



PIMERIA POST

PUBLICATION OF THE PIMERIA ALTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*Celebrating Pimeria Alta Historical Society's
75th Anniversary*

1948 - 2023



Fragment of Carlos Ibarra Michel's Nogales mural

Happy New Year to All! In 2023 we are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Pimeria Alta Historical Society and Museum! There is so much to be grateful for as we look back on the last 75 years, thank you to all of our members for supporting the PAHS and Museum for generations.

There is much to look forward to this year as we celebrate: special exhibitions on the Buffalo Soldiers of Camp Little, Historic Postcards of Ambos Nogales and Santa Cruz County, Cinco de Mayo on the Border and a retrospective of the Pimeria Alta Historical Society's last 75 years. The Museum is also planning to host guest speakers throughout the year, please stay tuned for dates and information.

On Saturday **January 28th** PAHS and the Nogales Buffalo Soliders Legacy Association will celebrate the history of the Buffalo Soldiers. Starting at 10:00am at the Nogales Cemetery Mayor Maldonado will give opening remarks. We will feature the Fort Huachuca Color Guard Cavalry, Buffalo Soldiers re-enactors and a performance by Nogales High School Singers. From 11:30am to 1:00pm the PAHS Museum will be open for a special Nogales Buffalo Soliders Exhibit. From 1:30 to 3:00pm there will be honors in front of Nogales City Hall with keynote speaker Carlos Bazan (Camp Naco board member), a horse cavalry performance in Teyechea Park, as well as performances and recognition of art students of Nogales High School. Please join us!

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PIMERIA ALTA MUSEUM

P.O. Box 2281
136 North Grand Avenue
Nogales, Arizona 85626
520-287-4621

HOURS
Tuesday through Friday
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

www.pimeriaaltamuseum.org

A New Mural for Ambos Nogales

Evan Kory

We are delighted to share that a mural depicting many aspects of the history of Ambos Nogales is currently being painted downtown. The phenomenal Nogales-native artist Carlos Ibarra Michel has been working tirelessly since July and the Pimeria Alta Historical Society is proud to be sponsoring this public art piece in partnership with La Linea Art Studio. The project is funded by the Santa Cruz County ARPA grant for non-profit organizations awarded to PAHS and La

Linea, Santa Cruz Advocates for the Arts, Shipley Family Foundation, SCC School Superintendent Alfredo I. Velásquez, La Cinderella, and individual donors. As the Pimeria Alta Historical Society celebrates its 75th Anniversary in 2023, we reflect on our past through the imagery of this monumental creation. The ambitious mural is located on the building facade that once housed The Border Vidette on Morley Avenue, perhaps you remember this location

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'Nogales' by Carlos Ibarra Michel

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as Saldamando Drug store, Charlie's, or currently the extension to La Cinderella.

The Border Vidette was one of our earliest newspapers in Nogales, a publication that ran for forty years between 1894 and 1934. The painter Carlos Ibarra Michel felt it was appropriate to bring the name back to life by painting "The Border Vidette" in its original typeset across the entirety of the top portion of the mural. We are fortunate that the Library of Congress, through their Chronicling America initiative, has digitized many issues of The Border Vidette and the historic documents are available to the public online. Browsing the various papers one can read about the early days of mining and the railroad as well as the development of the international boundary. The very first issue of May 16, 1897 includes advertisements of many contemporary businesses owned by families whose descendants continue to live in Nogales, such as the advertisement for Proto Brothers: Wholesale and Retail Dealers in Groceries, Hardware, Mining Supplies, Etc. And the ad for Roy and Titcomb Dealers in Lumber and Commission Merchants. If you walk on Morley Avenue today and look down to the sidewalk you will find many of the original water meter covers that bear the Roy and Titcomb name.

Reading The Border Vidette newspapers one realizes that not much has changed in Nogales. We continue to live as a binational community at the mercy of border dynamics and politics. To quote the Library of Congress' description, "As a border paper, the Vidette tackled many transnational issues that a town such as Nogales faced. The August 3, 1918 issue reported that World War I border restrictions were wreaking economic havoc on the Mexican and American sides of the town, causing "universal weeping among retail merchants of Nogales, Arizona, who see 'panicky' times ahead, for those who depend on citizens of the other side of the international line, to swell their daily receipts." Reading the impression from the Vidette written 104 years ago, we realize that many situations have occurred since then with similar circumstances. The same reality and concern was documented by the Nogales International recently during the covid-19 long-pandemic border closure.

