

GOOD PEAUNTS

Abandoned, barely there, or rebounding with new purpose, towns, hotels, and restaurants all across the state hold secret treasures: the stories of past lives.

BY JOHN MULHOUSE

ADDITIONAL STORIES BY JULIAN DOSSETT, KELLY KOEPKE, KATE NELSON, AND JENNY PARSONS

Photographs by
ANDREW KORNYLAK



A tumbleweed
meanders down
Folsom's once
busy streets.



An abandoned home in Yeso.
Facing page, from left: Jeff
Cornay and Matt Doherty
inside the Folsom Hotel.
A window to the past in Yeso.

For long minutes, the only sound is the wind rising and falling as it blows across New Mexico's eastern plains. From somewhere along a street of empty houses, a piece of tin bangs slowly on a rooftop. Nearby, the two-story Hotel Mesa's misspelled sign promises not a good night's rest but a "Frontier Musem & Trading Post" complete with "guns" and "antiques." A car approaches from US 60, slowing slightly at the cluster of curious buildings before speeding off toward Clovis. On the other side of the road sits the yellow shell of the Super Service Drive-In Garage.

Sheep once grazed this dry grassland, and not far away Billy the Kid and his gang had a shootout with a posse led by Sheriff Pat Garrett. A train whistle blows, always a surprisingly lonesome sound, all the more so here. When the engine roars past, the clacking of the steel wheels echoes the reason why this place exists at all. After the caboose passes, following the train onto the open expanse, all falls quiet again.

This is Yeso, New Mexico, a ghost town.

Those last two words are freighted with more romanticism and evocation than they can rightly bear, and yet they seem to require no explanation at all. In this past year of pandemic, cities like London and Boston have been referred to as ghost towns, and everyone immediately understood what that meant and why that feels sad. But what is a ghost town, really? And why does even the idea of such a place affect us so deeply? If you have spent much time traveling the back roads of New Mexico, you may have asked yourself these questions, probably more than once.

Upon my arrival in the Land of Enchantment in 2009, I im-

mediately began to crisscross the state, not only to explore as much of the ever-changing landscape as possible but also to feed an obsession with old places, particularly those that are largely forgotten. I documented what I discovered on my blog, *City of Dust*, supplementing whatever history I could uncover with photos that I would usually shoot with film out of a fidelity to the old ways. This eventually led to a book, *Abandoned New Mexico: Ghost Towns, Endangered Architecture, and Hidden History*, published last fall.

What compels a person to drive dirt roads of unpredictable quality only to stand beside, say, the few adobe bricks and rusty sardine cans that represent the earthly remains of the Puertocito trading post, in Socorro County? In the stark desert quiet, without another soul around,

I couldn't help but somehow feel—not just imagine—that this is where Texas outlaws "Bronco Bill" Walters and "Kid" Johnson stopped briefly on their flight from the law in May 1898, following a heist now known as the Great Belén Train Robbery, with tragedy for all parties involved. This sense of the past is a mysterious, addictive thing that may well require solitude and even a flash of loneliness.

Some ghost towns openly celebrate their history and welcome visitors—friendly faces will tell you about Lake Valley, Chloride, and Madrid. Then there are those now quiet villages, like the twin ghosts of Acme and Frazier, near Roswell, that have only stone walls and cemeteries to speak for their past. Still others, with remaining residents tracing a connection spanning many generations, protect their

homes and memories and would prefer that both be left in peace.

Regardless of perspective, as I traveled countless miles both literal and figurative, I learned that many of us share a fascination with the past that borders on awe, along with a desire to preserve the stories these places can tell, even when it's not clear how to preserve the places themselves.

TRUE GHOST TOWNS ARE RARE. Very few places have become entirely uninhabited. By one definition, a ghost town is a place that has seen its population decline significantly from its peak and lost the reason it originally came to exist. Thus, Yeso. It still has a couple of residents, depending on the day, and even a post office. But steam locomotives on the Belén Cutoff no longer stop to take on water—the reason the village once began to grow.

New Mexico can claim most

of the reasons that towns fade. Let's start with the railroad. When the switch from steam to diesel occurred after World War II, trains suddenly sped past many of the places they had formerly needed. Businesses that had sprung up around the tracks shuttered, including hotels and restaurants now

**SOME GHOST TOWNS OPENLY
CELEBRATE THEIR HISTORY AND WELCOME
VISITORS—FRIENDLY FACES
WILL TELL YOU ABOUT
LAKE VALLEY, CHLORIDE, AND MADRID.**

starved of passengers.

Likewise, the construction of the interstate highway system pulled travelers off of the winding roads that passed through countless small towns. When I-40 replaced Route 66, the most famous of these onetime byways, towns like Glenrio, Cuervo, Budville, and Prewitt, saw businesses close and houses stand empty.

