

A Legacy Local Monthly Publication

October 2025

The Historic

Mesilla Valley

Albuquerque International

Balloon Fiesta: A New Mexican tradition

From the
Publisher's Desk

Calendar
of Events

As Haunting as La Llorona: Santa Fe Opera's
performance of "The Turn of the Screw"

Wandering Roads: The
Turquoise Trail run's first stop

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**Featured on the Cover:
ABQ Balloon Fiesta**

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FROM THE

publisher's desk



Goblins, ghouls, witches, and mummies all come out from hiding this month; it's officially spooky season. Welcome to our October issue! We'll take you to the ghost town of Kingston, New Mexico for Pickamania and a brief history on the Victorio Hotel.

We also review our final opera, turning the page on the summer season as we hunker down for some frigid weather coming up – even though this is the nicest fall we've had in a long time. Then, we head over to the Balloon Fiesta for some fun at the biggest international festival in New Mexico.

There are so many outdoor activities this time of year across our beautiful state. Whether it's hiking or haunted houses, get out and enjoy!



*Artists from the September Issue are Rick Rao who can be reached at 575-496-7678 and Svea Peterson at 970-222-2896. You can call and arrange a time to view their galleries.



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Calendar OF EVENTS

TUESDAYS

– Club: Thomas Branigan Memorial Library hosts a weekly hands-on Journal Club for Tweens with Jenny. The class provides a creative outlet for your tweens' thoughts, dreams, and feelings through drawing, doodling, or writing prompts. Class is for children 8-12 years old. No registration is required. 4:30-5:30 p.m. 200 E. Picacho Ave., Las Cruces.

SATURDAYS

– Yoga: Start off your weekend with a yoga class led by a rotation of instructors at the Farmers Market at Ardovino's Desert Crossing. The class is designed for all levels. Bring your mat and stroll the market after class. \$10 (cash preferred). 9:30-10:30 a.m. 1 Ardovino Dr., Sunland Park, New Mexico.

OCT. 17

– Empty Bowls: The 33rd annual Empty Bowls event will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The event benefits El Caldito Soup Kitchen and is sponsored by The Potters' Guild of Las Cruces. The purchase of a ticket comes with delicious soup and bread in a handmade bowl. \$25 (1 ticket pays for 7.25 meals at El Caldito Soup Kitchen). 11 a.m.-2 p.m. 225 W. Griggs Ave., Las Cruces.

OCT. 18

– Workshop: Explore pyrography (decorative wood burning) at Assembly Craft Studio as they host a Wood Burning Workshop. Guests will learn the basics of the technique on small wood pieces. Once you feel comfortable creating lines, textures, and patterns, you can bring your creation to life on a 13.5" x 7.5" premium wood board. All tools and materials are provided. No experience necessary. \$39. 1-3 p.m. 1730 Tierra de Mesilla, Suite 6, Mesilla, New Mexico.

– Concert: Enjoy an evening of Halloween classic theme songs from movies, TV shows, and more. "Candlelight: A Haunted Evening of Halloween Classics" will illuminate the Las Cruces Convention Center with a live, multi-sensory musical event. \$38-\$64.50. 6:30 p.m. 680 E. University Ave., Las Cruces.

OCT. 24

– Class: Make-your-own Pumpkin Coffee Mug class will teach you how to create your own pumpkin mug just in time for Halloween. All materials are included in the class, and payments are final. \$75. 6 p.m. 615 Montana Ave., El Paso, Texas.

OCT. 31

– Salsaween: Amaro Winery presents a "Salsaween Party" with special guests DJ Manny Bachata and Eddie DJ E. Costume contest, Perry Dance class, Kayla Rea performance, and more. Yaz Mexican Food available. Free. 7-11 p.m. 402 S. Melendres St., Las Cruces.

NOV. 7

– Trolley rides: Enjoy horse trolley rides through the Historic Mesquite Street during First Friday Art Ramble. Rides are free, but feel free to bring cash to tip. Boarding is along Mesquite Street at Trails End Gallery. Free. 4-8 p.m. 1732 N. Mesquite St., Las Cruces.



NOV. 8

– Festival: The Rockabilly Kustom Kar Show is hosting a family-friendly celebration at Lincoln Park. The car show and music festival will feature more than 300 class and custom cars, live music, a career fair, local vendors, and food trucks. Free. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. 4001 Durazno Ave., El Paso, Texas.

