

THE LEGACY

COUSE-SHARP
HISTORIC SITE

SHE LEAVES A LIVING LEGACY VIRGINIA COUSE LEAVITT, 1932–2024

Couse-Sharp Historic Site pays tribute to Virginia Couse Leavitt, our co-founder and guiding light, who passed away on November 26, 2024, in Taos at the age of 92. Leavitt was the principal scholar on the work of her grandfather Eanger Irving Couse. Along with her late husband, Ernest Leavitt, she was the driving force behind preserving the archive, home, and studio of Couse along with the property of neighbor J. H. Sharp, also one of the original six members of the TSA.

On May 15, a memorial service was held at El Monte Sagrado Resort in Taos, drawing more than 200 attendees to say their farewells. “Through the years, Ginnie has been present in all our lives, keenly interested and involved in the programs and operations of the site,” said Davison Koenig, CSHS executive director and curator. “The preservation of the buildings and grounds, and ensuring that the

archive and collections remain available and relevant to future scholars, was her life’s work.”

Ginnie lived as a child at the Couse Home and returned during the summers throughout her life. She spent some 35 years researching and writing her masterwork, *Eanger Irving Couse: The Life and Times of an American Artist, 1866-1936*, published by the University of Oklahoma Press. She devoted decades to maintaining and obtaining records that formed the seed of the impressive archive at the heart of The Lunder Research Center.

Carl Jones, former chair and president of The Couse Foundation, fondly recalled their partnership to achieve her vision for the Site. “To say that someone is irreplaceable is, in most cases, an overstatement; but in Ginnie’s case it was absolutely true because she literally was our living connection to members of the Taos Society of Artists and to the history of the Site.”

Current Chair of the Board Elizabeth Crittenden Palacios said “Ginnie was a visionary leader whose tireless dedication to the arts and the history of the Taos community has shaped the cultural landscape for generations to come.”

For additional information on Ginnie’s fascinating and full life, see the Leavitt Family page on our website: couse-sharp.org/virginia-ernie.

Cofounder Al Olson passes on

We have lost another architect of The Couse Foundation: Alan J. Olson, who led the board of directors from its inception in 2001 to 2016, died in early September 2025 in Boulder, CO. He was 84.

In 2000, Olson, a Chicago lawyer, and his wife, Carol-Ann, visited Taos on a quest to locate the former homes of all Taos Society of Artists members. Walking up Kit Carson Road, they stopped to chat with Ernie Leavitt, who happened to be emptying the trash in front of the Couse house. Delighted to accept Ernie’s offer of a tour, they were joined by Ginnie. The couple had served as custodians of the house during the summers for over 10 years at that time.

Ginnie told the Olsons of the dream to create a foundation to preserve the property for the future. Al offered his services pro bono, and by March 2001 he had set up our nonprofit organization.

The staff, board, and volunteers of CSHS extend our condolences to Al’s family. “We recognize and are eternally grateful for the vital role Al played in preserving our national treasure and launching the organization on the upward trajectory it maintains today. He and his wife Carol-Ann continued their unwavering support long after he left our board,” noted former chair and president Rich Rinehart.



TOP: Ginnie at work on the Couse Catalog in 2020; ABOVE: the bust created by sculptor Ed Smida in the Azzari Family Library in The Lunder Research Center; RIGHT: Ginnie and Ernie Leavitt on their honeymoon in 1954.

BRINGING THE LEGACY TO LIFE

Dear friends,

Contemplating the past year, our thoughts turn first to the loss of our dear Ginnie. Virginia Couse Leavitt was the heart of all things Couse-Sharp, and while we knew her passing was approaching, nothing prepares you for the eventuality. Sadly, we also lost co-founder Al Olson in September. Please read more about these irreplaceable individuals on page 1.

As I reflect on such great losses, what brings me comfort is all that we accomplished during Ginnie's, Ernie's, and Al's lifetimes, far exceeding their collective dreams.

In 2001, the focus was on preservation, building a volunteer corps to conduct visitor tours, and research, scholarship, and publication on the artists and the collections. By 2012, funds had been raised to purchase the site from the Couse family. In 2015, we focused on enhancing the Sharp story by restoring his 1915 studio, which opened to the public in 2017. In that period, we wrote a vision statement: "to be the center of research and scholarship on the Taos Society of Artists."

In 2020 we publicly launched the "Bringing the Legacy to Life" capital campaign to build a research center in Sharp's former home. In 2021,

we moved into The Lunder Research Center, a \$3.6 million state-of-the-art museum facility. Operating the LRC has confirmed that our mission, based on the Taos Society of Artists, had expanded to include all the early artists of Taos and telling an even richer story of Taos and its importance in the shared, multicultural history of America.

A principal challenge we face in meeting our purpose is the need for free and affordable housing for the interns, fellows, contract workers, visiting scholars, students, and artists who come to Taos to conduct research and to experience this unique area firsthand. To solve this issue, a residency program has been in our strategic plan for close to a decade.