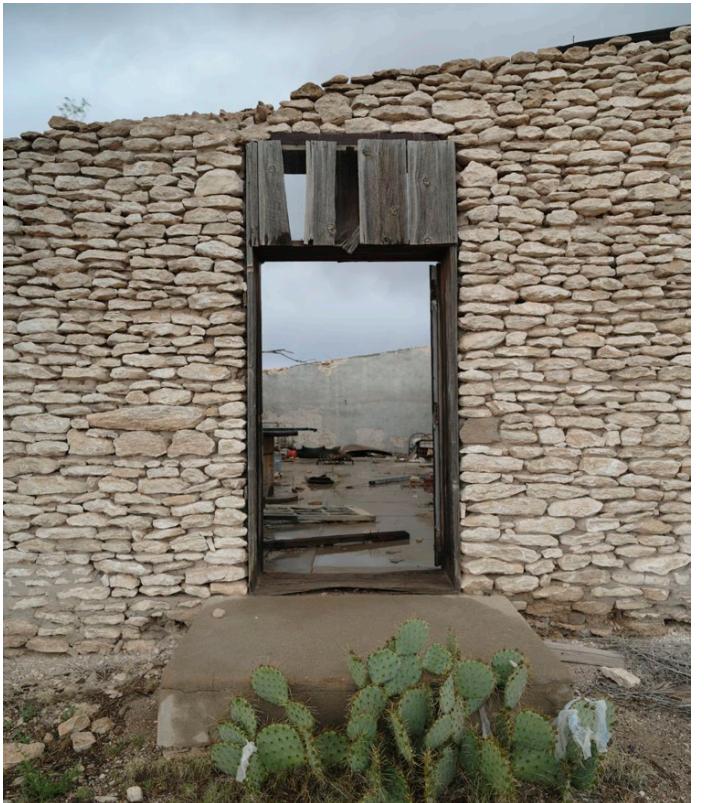
The Dust Bowl and the instability of small-scale agriculture also inflicted wounds, particularly near the state lines with Texas and Oklahoma. Here you will find Causey, Wheatland, and Amistad.

Finally, New Mexico's rich history of mining intertwines with tales of mines going bust

past lives in places such as the Bandelier, Aztec Ruins, and Salinas Pueblo Missions national monuments and Chaco Culture National Historical Park—communities where Ancestral Puebloans once thrived.

Our comparatively mild winters and lack of humidity help preserve what a couple of decades elsewhere would quickly obliterate. That raises a tiny hope for revival, even as rural areas throughout the nation grapple with dwindling populations. Sometimes people "discover" these old towns and move to them to get away from it all. When critical mass is reached, you might find a town reborn, such as Madrid, on NM 14. Now that the pandemic has proved we can do our jobs from anywhere, perhaps one day more Madrids might spring up across New Mexico.

SOME GHOST TOWNS CLAIM
momentous events. Elizabethtown, in the Sangre de





Duran might look like a ghost town, but community members have plans for preservation. **Facing page:** An old homestead in Lake Valley.

Cristo Mountains, was the first incorporated town in New Mexico. Hanover's 1950–51 Empire Zinc Company strike, in the southwest of the state, was portrayed in the film *Salt of the Earth*. The murder of popular merchant Anton Coury in central New Mexico's Duran led to the execution of four of the five assailants in 1922, the last judicial hangings in the state. In that same region, Pinos Wells saw the still-unsolved murder of well-known politician and Civil War veteran J. Francisco Chavez, who was shot through a window while eating dinner at a friend's house.

When I talk with people from such places, they don't mention those kinds of events. Instead they focus on little things that were important to their lives. The postmistress everybody loved in St. Vrain, music on the patio at the Organ Mountain Lodge, or adding peanuts to bottles of RC Cola outside the

R.L. Borden Store, in Floyd. They also talk about basketball and dancing. Not that many decades ago, high school basketball was the biggest thing going in rural New Mexico, and the games and rivalries remain fresh for those who were there, even as schools and gymnasiums in places like Cedarvale, Encino, and Forrest are torn down or collapse. Steve Flores wrote a 2006 book about the phenomenon, *Ghost Town Basketball: Former High School Basketball Teams of New Mexico*, now a rare and sought-after volume.

As for dances, the Dunlap Community Church and School, south of Fort Sumner, hosted get-togethers still talked about today. Solano, in northeastern New Mexico, had dances on an outdoor basketball court—"the Starlight Ballroom"—and bands played on a flatbed truck. On the Llano Estacado, the town of Lingo held dances at its high

school, enticing kids from nearby Causey, where dances weren't allowed. In Guadalupe, out in the Río Puerco Valley, all-night parties were held inside Juan Córdova's two-story adobe store, where the Tafoya brothers played until the wee hours of the morning.