NOV. 14-16

– Jubilee: Gear up to welcome the most magical season of the year at the Christmas Jubilee at the Ruidoso Convention Center. Shop with more than 75 local vendors, take time to get a photo with Santa, enjoy a food court and food trucks, and more. \$5 admission. Children under 12 and active military with ID are free. Starts at noon. 111 Sierra Blanca Dr., Ruidoso, New Mexico.

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As Haunting as La Llorona: Santa Fe Opera's performance of ***"The Turn of the Screw"***

By Doris Cherry



Darkly dressed ghosts emerging from shadowy waters evoke the image of the age-old story of La Llorona – haunting the Rio Grande in search of her lost children – in the Santa Fe Opera's performance of Benjamin Britten's *"The Turn of the Screw"*.

Britten's chamber opera has libretto that Myfanwy Piper adapted from the Henry James novella of the same name. The story, set in Victorian England, follows a governess who is sent to be with two children abandoned in a deteriorating manner house. The governess declines mentally as she "sees" ghosts who have dominated, and possibly molested, the children she was sent to protect.

Ambiguity lends itself to psychodrama as the story unfolds. Soprano Jacquelyn Stucker as the governess fulfills the image of a Victorian-age woman who faces pressures from two precocious children and isolation. Her physicality and voice give to the character, requiring her to indulge in desperate hysterics.

The stage is set with large dirty windows, doors that mysteriously open by themselves, a shallow "lake" skirting the set, and an open area overlooking the sunset on the Jemez Mountains. Designed by Christopher Oram, these stage elements

were encouraged by director Louisa Muller to help set the tone of the opera.

Everett Baumgarten as the young child Miles and Annie Blitz as teenage Flora were remarkable in their performances. Baumgarten's pure and sweet soprano voice adds to his haunting song "Malo", which he sings in Latin class. Blitz also held her character tightly in her performance. Both singers were smooth with their delivery and memory of notes throughout their long scenes on stage.

The story and its music invoke unease and a sense of loss of innocence, especially as the ghostly characters Peter Quint and Miss Jessel begin to appear as apparitions – performed by tenor Brenton Ryan and mezzo soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano, respectively. Ryan also sings the prologue. Perhaps the only sane character is the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose (also performed by Johnson Cano), whose character opens the story with the two children.

"The Turn of the Screw" is considered a chamber opera; it features a smaller cast of six singers, and a smaller chamber style orchestra of 13 instruments seated on a raised platform visible to the audience. Conductor Gemma New was astounding in her performance. The score was made up of a 12-note theme, which varied

throughout and indicated the scenes within the two acts, utilizing percussion, harps, and other chamber instruments.

Some biographers say Britten's choice to adapt the novella into an opera was influenced by his own struggles with societal acceptance of his homosexuality, along with recurring themes of abuse and psychological distress, as in his other operas.

The following night, in a totally different setting, the Santa Fe Opera performed Giacomo Puccini's *"La bohème"*, highlighting its melodic theme and arias that viewers could hum while leaving the theater. On a set packed with a projected video of bustling 1920s Paris rooftops and a cluttered attic room, characters Marcello and Rodolfo open the story that involves innocent but tubercular Mimi falling in love with poor Rodolfo. The four-act story drags in the first act, as the audience is introduced to the characters with their arias.

All performers did well in *"La bohème"*, the orchestra majestic in its rising and falling Puccini score. Bravo to the stagehands for arranging massive sets and to the wonderful SFO chorus. For information about the 2026 season, go to www.santafeopera.org.



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Albuquerque International

Balloon Fiesta:

A New Mexican tradition

By Sarah Boothe



Every October, the skies over Albuquerque, New Mexico transform into a breathtaking canvas of color as hundreds of hot air balloons rise with the morning sun. Formerly known as the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, this iconic event is the largest ballooning festival in the world, drawing visitors and pilots from across the globe to witness and participate in a spectacle unlike any other.

The Balloon Fiesta began humbly in 1972, when just 13 balloons took off from a shopping center parking lot to celebrate the 50th anniversary of a local radio station. What started as a modest community event quickly grew in popularity, especially thanks to Albuquerque's unique weather conditions. The "Albuquerque Box", a rare wind pattern that allows balloons to drift in predictable loops, makes the city an ideal setting for ballooning. Today, more than 500 balloons ascend during the festival, creating a surreal landscape above the desert.