A residency program would activate our campus and truly bring the legacy to life. For the coming year, we invite the support and expertise of our valued friends in helping us explore how to realize this final phase of our long-term plan, fulfilling the fondest visions of our founders.

Thank you,
Davison Packard Koenig
Executive Director and Curator



AN UNBROKEN LINE OF AMAZING TAOS ART

KLOSS AND *SUN BROTHERS* EXHIBITIONS DELIGHTED VISITORS

2 Two exhibitions in the Dean Porter Gallery in 2025 showcased art for lovers of Taos and by lovers of Taos, hailing from the past and present. *Legacy in Line: The Art of Gene Kloss* and *Sun Brothers: Dean, Elliott, Hagege in the Land of Enchantment* drew more than 800 visitors each, plus provided a "cherry on the sundae" for hundreds more site-tour participants.



The Kloss exhibition ran April 4 through May 31, with works shown at CSHS and the Harwood Museum of Art, an unprecedented collaboration. A particular highlight at the opening reception was remarks (via streaming video) by collectors Frank and Joy Purcell, who donated the bulk of each museum's Kloss collections. The Purcells lived for many years in the house Gene and her husband built in Taos and became close friends of the artist.

The gallery's summer and fall exhibition, installed after the *iQue Viva! Artes* popup (see page 4), was *Sun Brothers*. All works by the three outstanding contemporary artists, which featured Taos-area landscapes and people, were sold, most through the draw sale and auction at the opening reception. The show remains on view through November 15.



Taos Perspective (triptych), 2025, 12 x 12 in. panels, oil; left to right, Glenn Dean, Josh Elliott, Logan Maxwell Hagege

Autumn: A time to consider our legacies

Dear Friends,

As the year draws to a close, we reflect on challenges overcome and opportunities embraced that have guided our progress. Nearly a year after Ginnie's passing, we look to the future with confidence and purpose. In November, the Board will undertake strategic planning to define our next steps, supported by an expanding Board, strong operations, and a highly skilled and dedicated staff.



Holly Azzari (right) is not afraid of Taos Bigfoot during the Christmas holiday, or any other time.

We give our heartfelt thanks to **Holly Azzari**, longtime Volunteer Coordinator, vice president, and Board member. Holly is stepping away from these roles after many years of dedicated service. While we will miss her presence on the Board, we are grateful to welcome her as Board Member Emerita, which allows her experience and perspective to continue shaping our work.

We also express gratitude to **Robert Berquist** as he leaves the Board after years of service. We trust that Bob and Kris, his wife, will continue to be loyal supporters as they have for well over a decade.

A key focus in the coming year will be expanding charitable planned giving through the launch of the **Couse Legacy Society** (see page 6).

Inspired by Ginnie and Ernie, we know that where there is will and vision, there is a way to support the causes that matter most. Building upon our ongoing **Estate Art Program**, established in 2020, the Legacy Society extends this vision. Legacy gifts provide sustaining support, ensuring that the stories of art, culture, and community stay alive.

The Legacy Society recognizes those who have included the Site in their estate and planned giving. This distinguished circle of supporters guarantees that the Couse-Sharp Historic Site and its collections will be preserved, studied, and shared far into the future. We are deeply grateful to the founding members of the Society, whose foresight and generosity strengthen us and secure our mission.

As you consider your philanthropic journey, we invite you to explore with us the methods of charitable planned giving. By including CSHS in your plans, you help ensure the intertwined histories of Taos and the American West remain vibrant, relevant, and accessible to all.

With gratitude and warm wishes for the year ahead,
Elizabeth Crittenden Palacios
Chair of the Board of Directors



LEADERSHIP

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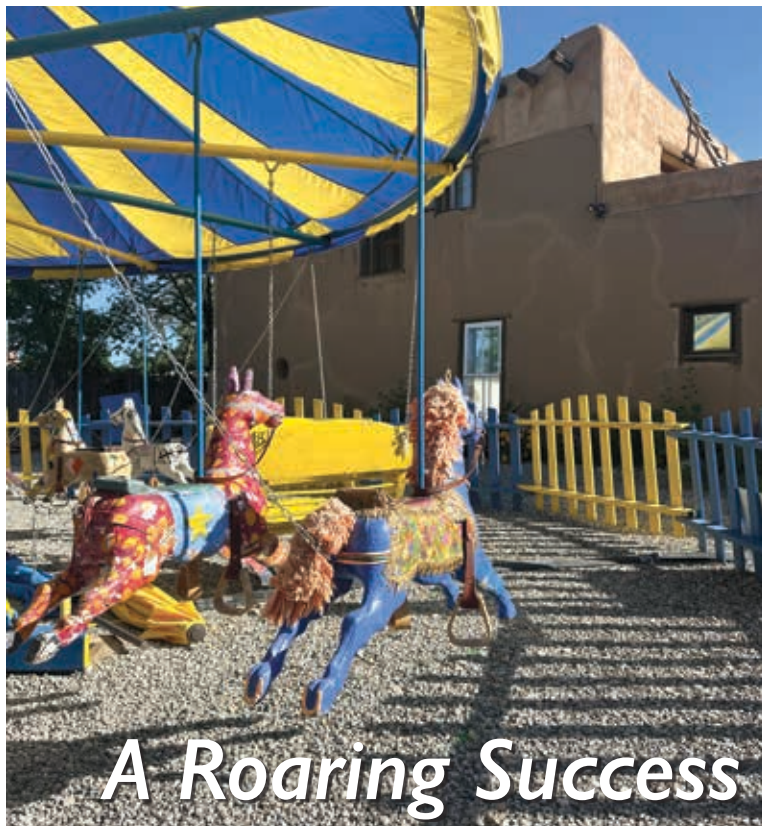
DAWNING POLLEN SHORTY

