

# **The SAN ELIZARIO GENEALOGY and HISTORICAL SOCIETY (SEGHS)**

**by George A. Sanchez.<sup>1</sup>**

San Elizario, Texas is a small community about forty miles Southeast of El Paso. It is here that the **San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society (SEGHS)** was **organized in 1992** by people whose ancestry was from this area: **Alarcon, Maese, Sanchez<sup>2</sup>, Borrego<sup>2</sup>, Carabajal, Loya, Trujillo, Guerra, Grijalba, Perez, Madrid, Garcia**, and many others. Many of the founding members are still members of SEGHS and there are now over 300 members scattered all over the world.

In 1996 the **County of El Paso**, with the help of **Miguel Teran** an El Paso County Commissioner for many years, gave **SEGHS** permission to operate a museum in a county owned building next to the **Veterans Memorial Placita** and across from the **San Elizario Presidio Chapel**. The **Los Portales Museum and Information Center**, originally the **Garcia House** and later where **Octaviano Larrazolo<sup>3</sup>** was a school teacher, has two large rooms with **displays of historical information of this area**. **Gary Williams** and many other El Paso historians helped to set up these displays. There is also a **Library Room with members' genealogies and family trees**. The County of El Paso also gave SEGHS permission at this time to use another county owned buildings, the **Casa Ronquillo**, for storage.

The current Director of the **Los Portales Museum and Information Center** is **Cathe Apodaca**. Besides this museum SEGHS now operates two other museums in San Elizario: The **Eduardo Pedregon Veterans Museum<sup>4</sup>** and the new **Old El Paso County Jail Museum<sup>5</sup>** The Jail Museum is in a building from 1850 when San Elizario was the **County Seat** of what is now El Paso. The hours for all three museums are: **Tuesday- Friday 10-2 PM; Saturday 12-4 PM; Sunday 12-4 PM**.

SEGHS is **affiliated with many other genealogical and historical societies** in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. It is a **501c3 organization** which means that contributions are tax exempt. **Yearly due are \$15** for a family and SEGHS has **monthly meetings on the first Sunday of the month at 2 PM at Alarcon Elementary School**.

An **Annual History Conference** is held on the **last Saturday in April** celebrating the arrival of Don Juan de Onate in 1598 with the first European Colonists to this area. Well known southwest historians are **invited to speak** at this conference. Some of these have been **Rick Hendricks** (New Mexico State Historian), **Joseph Sanchez**, (US Interior Department) **Paul Cool** (Author of The Salt Wars) and **Felix Almarez** (History Professor from San Antonio, Texas). Last year our speaker was EPCC historian **Dr. George Torak**, an expert an author on the cultures along the **Camino Real** starting in 1598.

The San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society, SEGHS, will be holding its annual conference on Saturday, April, 30th at Alarcon Elementary School in San Elizario starting at 1

P.M. The conference is free but there will be a \$20 luncheon fee starting after the speakers at about 4 P.M.

Later in the afternoon the conference attendees are invited to see a play of **The First Thanksgiving** by actors hired by the **Mission Trail Association** in front of the **San Elizario Chapel**. This was started by **Sheldon Hall** in 1989 who founded this organization. Last year's UTEP's Opera students did an outstanding job portraying the **Onate colonists** arriving in what is now the San Elizario area in **1598** and the UTEP Opera will again be performing the play.

The three annual functions that SEGHS has is the "**Founders Luncheon**" in **September** where the older members, past and present, of SEGHS are honored. In **November** on **Veteran's Day** the veterans from the surrounding areas are honored with a **parade** and **speakers** at the **Veterans Memorial Placita**. Finally, in **December** before Christmas SEGHS has "**Luminarias**" and "**Posadas**" also at the Veterans Memorial Placita.

The San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society (SEGHS) has accomplished the following two National recognitions for the community of San Elizario. (1) It is now a **National Historic District** and (2) It is now a **National Historic Trail Site**. Recently San Elizario was designated a **State Cultural District** by the Texas Commission on the Arts. SEGHS is now working on getting a **Preserve America Community Designation** through the US Dept. of the Interior.

SEGHS also supports other events in the San Elizario Historic District: (1) The **Pistoleros de San Elizario** monthly reenactment shows, (2) The **Billy The Kid Festival and Play** in June, (3) The **Annual Easter Egg Hunt**, and (4) The **Monthly Art Market**.

Besides having the **Scholarship Program**, **Youth Volunteer Program**, and the free **Tours Program** for the community of San Elizario, SEGHS is currently working on the following projects:

- 1) **Old Cemetery Restoration & Preservation**
- 2) **Public Theater**
- 3) **San Elizario Music (school)**
- 4) **Artist Workspace**
- 5) **Historic Sculpture Series (Public Art)** Since 2011 five statues have been unveiled:  
**Billy the Kid, The Ox, Onate, American Eagle & Flag, and A Buffalo Soldier.**
- 6) **Visitor Traffic Flow Signage Walking Tours w/QR codes**<sup>6</sup>
- 7) **Historic & Cultural Events**
- 8) **Los Portales Museum Interactive Exhibits**
- 9) **Public Area Beautification & Restoration**
- 10) **Conduct School Field Trips and Tours.**

## **FOOTNOTES:**

1. The information for this article came from the notes I made with the help of **Al Borrego, President of SEGHS, Ray Borrego, Vice President** in charge of the Veteran's Museum, and others for my appearance on the April 18, 2015 Radio Show "El Paso History" on KTSM AM hosted by Melissa Sargent and Jackson Polk.

2. **Felipe Sanchez and Condelaria Padilla** are my paternal grandparents who brought our family from the Ruidoso area in Lincoln County New Mexico to the Guadalupe, Mexico area across from San Elizario in the United States sometime around 1915. Later my grandfather Felipe moved the family to San Elizario.