When you find a ghost town that speaks directly to you, you might feel something like what they call *saudade* in Portugal and Brazil. It can contain longing, melancholy, loss, and even a desire for a time that you suspect may have never truly existed. I have felt all those things. But ghost towns can also allow us something even more fundamental: a quiet moment of recognition for those who came before and brought each of us to where we are today, for their story is ours, and it is well worth learning.

John Mulhouse is featured in "Storytellers," p. 8.

WHO YA GONNA CALL?

CELL RECEPTION MIGHT FAIL, BUT THE ROAD AWAITS. PREP YOURSELF WITH THESE GHOST-TOWN TIPS.

Read up. Web searches yield a host of info on older towns, along with recommendations for book learning. Those empty buildings will speak volumes when you know more about what happened inside.

Be friendly. Someone may ask you why you're visiting, and if you already did some homework and happen to know who used to run the old general store, you're likely to learn even more.

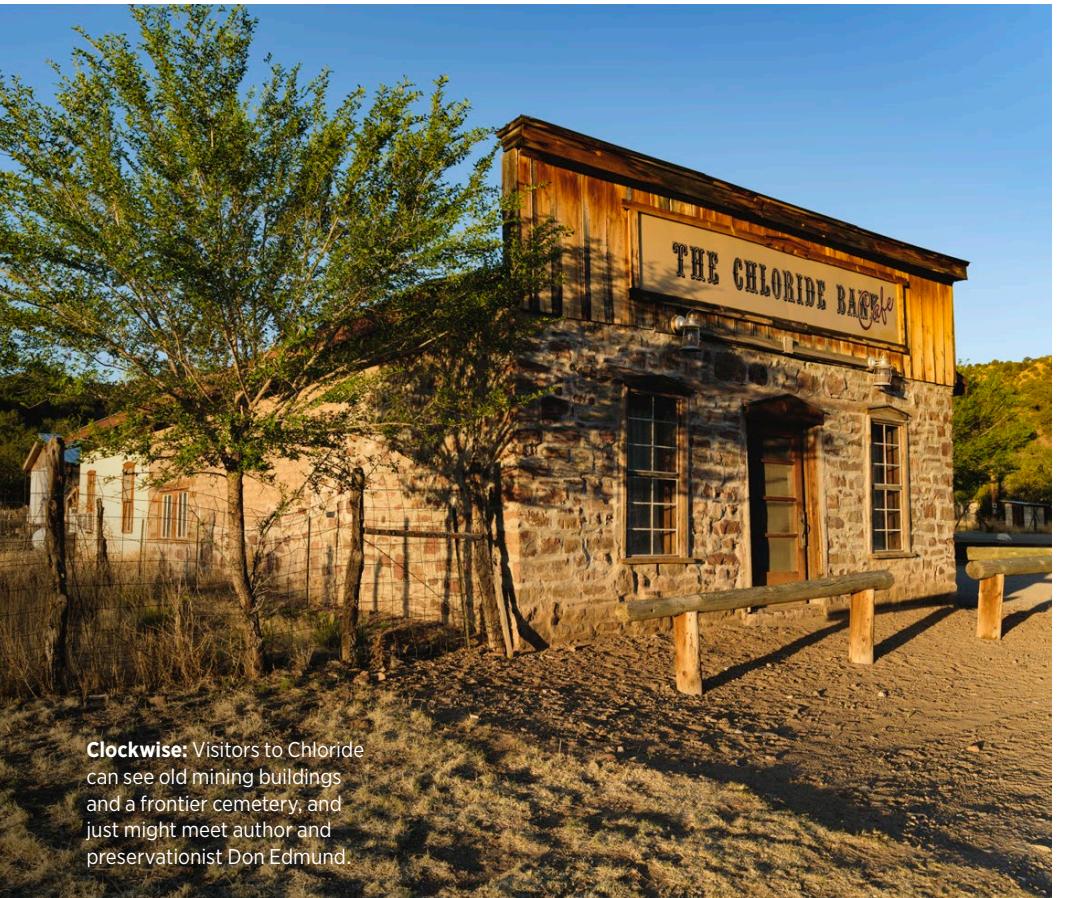
Show some respect. Many ghost towns are still someone's home. Don't take pictures of people or occupied houses without asking. Obey all no-trespassing signs, leave those "cool artifacts" behind, pick up your trash, and—do we really have to say this?—don't vandalize anything.

Take care. Old mines can collapse. Neighbors could be justifiably suspicious. Abandoned buildings might hold asbestos, varmints, and rotting floorboards.

