



# TIME TRAVEL AT THE LUNA CHAPEL

## ALSO INSIDE

- Writers join forces at SOMOS
- Gretchen Ewert fires up
- Men with candy
- Dancing in the street

COVER STORY

# LOOKING BACK

Historic New Mexico prints at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site | BY DENA MILLER

**O**NE OF THE BEST PARTS of life is the stories it leaves with us. Especially here in Taos, many of those stories are told through the visual arts and this summer the community is able to visit the “old days” with a striking exhibition at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site. “Glimpses of the Past: Historic New Mexico Prints, 1880-1950” is a can’t-miss look into the world of etchings, lithographs, wood block prints, linocuts, aquatints, serigraphs and monotypes with a twist: Some of the artists’ names will be familiar to you but, “Many of these are the works of artists who are

lost to history [yet] provide a fascinating look into days gone by,” said Davison Koenig, executive director and curator of Couse-Sharp.

The exhibit is hanging in the property’s two-century-old Luna Family Chapel, which alone makes it worth the visit. But there is a real visual treat awaiting those who enter. The collection of over 50 pieces – on loan by an anonymous New Mexico collector – is stylistically diverse and rooted in the movements of modernism, regionalism, cubist-inspired abstraction and academic realism, Koenig noted.

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Luna Chapel exterior at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site

COURTESY PHOTO





*Norma Bassett Hall*

COURTESY IMAGE

**Norma Bassett Hall, 'Navajo Land,'  
woodblock**

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**Pat Pattison, 'Elk Foot,' lithograph**  
**Below: Interior, Luna Family Chapel**  
 COURTESY PHOTOS

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**YOU WILL FIND** recognizable landmarks and vistas interspersed with pastoral scenes of life in Taos, Santa Fe and environs as they appeared many decades ago, all of which are captured in the stunning detail that best exemplifies the art of printmaking.

“The primary focus is on the work of lesser-known printmakers who worked in New Mexico for a few years, for a season or even only for a few days,” explained guest curator David Clemmer. However, their professional obscurity in no way dilutes the wonder of the imagery, he believes.

In fact, “The print chosen as our signature for the exhibition is entitled ‘Elk-Foot’ by an artist named B. Pat Pattison,” Clemmer noted. “It’s such an interesting mystery. We have been unable to document much of anything about the artist – we don’t even know if Pat is a male or female – but we do know that this Pattison print and two others were included in an important 1930s show with such notables as O. E. Berninghaus, Nicolai Fechin, Dorothy Brett, Howard Cook and Gene Kloss.”

One of the other two, “Ol Boy,” also happens to be on view. “Like the portraitist, the identity of Ol’ Boy remains a mystery, but his cohort Elk Foot is believed to be Jerry Mirabal, well-known as a model for both E. I. Couese and J. H. Sharp. The graphic vibrance and bold modernity of these portraits truly belies their ages,” Clemmer said.

Another idiosyncratic, and no less masterful, addition to the exhibit is an untitled pueblo scene circa 1925 by an artist named Rosella de Milhaus. Included with the print is the copper etching plate on which the print was pulled.

“Again, we know very little about the artist, but we do know she was the first female motorcycle police officer on Long Island, N.Y., during the World War I era,” Clemmer said.

Coy Avon Seward, founder and charter member of the prestigious early 20th-century, Kansas-based Prairie Print Makers is represented in the show where the titles of his two lithographs may cause a few head scratches. “Grasshopper Peak,” circa 1931, may be better recognized by locals as El



Salto; and "Toadstool Rock," circa 1925, stands out to everyone as Camel Rock.

Several of Seward's compatriots, including Charles M. Capps and the only female member of PPM, Norma Bassett Hall, are likewise included in the show.

"Prairie Printers is the equivalent to Kansas as the Taos Society of Artists is to this region," Clemmer noted. "Hall and her husband did move to New Mexico in the early 1940s and her woodblock of Shiprock and bucolic serigraph of a family drying chiles are quintessential examples of those art forms." [couse-sharp.org](http://couse-sharp.org)

**THE SHOW** is exceptionally fortunate to include works from the brother team of Peter and Thomas Moran. The prodigious Moran brothers also included John (a photographer) and Edward (a painter of marine subjects) but Thomas is the most illustrious of the quartet, known as one of the premiere American landscape artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"Peter's reputation as an animalier – a painter of rural scenes featuring domestic livestock – is reflected in a rare, hand-painted photogravure, and an etching on silk of 1880s Spanish Taos," Clemmer said. "Thomas sketched during his travels through the West, and created his prints back in his studio in New Jersey."

In addition to de Milhau and Hall, the exhibition includes the work of six other women artists: Dorothy Stauffer, Stella MacLean, Elna Hogin, Blanche McVeigh, Trude Hanscom and Henrietta Dean Lang, whose rare white-line woodblock depicts a Buffalo Dance at Taos Pueblo. Clemmer also remarked that many international artists are represented.

Artists who worked in the print medium – including J. H. Sharp, O. E. Berninghaus and E. Martin Hennings – were prolific in producing prints during periods of widespread economic hardship. The print medium allowed them to produce multiple images quickly and inexpensively, and sell them at prices affordable for collectors of modest means.

Nevertheless, "Glimpses of the Past" proves beyond any doubt that printmaking is a very intricate and nuanced art.

David Clemmer is a Santa Fe-based author, curator, and E. I. Couse Catalogue Raisonné Project Consultant, and his services as "Glimpses of the Past" guest curator brings a wealth of information which is available for your perusal at the show.

The show may be viewed by appointment through Nov. 6. It will also be open to the public on Aug. 7 and Sept. 4 in conjunction with the historic site's usual First Saturday open houses from 3–5 p.m. Admission to the exhibition is free, as are tours of the historic site, but donations are always gratefully received.

The Couse-Sharp Historic Site is located at 146 Kit Carson Road, on the corner of Quesnel Road. View the gallery at [glimpseofthepast.org](http://glimpseofthepast.org), or for further information visit [couse-sharp.org](http://couse-sharp.org) or call 575-751-0369.

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