboard) in master bedroom; San Ysidro church; interior stained glass; San Isidro, patron saint of farmers; church interior corbels - Photo credits: Dawn Foster

Reminder: There are no planned activities in July and August

NEXT PROGRAM: Sunday, Sept 8
Gallegos Family History, El Llanito by David C de Baca

UPCOMING SCHS PROGRAMS: [held on second Sundays, 2 PM, Delavy House]



OCT 13	<i>Honoring Henry and Karen Vallo Family</i>
NOV 10	<i>Genetic Genealogy - DNA</i> by Henrietta Christmas
DEC 8	<i>Potluck Christmas Dinner</i>

UPCOMING FRIENDS OF CORONADO HISTORIC SITE (FCHS) - 2019-2020

“YEAR OF THE WOMAN” Lecture Series:

[held on third Sundays, 2 PM, Delavay House; members free, non-members \$5]

- go to <https://www.kuaua.org/presentations> for listing when available

PLACITAS COMMUNITY LIBRARY (PCL) ADULT PROGRAM (all programs free to the public):

- Sept 14, 2 PM - Value of Dark Skies with Charlie Christmann
- Sept 21, 2 PM - Chronic Stress Reduction with Marti Murphy
- Oct 5, 10 AM to 3 PM - Santo Domingo Day

ALBUQUERQUE MUSEUM/CASA SAN YSIDRO EVENTS:

- Heritage Festival - Saturday & Sunday, Sept 28 & 29, free admission
- Second Saturdays - Oct & Nov, 1 - 4 PM, free admission to programming and performances

BLM ARCHAEOLOGIST UNCOVERS STORY BEHIND ROCK INSCRIPTION (excerpt)

by Brenda Wilkinson, archaeologist in the Bureau of Land Management's Socorro Field Office

You have to listen hard, but the hills do tell stories, and archaeologists are listening. An archaeological survey report for a wood cutting area, prepared by a very thorough contractor, got the ball rolling. They recorded an inscription on a rock atop a small hill near Datil, New Mexico that bore the name José Armijo and a little stick figure. They looked for José in the census records and he didn't turn up. However, a sheep rancher by the name of Celso Armijo did appear in the 1890 census. They wondered, could Celso have had a son named José who inscribed the rock?

The inscription says Jose R. Armijo with a little stick figure upper right, and there's more that can't be fully deciphered, but looks "ALIT". Anyone want to hazard a guess to it's meaning? (Photo credit: Brenda Wilkinson)



Her curiosity thoroughly aroused, the BLM Socorro Field Office archaeologist put out a note on the New Mexico Genealogical Society Facebook group asking if any members had an ancestor named Jose R. Armijo in Datil in the 1890s. Within a day came word from a great-great-grandniece of Celso Armijo that Celso had a son named José who had died in 1892 at age one. Now the story had become one not of idle shepherd graffiti, but of a grieving father's tribute to his lost infant son. Good job, Celso. If you wanted little José to be remembered, we're remembering him now – 126 years later.

Pulling out one more tool from the toolbox, General Land Office homestead records were searched. The records show that seven years after the loss of José, Celso proved up a homestead claim. It's four miles from that lonely hilltop, and it turns out it's adjacent to BLM's Datil Well Campground. Celso and his wife Margarita (Baca) Armijo were eventually blessed with six sons and five daughters.

For additional text and photographs, visit the Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Land Management website, <https://www.blm.gov/blog/2018-11-02/blm-archaeologist-uncovers-story-behind-rock-inscription>, dated Tue. 10/30/2018; Reprinted with Permission from U.S. Bureau of Land Management



The 2019 New Mexico History Conference, presented by the Historical Society of New Mexico, in partnership with the Albuquerque Historical Society, was held at the end of March in Albuquerque. There were 30 “sessions” covering a myriad of topics - each session included a moderator and 1-4 presenters. The varied and interesting session topics ranged from *Artists and their Arts and Talents - Histories of 20th Century New Mexico Creativity* to *Women Writing and Making History* to *New Mexico Connections: Fast Cars, Fast Computers and Boom Towns* and many more.



An amazing diversity of topics, and truly “something for everyone”!! And a number of our members along with former and future SCHS lecture presenters participated in the conference! Thanks to Francelle E. Alexander for sending information to include in *El Cronicón*! Francelle mentions that there is a new book coming out soon, related to the *Nación genízara: Ethnogenesis, Place, and Identity in New Mexico*, and that Judy A. Garcia’s books are “interesting” and definitely worth a look. Judy presented a History Conference lecture entitled, “*Stories from the Manzano Mountains: How Writing about the Past Connects to Our Present*”. Perhaps one should think about joining the 2020 New Mexico History Conference....I know I am!

For more information on the various NM History Conference topics and sessions and individual lectures, visit <http://www.hsnm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-NM-History-Conference-Program.pdf>.



“The coat of arms of the state shall be the Mexican eagle grasping a serpent in its beak, the cactus in its talons, shielded by the American eagle with outspread wings, and grasping arrows in its talons; the date 1912 under the eagles and, on a scroll, the motto: “Crescit Eundo”. The great seal of the state shall be a disc bearing the coat of arms and having around the edge the words “Great Seal of the State of New Mexico.”

“The “American eagle” is an American bald eagle. The “Mexican eagle” with serpent and cactus is from the coat of arms of Mexico, in turn derived from an Aztec myth of the foundation of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. Although in Mexico the Mexican eagle is understood to be an American golden eagle, the New Mexico seal uses an American harpy eagle. Mexico adopted its coat of arms when it was under Spanish rule, and New Mexico identified with it as well. On the New Mexico seal, it symbolizes that the state still holds on to its Spanish, Mexican and Native American traditions.” All information, including image from Wikipedia website



SCHS Notices, Corrections and Apologies

Contact Rusty VanHart - Membership Chair if you have questions regarding your current membership status (505) 293.2073 or dirkvanhart@yahoo.com

Historical Society archives and library are open every Thursday from 9 AM til noon, except during the month of July, when it is closed. Questions? Contact Martha Liebert (505) 867.2755.

Receiving *El Cronicón* via email: We’ve had some takers, so please let us know if you’d like to receive your future editions of *El Cronicón* in **COLOR** via email!! Just send an email to dawnfoster84@comcast.net using the email address from which you’d like to receive *El Cronicón*. Thank you for helping the Historical Society reduce the cost of printing and mailing a paper edition....not to mention the number of trees we’ll save!!

Editor’s sincere apologies re: the April *El Cronicón*: to those who submitted photos - Lorraine Dominguez Stubblefield, Virginia Ortiz and Anna Torres - for ineffective photo credits; to Roger E. Smith for erroneously identifying him in a photo, and to David Cooper for not identifying him in the photo with Francelle Alexander.



Archived SCHS Photos:



San Jose Church, Algodones, 1928;
Courtesy: C.E. Thompson



Tricia Candelaria and Cornelio Archibeque,
Placitas; Courtesy: Christine Gonzales



Restoration work on Cabezon Church
(Photo credit: John Pascarella);
Courtesy: Helen Sandoval



Albermar Ladies Literary Society,
gold mining camp, circa 1900; Courtesy:
Thomas Ball