Tradition is at the heart of the fiesta. The Mass Ascension, where hundreds of balloons launch in two waves at dawn, remains the centerpiece of the event and is best viewed with a steaming cup of coffee or hot chocolate. Evenings bring their own magic with "Balloon Glows," where tethered balloons illuminate against the

dark sky, casting a warm, lantern-like glow across the festival grounds.

Beyond the balloons, the fiesta has grown into a cultural celebration that highlights New Mexico's vibrant heritage. Visitors can enjoy live music, traditional dance performances, and sample local cuisine – green chile breakfast burritos are a must. The event also honors its international popularity, with pilots from more than 50 countries flying side by side throughout our desert skies.

For many New Mexicans, the fiesta is more than just a tourist attraction – it's a tradition woven into the fabric of

community life. Families return year after year, sharing stories of early mornings bundled in blankets, the smell of roasted chile in the air, and the awe of watching a balloon shaped like a giant cow, spaceship, or cartoon character drift overhead.

As the 2025 Balloon Fiesta approaches, anticipation builds once again. Whether it's your first visit or a cherished annual ritual, the experience promises wonder, joy, and a renewed appreciation for the beauty of New Mexico's skies. The Fiesta will begin on Oct. 4 and run through Oct. 12. Visit balloonfiesta.com for information about tickets, launches, special events, and more.





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Wandering Roads: The Turquoise Trail run's first stop

By Sheila Bardwell



The sun-bleached asphalt of New Mexico State Road 14 – also known as the Turquoise Trail – unspools like a ribbon of freedom under the wide and high desert sky. Our steed for this journey isn't some modern crossover; it's a 1964 Ford Starliner Galaxie, a land yacht of chrome and fins escorted by two tall, rugged mechanics – our guardians of the asphalt. With a lazy V8 rumble, we chased a Thelma and Louise fantasy, but with better mileage, a pristine classic, and far more intriguing escorts, heading for the ghost towns and living history of the Black Range.

Our first port in this sea of juniper and piñon is Kingston: a town where the past isn't stored under glass but is instead a slow-burning fire in the hearth, its embers still warm with the whispers of silver barons, madams, and miners. With a population that hovers around a few dozen, Kingston's main street is a quiet testament to its riotous past. It's also a town where the historic political divide is now loudly advertised. The once-unspoken rule of which side of the street you lived on has been replaced by a lively, passive-aggressive garden sign debate, proving some traditions simply update their medium. This divide is a modern echo of the 1880s, when this very street separated the respectable townsfolk from the Percha Creek saloons and brothels that serviced a silver mining boom of 7,000 souls.

We bed down for the night in the historic Victorio Hotel, built in 1882 at the zenith of the Silver Kingdom's frenzy – a symbol of permanence in a transient world of

fortune seekers. Proudly stood a three-story sentinel watching over a town that briefly rivaled Denver and Albuquerque in its ambitions and audacity. However, that permanence was tested by time. The silver veins played out, the population dwindled, and a devastating fire in the 1930s scorched the hotel's top floor, a wound from which it would never fully recover as a public inn. Like Kingston itself, the Victorio retreated into a quiet slumber, in a nearly ghost town dreaming of its glorious past.

Today, the hotel has been granted a new chapter, lovingly converted into a private residence. Its grand facade is one of the few remaining historic structures that hint at the scale of the metropolis that once was. To stand before it is to feel the poignant contrast of then and now. You can almost hear the ghosts of burros laden with ore clip-clopping past, their sounds replaced now by the sigh of the wind through the Gila National Forest, for which modern Kingston serves as a quiet gateway.

The Hotel's current owner, Gordy Steel, is a veritable archive of local history. The Steel family's roots here run deep; his father was the Sierra County local doctor who tended to everyone, from ranchers to legends. And in Kingston, legends are the main currency.