Buy good maps. DeLorme publishes a New Mexico atlas with 72 pages of maps that include back roads, campgrounds, and landownership. The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management also have maps that show former mining camps and the like, along with where public lands end and private property begins. (Don't count on your cell phone to show you the way, especially in rural and mountainous areas.)

Go slow, enjoy yourself. Everything will take much longer than you expected. Forget about racing to the next town. Devote a weekend here and there. Begin to love quiet moments and the rich stories of the places you find. —JM





Clockwise: Visitors to Chloride can see old mining buildings and a frontier cemetery, and just might meet author and preservationist Don Edmund.

AFTER THE BOOM

When silver went bust, the miners of Chloride fled, leaving buildings that visitors flock to today. By Kate Nelson

Had Don Edmund not taken a wrong turn on Labor Day weekend in 1977, the town of Chloride might have fallen faster. Instead, Edmund fell for the onetime silver-mining boomtown 40 miles northwest of Truth or Consequences, moved there in 1986, and, along with other residents, began rescuing buildings and collecting stories from the locals. Eventually joined by his daughter, Linda Turner, he helped turn this wee dot on the map into a historical treasure.

The town dates to a silver strike in 1879 by Harry Pye, who was killed by Apaches before he could reap his reward. Others did their best to get a

piece of Pye's, uh, pie. Some 3,000 people crowded into the almost overnight town. The population swelled into nearby Winston and Cuchillo, while other strikes in the Black Range fueled the towns of Lake Valley, Hillsboro, and Kingston. Churches and schools sprouted throughout the region, along with newspapers, banks, cabinetmakers, tailors, doctors, hotels, and a brothel or two. (Dozens of brothels if you believe some of the hype.) For certain, Chloride had a hanging tree, a live oak that stands today.

The town also had an ore crusher and smelter to serve the 480 claims that turned into 42 working mines. In 1896, President William McKinley



embraced the gold standard and halted the purchase of silver for coinage. Prices plummeted, mines closed, and towns went bust.

In 1923, the proprietor of Chloride's Pioneer Store, which sold everything from cast-iron frying pans to canned goods,

EITHER ORE TAKE YOUR PICK. THESE OLD MINING TOWNS DELIVER UNIQUE REWARDS.

A century's worth of prayers bolster the restored adobe chapel at the **Lake Valley Historic Town Site**. Other ruins and rescues from its silver-mining heyday abound in this Bureau of Land Management-owned acreage 48 miles southwest of Truth or Consequences. The town welcomes visitors year-round, Thursdays through Mondays (hours can vary), but, says Kendra Madrid, chief of cultural and recreation programs for the BLM's Las Cruces office, you can walk around the gate on other days. Go on official days to get inside the restored schoolhouse museum. "To see the way students used to sit, the markings they made on their desks, you get a feeling of nostalgia," she says. nmmag.us/lakevalley

"**MORE THAN A FEW VISITORS SAY THEY FEEL LIKE THEY STEPPED BACK IN TIME 100 YEARS, AND MOST PEOPLE SAY, 'IT'S A WONDERFUL COLLECTION.'**"

—LINDA TURNER

right there. "I have to respond, 'It's not a collection.'"

Thursdays through Mondays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., visitors can marvel in the museum and wander into the Grafton Cabin, a two-story log building, as well as the Monte Cristo, a onetime saloon that houses a gift shop with works by local artisans. You can stay a night or two in the RV park or rent one of the historic but modernized cabins.

When Edmund moved in, just 13 people remained. Most could spin a good yarn about the old days, and those fill his book, *Stories They Told Us*, and another by longtime resident Raymond Schmidt, *New Mexico Recollections*, both available at the Monte Cristo.

These days, Turner hopes to renovate the onetime home of Cassie Hobbs, "a true pioneer woman."

"Until she turned 14, she hadn't lived in anything but tents and covered wagons," Turner says. "She married at

16 and settled in Chloride in the 1940s. We have a houseful of furniture and art that was made by Cassie, along with clothes made by her. It's amazing the things she did with a few simple tools."

The pandemic slowed Turner's construction schedule and helped scuttle a café that operated in another historic building. (Take the hint, should you happen to possess culinary acumen, an entrepreneurial spark, and a hankering for life lived slowly.)

"Chloride is this quaint little ghost town," Turner says. "A lot of the buildings have been restored, it's the entrance to the Gila National Forest, and there are dark skies. We frequently see deer right here in town, even in the middle of the day. Some visitors are really interested in the history,

some are particularly interested in mining, and some just come for the peace and quiet." pioneerstoremuseum.com



KAREN HAUGHNESS WHITE OAKS

Albuquerque native Karen Haughness moved around before settling in the tiny town of White Oaks, near Carrizozo. Eight people still live in this place, which boomed in 1879 with gold and coal mines in the nearby Jicarilla Mountains. She works full-time as a school psychologist and runs two businesses, the always popular *No Scum Allowed Saloon* and a soon-to-open dry-goods store.