The mural is a symbolic image of the sister cities of Nogales, their history and also the painter's experience growing up here. If the viewer has spent some time in Nogales they will recognize many iconic buildings depicted in the painting: the original 1914 City Hall building- home of the Pimeria Alta Museum, the 1904 Historic Courthouse, Sacred Heart Church, the original Nogales, Sonora

Customs House, Pestalozzi School, Museo de Arte, Fray Marcos Hotel, and several other familiar architectural landmarks. The various gears seen throughout the painting reference the mechanism of a clock, symbolizing time, but are also representative of the maquilas in Nogales, Sonora. The gears cover the canvas: at the top they are the stars, in the middle, foliage from the tree, and at the bottom, white desert blooms. The twin babies each represent one Nogales, one for the United States and one for Mexico and they are together in their mother's womb. The sun and moon represent the passage of days, months and years. The tree at center is a walnut tree, or "nogal" in Spanish and the heart in front of the tree is the literal fruit of the nogal, and the figurative fruit of Nogales, its people. If you look closely, the upper left part of the heart is painted as a walnut shell.

The twin babies symbolize the sister cities but they are also a very direct allusion to familial ties across the international border. They are also literally part of the landscape: the heads are stars, their upper bodies are part of the sky, their arms and hands are clouds, and their bended legs form part of the hills and mountains. There is a faint suggestion of newspaper text across the majority of the painting that is represented by vertical notches. They are arranged like bricks on

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Fire on the Corner of Court Street and Morley Avenue

Evan Kory

On November 28 at approximately 1:30pm, a commercial building on the corner of Morley Avenue and Court Street caught fire. The speed in which the fire spread south was impressive and frightening. I was downtown when it started and all we could do was wait and see how the fire progressed. Sadly, the fire burned down three buildings on Morley Avenue.

After the unfortunate event, in the days ahead I began to wonder about the history of the buildings. Morley Avenue is home to many historic buildings and each space has had a number of identities throughout the years. One great source for identifying past businesses is a historic fire insurance map published by the Sanborn Map Company in 1917. One can explore the map available online and learn what type of business inhabited each space downtown at that time. In 1917 the three buildings that burned were grocery related businesses: a market, a wholesale business, and an office. A corner of the second building South of Court Street also indicates that a tailor worked in the space.

After learning of the buildings' grocery history, we still need to know who the grocer may have been. This is where a historical postcard helped answer the question. Early postcard photography can serve as a great source of information through the settings documented. In the early part of the 20th century postcards were produced in large quantities and often displayed significant buildings and sites worthy of sharing with the world. They also helped commemorate important events that photographers felt worthy of sharing.

Looking through several hundred postcards we came across one of the Morley and Court Street corner postmarked November 19, 1918. The image shows a military parade that occurred shortly after the Battle of Nogales. On the back of the card there is a fascinating note from a buffalo soldier that participated in the parade:

Mon Night

Dear Verna,

Your 1st letter got here this afternoon and they told me no mail came, but I went right over to the orderly room with fight in my eyes and sure enough it was there but misplaced My 1st letter from you since last Wednesday. This photo shows the 25th Inf. in the big victory day parade that we were in. My position was out in front like the officer in the photo but I had white men behind me Hope you are well as I am will write tomorrow. Am very busy all the time.

Lovingly yours, Willis

On the right side of the postcard image, below the courthouse, the front sign of a building reads "ALBERT ST... WHOLESALE." The Albert in the postcard is Albert Steinfeld & Co., owned by the pioneer Tucson merchant by the same name. Wirt Bowman sold his Bowman Commercial Co. store to Steinfeld in 1916 (Border Vidette, April 15, 1916.) Steinfeld was present at the Nogales wedding of the rails in 1882.

Every building tells a story that connects us to our past. Much like old newspapers, historic structures have a way of encapsulating the lives of the people that inhabited their space. Period photography, such as the postcard that shows Albert Steinfeld's grocery business, can help fill in the gaps and communicate the history to future generations.



Photo taken day after the fire November 29, 2022



Postcard postmarked November 19, 1918



Postcard ca. 1910

MURAL

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a wall. So there is a wall that covers the entire bottom two-thirds of the painting, but it is diaphanous and a wall in nominal terms only. It does little to nothing in separating the two communities and their rooted bonds. The connecting factor between the sister cities of Nogales is the railroad, the reason we are all here. It is depicted in the painting crossing both cities as a modern day Union Pacific train. When the artist was painting the original oil painting he miscalculated and was only able to paint the word "Union." It turned out to be a happy accident because he realized the painting was ultimately about the unity between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora. And in fact the word "union" is the same in both the English and Spanish languages.

Carlos Ibarra Michel has dedicated himself full-time to the completion of this project, and it is a tremendous gift to the community. He has confronted grueling hot summer days, strong winds, unpredictable monsoon rains, and now the cold winter season. As the mural is closer to being completed we will keep you informed and look forward to celebrating the Pimeria Alta Historical Society's 75th Anniversary at the unveiling and at events throughout the new year with all of you. We are grateful for your continued generous support as we embark on the next 75 years.



Photo of mural in progress taken on a rainy day in December



The Border Vidette ca. 1920, site of the new Nogales mural

Pimería Alta Historical Society

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