The Victorio is charmingly, and famously, haunted. Paranormal investigators make a pilgrimage here yearly, drawn by tales of playful spirits. The most famous residents

Continued on Page 14 ►

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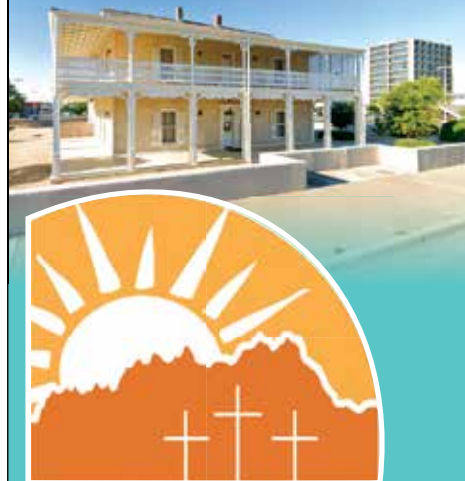
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◀ Continued from Page 12

are the lingering echoes of Sadie Orchard's girls. Sadie was the formidable madam of Kingston's "social clubs"; tokens good for "One Night with a Sadie Orchard Girl" are still on display behind the bar, a tantalizing relic of a bawdier time.

Yet, the hotel's most notorious ghost might be that of Lottie Deno (also known as Mrs. Frank Thurmond), who ran a gambling parlor within its walls. The history books crackle with the tale of her infamous tiff with Big Nose Kate. The story goes: Lottie had won a staggering \$3,000 from Doc Holliday. Kate, suspecting more than just cards was being played, stormed in and pulled a knife. Quick as a flash, Lottie produced a pistol she kept ready under the table. It was only Doc himself jumping between them at the nick of time who prevented the Victorio from hosting a legendary shootout.

However, on this trip, the past visited us in a far more tangible form than a ghost. Sitting in the parlor in the cool afternoon air was John Bloom, a cousin to Gordy Steel who was a piece of living history himself. At over 100 years old, his eyes still sparkled with the clarity of a man who remembers everything. He was the grandson of Supreme Court Justice John

R. McFie, a pivotal figure in New Mexico's journey to statehood. As we listened, rapt, he wove tales of territorial days, of his grandfather's work shaping the state's legal foundation, and of his own deep family legacy with New Mexico State University. He recounted how his family's influence and advocacy were instrumental in the university's early development, helping to establish the agricultural college that would grow into the vital institution it is today. To hear it from the grandson of a man who helped draft the state's constitution was to feel the pages of a textbook come vividly to life.

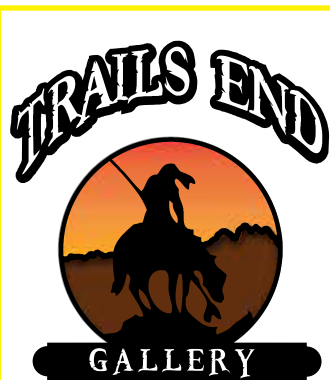
Gordy, with a twinkle in his eye, assured us the ghosts are friendly, perhaps just lonely for company. After a night spent listening to the old building settle and the echoes of Mr. Bloom's stories, every creak of the floorboard felt like a spectral hello.

But we hadn't just come for the ghosts. We'd timed our trip for Pickamania, the annual music festival at the magnificent Black Range Lodge. The 2025 iteration was in full swing, filling the mountain air with the sounds of folk, blues, and old-timey music. The historic lodge itself, once a boarding house for miners and later a tuberculosis sanatorium, pulsed with new and joyful life. We were

served incredible fire-stove pizza by the wonderful Nora (my mother), who seemed to single-handedly feed all the guests with grace and a constant smile.

Between sets by local bands strumming tales of hard luck and high desert hope, we wandered the dusty streets of Kingston. The Starliner, parked proudly near the old hotel, looked like it had finally come home. As the sun came up the next morning, a family of javelinas – the desert's odd, pig-like custodians – trotted into the backyard on a mission. Our doodles, who had been bravely claiming this new territory, suddenly found their courage outsized by imposing tusks, and decided a hasty retreat through the back door was the better part of valor.

Sitting on the hotel porch after breakfast, full of Nora's food, music, and history lessons, the lines began to blur. The 1964 Galaxie, the 1880s silver boom, the ghost stories, the century-spanning memories of John Bloom, and the living, breathing community of today all existed on the same plane. On the Turquoise Trail, history isn't just something you read about. It's something you drive through, sleep in, listen to from a centenarian, and occasionally, run from with a javelina on your heels.



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