We're a very eclectic community. We have retired diplomats. We have a couple of men who are fourth- or fifth-generation White Oaks folks. And I just sold my log cabin to a rancher from Texas.

My mother's side of the family is all from Texas. They call me the black sheep of the family because I came back to New Mexico. I just love it here. It is one of the few areas that is reflective of the real New Mexico without any of the fabricated stories. It is what it is.

I just like being out with my horses and my dogs. I like watching the clouds roll in. In White Oaks, we don't believe in external lighting. It's easier to see the stars at night. It's very peaceful for me. There are petroglyphs, arrowheads, and pottery shards that we find just by walking around.

I had been a customer of the No Scum Allowed Saloon. The last owner was about to sell it to a club, but this saloon has always belonged to everyone. I bought it as kind of a joke. I worked through my undergrad tending bar and then I ended up owning a bar. I don't know why I wrote all those papers.

I just thought it would be good for the community. I've just always been oriented to helping people.

Everybody's welcome. I tell people when they come here that they're in the middle of somewhere. —As told to Jenny Parsons



THE GRASS WAS GREENER

The Río Puerco Valley once sheltered Ancestral Puebloans and, later, Hispanic ranchers. Only small signs of life remain. By Kate Nelson

here CR 279 breaks south from US 550, between San Ysidro and Cuba, centuries of history emerge. The craggy knob of Cabezon Peak, the remnant of a 1.5-million-year-old volcanic eruption, looms to the east as the road passes through the village of San Luis. After turning into a well-maintained dirt road, it forks this way and that before reaching the village of Guadalupe and then a parking area for a Bureau of Land Management site, Guadalupe Ruin. A short climb up a trail leads to a 12th-century Chacoan outlier, later occupied by Mesa Verde refugees and then again by the Gallina people.

The land below splay out in a panorama of sheer cliffs and broken arroyos. Noted folklorist and author Nasario García grew up exploring all of it. His grandfather was among the last residents to leave Guadalupe, after the once verdant Río Puerco had withered into

a deep arroyo.

Today, García's family home is an eroded adobe among other eroded adobes, including a rare two-story building that some ghost-town chasers contend was a brothel. Which makes García laugh. "They would have been run out of the village," he says. The real occupants, the Córdova family, lived on the second floor and ran a mercantile on the first. So far as miscreants go, consider the behavior of young Nasario and his cousin Juan during dances held at the store.

"Juan and I were in charge of sprinkling water on the dirt floors, especially after a polka, to settle the dust," García says. "The men would go outside for a hidden bottle of wine. As the night progressed and they got drunker, Juan and I would add more and more water. Think of them trying to get all that mud off their boots!"

García has collected such tales in several books, including his acclaimed *Hoe, Heaven,*

and Hell: My Boyhood in Rural New Mexico. He's a cherished elder among others with family ties to the area, including Lorraine Dominguez Stubblefield, president of the Sandoval County Historical Society. Her family roots lie in San Luis, where the San Aloysius Gonzaga chapel still holds occasional services.

"All the villages back there—San Luis, Guadalupe, Cabezon, Casa Salazar—everyone was related to everyone," she says. "Today there's probably 25, 35 people who live there on a weekday, maybe 45 on a weekend."

Cabezon village is gated and requires permission, but San Luis and Guadalupe can be seen from the road. (Obey private property signs.) Casa Salazar, south of Guadalupe, requires a rugged vehicle.

The people of San Luis hold the deed to the chapel and maintain it themselves, along with a morada for the laypeople who provide community guidance and a historic cemetery.



Clockwise from left: Cabezon Peak, near the villages of San Luis and Guadalupe. Horses at the old Córdova store in Guadalupe. The Río Puerco once nourished the villages. **Facing page, clockwise from top left:** Santeria Mary Rose Pino at La Posada Art Gallery, in Magdalena. Inside the old Folsom Hotel. Osiris Navarro and Michal Gola at their Tumbleweeds Diner, in Magdalena. The Sacred Heart Church in Bueyeros.

During Holy Week, it becomes a pilgrimage site. "This last year, my brother, who's 74, he did a promise for my nephew, who has colon cancer," Dominguez Stubblefield says. "He walked from the highway to the church. That's always a beautiful time of year." blm.gov/visit/guadalupe-ruin



BETTY WILLIAMSON

PEP

Betty Williamson's grandparents homesteaded a piece of land 10 miles outside the town of Pep, in southeastern New Mexico. She grew up on that land and lives there today with her husband, who is retired. The niece of famed science fiction writer Jack Williamson, she has kept his family tradition alive, working as a freelance journalist for The Eastern New Mexico News.