The oldest son was Antonio Sanchez who married Juanita Caballero from San Elizario. They are the parents of the many Sanchez's who lived here. With the family were two sisters, Celedonia, who died young, and Cornelia who married Alfonso Borrego. They are the parents of the many Borrego's who live here. My dad Abran Sanchez was only about 13 years old at the time.

All of this can be found in one of the books I wrote, The Sanchez/Padilla Family of Lincoln County New Mexico, or you can go to our web site: **SanElizarioGenealogy.Com** and click on "History" and read **The Sanchez Connection to Billy the Kid**.

3. **Octaviano Larrazolo** This gentleman is very important to the history of San Elizario because of what he became after he moved his family to Las Vegas, New Mexico. He was born in 1859 in El Valle de Allende, Mexico. At the age of ten he was brought to the United States by Bishop Jean Salpoint, the vicar apostolic of the Territory of Arizona and other parishes of the southern part of the Territory of New Mexico and also San Elizario and Ysleta, El Paso County, Texas. Salpoint sent Octaviano to be educated in a college in Santa Fe and when he returned Octaviano became a teacher then a principal at a school in San Elizario, Texas for six years.

From there he moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico and was very involved in the politics of Territorial New Mexico. In 1912 New Mexico became a State of New Mexico and Larrazolo was elected Governor of New Mexico in November 1918 for a two year term. In November 1928 he was elected to an unexpired United States term. This makes him the only Mexican-born New Mexico Governor, US Senator, and the only New Mexican to be elected to both the Governorship and U.S. Senate.

4. **The Eduardo Pedregon Veterans Museum.** The veteran's museum started in a small 10ft. x 12ft. room at the Los Portales Museum. In 2008, a few San Elizario veterans wanted to place more emphasis and recognition on those veterans from San Elizario that served our Country. A **Veterans Committee** was formed to do this. The Veterans Committee continues to be part of the San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society. So the Veterans Committee, made up of veterans and non-veterans, most of who are also members of SEGHS.

On April 2011 the new veteran's museum was dedicated at 1501 B Main Street. The museum was later renamed the **Eduardo M. Pedregon Veterans Museum**, in honor of the young man from San Elizario, who was a Korean soldier missing in action for 50 years and whose remains were eventually identified through DNA and returned to his birthplace and childhood home of San Elizario. He now rests in **Arlington National Cemetery**.

The Veterans Museum now holds over 300 pictures of veterans, from all branches of service. All veterans displayed at the museum must have ties or roots to San Elizario, by birth, by marriage, ancestry, or by past or current residence in San Elizario.

We support other veteran organizations through donations, services and participation. We participate in the Eastside Lions Peoples 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, we support Toys for Kids and we support the Clint Fallen Heroes event. We also provide a \$500 scholarship to a San Eli High School Senior. The Committee also supports other community events in San Elizario. We also pay respect, remembrance and honor to veterans at their funeral services.

The Veterans Committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 pm, at the Veterans Museum, 1501 B Main Street. No membership fees or dues are required, only the willingness and dedication to honor and remember our veterans. We now place the greatest emphasis into these three areas: The **Eduardo Pedregon Veterans Museum**, the **Memorial Brick Walk**, and the **Veterans Day Parade and Celebration**.

Contact **Ray Borrego**, Chair, San Elizario Veterans Committee at **915-383-8529**.

5. The "**Old El Paso County Jail Museum**" is the newest addition to the San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society (SEGHS) and to the National Historic District of San Elizario. Officially opened on April 17, 2014, the Interpretive Museum has had over 2500 visitors in the first month.

The building was **built about 1830** and used as a **residence**. The Interpretive Museum features various exhibits, including the original jail cells, believed to have been manufactured in Chicago and installed in 1850, when it became **the first El Paso County Jail, while San Elizario was the El Paso County Seat. San Elizario was last the County seat in 1873.** (There were 2 short periods when the **seat was moved to Ysleta in 1854 & 1866**)

The East side of the building was the **Courtroom**. The first **County Judge** in 1850 was C.A. Hoppin. He was from Alabama and moved to San Elizario in 1848. Here is a list of all of them:

C. A. Hoppin	1850		
A. C. Hyde	1850 - 1852		
Simeon Hart	1852 - 1854	A. C. Hyde	1854 -
	1856		
Henry L. Dexter	1856 - 1858	John L. McCarty	1858 -
	1860		
Henry L. Gillett	1860 - 1866	Albert H. French	1866 -
	1870		
Maximo Aranda	1870 - 1872	Telesforo Montes	1872 -
	1874		

There were four Sheriffs that served in the jail including: **William Ford, William Yates, Juan Armendariz**, and **Charles Ellis**. The Jail was used as a **holding cell into the 1900's**.

**6. VISITOR TRAFFIC FLOW SIGNAGE (Tours QR Codes).** Throughout the San Elizario Historic District, SEGHS installed new signs for **Self-Guided Walking Tours**. These signs are placed at 18 locations throughout the District and the walking tour can be followed during the daylight hours and the signs have very informative and complete description of what is being depicted. In addition, the signs are equipped with **QR (Quick Response) Codes**.

The signs contain three codes that can be read with a QR reader application on smart phones. The QR Codes in the San Elizario Historic District, however, are unlike any being used today. When scanned, they provide an Audio version of the information on the sign in Spanish or English. There is also a **QR Link** to the Historic District's **Facebook Page** for easy checking. In addition to the Tour Signs, the SEGHS has installed Signage for Historic District locations in the area like the (start) of the **Camino Real de Tierra Adentro** and **Casa Garcia**.

### **OUR CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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