When I was growing up, the joke was always that Pep was population two. Then a man from Albuquerque bought the whole place back in the 1970s. He ran the store in town, was the postmaster, the mayor. Now the town doesn't have anybody who lives within the city limits. But it still has a functioning post office.

I was away for a few years. I went to ENMU, in Portales. I worked for the Roswell Daily Record for my first job, then in Washington, D.C., for three years. I returned in 1987 thinking I was just coming for a short stay. I wanted to learn how to artificially inseminate cattle. I took a class. I bred a bunch of cattle and I wanted to stay and watch my first calves be born. One thing led to another. The seasons changed, and here I am.

I love the high plains. Not everyone does. We are on a cattle ranch, but we have completely sold out with the ongoing drought. But I do have really deep roots to the land and the area. I find it a really beautiful and special place. You have to look a little harder for the beautiful.

On the land here we have the lesser prairie chicken and the dunes sagebrush lizard, and they are both species of concern. We have researchers coming to check on them. And that is tied to the drought as well. The numbers are tough. The ranchers are having a tough time. They need the rain like all of us do.

It's not that we have a really special place, but it's special to us, and we love to share it with people. —As told to Jenny Parsons



Van Jacobsen in his Adobe Deli.

DINING WITH THE DEAD

New Mexico cuisine sometimes comes with a curious question: You want some frights with that? By Julian Dossett

The circular outcropping of low structures rises against a rolling backdrop of desert wilderness. Here, the fabled Adobe Deli, a rambling steakhouse and saloon, sits at the end of a windswept road 10 dusty miles east of Deming.

Taxidermy, Old West artifacts, and other peculiar objects fill this place, built from the bones of an old elementary school. It's easy to glean why a reputation for hauntings persists. The

Travel Channel's *Ghost Adventures* even filmed a 2018 episode inside the saloon's shadowy space.

On a covered deck outside, I sit across from Van Jacobsen, Adobe Deli's proprietor since it opened in 1978. Behind us looms a rusted, antique streetcar beside double doors leading into the main building. Jacobsen tells me the local history while soft country songs from outdoor speakers drift around us in the late afternoon.

"The old Lewis Flats School closed in 1977. It was on the auction block. We put down a bid and got it. The rest is history," Jacobsen says, then mentions a newspaper article hanging on the wall that reveals rattlesnakes were an issue at the school. "The principal had to go out and check around the

"ONE OF THE CUSTOMERS WAS DANCING, HAD A HEART ATTACK, AND DIED. BUT HIS WIFE SAID THAT NIGHT WAS THE BEST TIME HER HUSBAND EVER HAD IN HIS ENTIRE LIFE." —VAN JACOBSEN

area before the kids went out and played."

When asked about ghosts, Jacobsen admits he's not much of a believer. Still, his family and staff swear by unexplained encounters over the years, like hearing the faint sound of an old piano through the house speakers in the saloon while closing up alone late at night. Jacobsen ticks off a few stories he believes may have led to these occurrences, including a death during a dance held for Deming's centennial celebration in the early 1980s.

"One of the customers was dancing, had a heart attack, and died," he says. "But his wife said that night was the best time her husband ever had in his entire life."

Today the Adobe Deli is treasured by locals and travelers alike. Jacobsen leads me on a tour past the dining room/saloon, which is nearly full to its limited capacity. Patrons come for the famous rib eyes, giant kebabs, and French onion soup, then hang around for the spooky roadhouse atmosphere.

I follow him down a long

COURTESY OF DOUBLE EAGLE



Mesilla's Double Eagle restaurant might be haunted by young lovers.

EAT, DRINK, AND BE WARY COME FOR THE FOOD. STAY FOR THE SPIRITS.

Longtime US 60 favorite the Gatherin' Place reopened in January as **Pie Town Pies**, part of the Pie Town Homestead complex that includes a general store. Hewing to the mountain village's moniker, owner Sarah Chaves serves up New Mexico apple, buttermilk, and strawberry-rhubarb pies using the previous owners' recipes, while reimagining the café's larger menu to reflect a "simpler time." The site of an old Sinclair station, Pie Town Pies is also home to "a shadow of a cowboy who comes in from time to time," says Chaves. (We don't know what he longs for but urge you to try Aunt Mildred's Pecan Pie Muffins.) 5603 US 60, Pie Town; 575-772-2909, facebook.com/pietownpies

Near Las Cruces, Mesilla's **Double Eagle** has earned fame for expertly aged steaks, massive green chile cheeseburgers, and award-winning margaritas. Built in 1849, the adobe building, once a hacienda, features beautiful, ornate dining rooms—and the specters of Armando and Inez, ill-fated young lovers forever destined to roam the halls. "We have two velvet chairs, and each one has worn into the body shape of the ghosts," says owner Buddy Ritter. 2355 Calle de Guadalupe, Mesilla; 575-523-6700, doubleeagleonline.com

Head to Albuquerque's Old Town for delectable New Mexico cuisine at the **Church Street Cafe**, an establishment housed in the Casa de Ruiz, built in the early 1700s, that spills out onto a lushly landscaped "secret" patio. "The ghost that haunts the cafe is Sarah Ruiz," says owner Marie Coleman. "She's believed to still reside here." A curandera, or healer, Ruiz reportedly rearranges the dolls in a china cabinet up front or perhaps simply drops by to ensure that patrons enjoy the restaurant's carne adovada and blue corn enchiladas. 2111 Church St. NW, Albuquerque; 505-247-8522, churchstreetcafe.com

hallway to the rear portion of the building. Past the wine cellar is the cigar lounge, filled with books and animal heads, leading to a second dining area that's seldom used. Seasoned ghost hunters have indicated that an invisible "portal" to beyond lurks here.

Earlier this year, Jacobsen admits, he had an otherworldly experience while making coffee one morning. He dropped a

rag over a coffee spill and, upon picking it up, found the words VAN DIE stained on the fabric. Nonetheless, after running the Adobe Deli for more than four decades, he remains on the fence as to whether that or any other purported event belongs in an X-File. Besides, he has a business to run and T-bones to grill. 3970 Lewis Flats Road SE, Deming; 575-546-0361, adobedeli.com



MELINDA BONEWELL MADRID

Melinda Bonewell traded Seattle's rain for the sunny skies of New Mexico 18 years ago when she moved to the former mining town of Madrid, south of Santa Fe. Many of its coal-mining buildings still stand, and the town attracts artists and shop owners. She and her partner own the Mine Shaft Tavern. Bonewell dubs herself the unofficial town historian, collecting various items and stories for the Mine Shaft's (currently closed) museum.

When we first moved here, there was no internet, no trash pickup service. We were some of the youngest people here. Once we got internet and people realized they could live anywhere, a lot of people moved here with kids.

The town's heyday was in the twenties and thirties. We might have had up to 2,000 people—mostly coal-mining families.

When Pearl Harbor happened, it all stopped abruptly. A lot of the miners went off to war. After the war, the demand for coal dropped off. It became a ghost town almost overnight.

From roughly the 1950s to the 1970s, there were only about 12 people living here. In the 1970s, they tried to sell the town of Madrid, and it wouldn't sell. Finally, they worked with a local real estate agent and put up smaller lots. Those sold.

It was really run-down. There was no power. The water had always been brought in by train. We basically resurrected from our ghost town past. It was mostly hippies and veterans at first. Who else was going to live in those houses without power?

Quite a few ghost hunters have come out. Especially up at the tavern, when people work late, they will see unexplainable things. I definitely believe in them.

If Madrid doesn't like you, they'll kick you out. The spirits must like me. —As told to Jenny Parsons

Clayton's Hotel Eklund.
Below: Co-owner Jo Beth Vigil Price in the Victorian lobby. **Facing page:** One of the hotel's restored rooms.



SLEEPING WITH SPIRITS

Clayton lays claim to a few ghosts, along with one who may roam the hallways of the Hotel Eklund. By Kelly Koepke

The Hotel Eklund has had 125 years to accumulate ethereal energy by offering comfortable accommodations, good food, and liberal libations to travelers, some of them rambunctious. (Take a gander at the tin ceiling. The bullet holes are still on display.)

Since 1892, what started as a mercantile is now a three-story sandstone boutique hotel, saloon, and restaurant in the small northeast New Mexico town of Clayton. Between the bar brawls and angry confrontations, the joyous celebrations and clandestine trysts, it's no wonder some say they've had

uncle Cipriano worked behind the iconic, belly-up bar. He shot a man dead after the ruffian knocked her great-grandfather unconscious.

"We've got a great photo on display of Carl Eklund, the

property's namesake, sitting on the front porch with the family during a celebration in the 1920s," says Barras. Guests can imagine more happenings from the scores of family photos and Wild West period decor.



RIGHT, FROM TOP: COURTESY OF HOTEL PARQ CENTRAL; COURTESY OF LA POSADA DE SANTA FE

otherworldly encounters there. "Usually when people ask about the ghost, I tell them it's just an old building. Old buildings have stories," says co-owner Keith Barras, of the historic property that he, his wife, Jeannette Vigil Barras, and his sister-in-law, Jo Beth Vigil Price, purchased in 2011.

The Barrases are both New Mexico architects with loads of hospitality experience. Jeannette's family goes back generations in Clayton. When the Eklund became available, they turned into innkeepers. That's not their only connection with the Eklund. Her family recounts a gunfight in the saloon when her great-

The supposed ghost, a maid named Irene, poltergeists her way around Room 307, creaking floorboards and making mysterious faces in the wallpaper. Barras prefers to think of her as a benevolent presence.

"My personal favorite story is the time a couple stayed because the wife had a terrible migraine. In the morning, she thanked her husband for the wonderful way he had caressed her head through the night, relieving her headache. He denied having done anything! Maybe she was touched by an angel," Barras says.

Not so angelic is the spirit of Clayton's notable ne'er-do-well (and lover of the Eklund's chicken dinners), Tom "Black Jack" Ketchum. He and his magnificent mustache supposedly haunt the halls of the nearby Union County Courthouse and leave a chill in the jailhouse cell where he awaited capital justice. Ketchum was a train-robbing member of the infamous Hole-in-the-Wall

Gang, and his botched hanging in 1901 and ignominious burial in one cemetery and then in another might be reason for his shadow to linger.

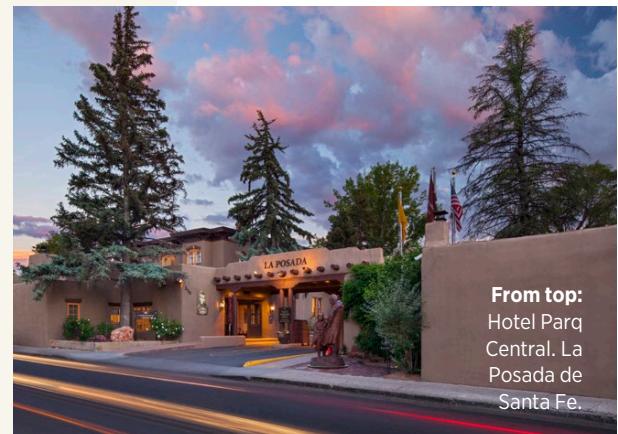
The town's Herzstein Museum, built in 1919 as a Methodist Episcopal church, offers more about Black Jack, as well as Clayton's history as a stop along the Santa Fe Trail, its Dust Bowl and WPA connections, and its own haunted happenings. The presence of a "sassy older woman" was documented by professional ghost hunters in 2015, who reported that she roamed the building. Maybe she was touched by an angel," Barras says.

"We love hearing about people who came into the hotel with their grandparents who are here now with their grandchildren," he says. "That's continuing the Eklund's and Clayton's tradition of hospitality. Ghosts or no ghosts." 15 Main St., Clayton; 575-374-2551, hoteleklund.com



"USUALLY WHEN PEOPLE ASK ABOUT THE GHOST, I TELL THEM IT'S JUST AN OLD BUILDING. OLD BUILDINGS HAVE STORIES."

—CO-OWNER KEITH BARRAS



From top:
Hotel Parq Central. La Posada de Santa Fe.

GHOSTLY LODGINGS ADD SOMETHING EERIE TO YOUR NEXT OVERNIGHT.

Visitors to the **Lodge Resort & Spa**, in Cloudcroft, will surely marvel at the historic hotel's 1899 Arts and Crafts architecture, renovated rooms, outdoor relaxation spaces, and high-altitude golf course. With reports of flickering lights, spontaneous blazes igniting in fireplaces, and objects sliding across tables, popular legend says these are the mischievous echoes of Rebecca, a beautiful young chambermaid and restaurant namesake who purportedly disappeared after her lumberjack beau caught her in flagrante delicto with another lover. Her portrait hangs in the lounge. 601 Corona Pl., Cloudcroft; 800-395-6343, *thelodgeresort.com*

After her death in 1896, Santa Fe society matron and hostess Julia Staab never departed Staab House, now part of **La Posada de Santa Fe**. So say guests and staff who have encountered her spirit descending the staircase or have heard her speak, though that may just be her eponymous margarita talking. Some speculate her benevolent appearances belie a restlessness spurred by postpartum depression after the loss of a child, or possible foul play or suicide as her cause of death. 330 E. Palace Ave., Santa Fe; 505-986-0000, *laposadadesantafe.com*

A 2011 investigation by the ghost-hunting Los Muertos Spirit Seekers reported unexplained voices, coolness, and a sense of being watched at **Hotel Parq Central**, near downtown Albuquerque. These classic haunting signs at the former hospital and psychiatric facility turned boutique hotel add to the charm and mystery of the iconic 1920s structure. Are these the remnants of the anguish and suffering of former patients? Enjoy a drink at Apothecary Lounge, the rooftop bar, and watch out for poltergeists who like to pull off guests' bedsheets in the dead of night. 806 Central Ave. SE, Albuquerque; 505-242-0040, *hotelparqcentral.com*