JOHN SUAZO

RYAN SUAZO

STAFF LIST ON PAGE 9

FIRST BIENNIAL COMMUNITY EVENT WAS



A Roaring Success

¡QUE VIVA!

¡Que Viva! is a celebration of the past, present, and future of the Taos community. The inaugural event was hosted by Couse-Sharp Historic Site June 7 and 8. We estimate at least 500 visitors on Saturday and 200 on Sunday.

Activities included the well-received multimedia exhibition *Timeless Turns: The Legacy of Tío Vivo* about the antique yet still in service carousel, Tío Vivo rides, open house tours of the Historic Site, educational children's activities, local music and dance, artist demonstrations, food, the impressive *¡Que Viva! Artes* exhibition and sale featuring local artists working in a variety of media, classic vehicles on view, and a chance for great door prizes. You can see more details, exhibits, and event images at QueVivaTaos.org.

In addition to our sponsors and partners, we extend a huge thank-you to the event volunteers with Couse-Sharp Historic Site, Taos Lions Club, and the ¡Que Viva! Community Event Committee. We couldn't have done it without you! The next ¡Que Viva! is planned for June 12, 2027. Hope to see you there!



Gabriella Salazar performs June 7 during the ¡Que Viva! main event, one of seven musical and dance performers in the Couse Garden

2025 ¡QUE VIVA! SPONSORS

Lead: LOR Foundation	Oro Level: Taos News	Turquesa Level: 203 Fine Art Hotel Willa Heidi Thorleifson Art & Acute-tremonts Taos Cow	Partners: Lions Club of Taos Arroyo Seco Live Bombon Mante's Chow Cart	Sabor Real Restaurant Southern Exposure Photography Taos Pueblo Tourism Department
Tío Vivo Level: Nusenda Credit Union	Plata Level: Centinel Bank of Taos Taos Ski Valley			

Growing archives leads to growing knowledge

We are delighted that archival material, art, ephemera, and books continue to be donated to the Site to expand our understanding of the early artists of Taos and their context, and to augment the visitor experience. All this material requires processing and cataloging, and we are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers, interns, and fellows to make that happen.

Juliana Trillo (University of Oklahoma) recently completed her fellowship and presented highlights of her experience to volunteers including her independent research project on Long John Dunn, and a pop-up exhibit of his personal effects including his gaming dice and chauffeur's badge on loan from Taos Historic Museums.



OU Fellow Juliana Trillo processing materials in the library

Hannah Rosenberg (Colby College) began her yearlong fellowship with us at the end of July and has begun delving into the 276 letters of Virginia Walker Couse for preliminary research focused on the women of the Couse family as well as cataloging art and historic objects on loan from Taos Historic Museums.

Funded in part by Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area, interns from Taos Center for the Arts Inter-Arts internship program have been processing archives on loan from Taos Historic Museums, which include materials related to many Taos artists and personalities including Blanche Grant, Ila McAfee, Rebecca Salsbury James, and Gerson Gusdorf.



2026 EXHIBITION PREVIEW

Showcasing historic textiles, student photography, top contemporary art

Couse-Sharp Historic Site has another slate of wonderful exhibitions planned for the coming year.

WEAVING THE NEW WORLD

Hispanic Textiles and Their Influence on the Northern Frontier

First up will be *Weaving the New World: Hispanic Textiles and Their Influence on the Northern Frontier*, which demonstrates the unique, rich, and colorful textile traditions that developed in Mexico and in what is now the American Southwest from the encounters of various resident and settler cultures.

The exhibition will interpret examples—many rarely exhibited—of the Native styles but focuses on the region's Hispanic textile traditions, which without the blending of cultures would not have existed. Included will be examples of the famous Saltillo and Rio Grande-style Sarapes, along with Colchas and Mantas from the various traditions and loom types from several hundred years of time. *Weaving the New World* runs December 2, 2025, through March 31, 2026, with a reception the afternoon of December 6.

In its wake, *La Luz de Taos 2026* will open April 17 in the Dean Porter Gallery. Find out more about the contemporary exhibition, sale, and gala on page 6.

SKETCHBOOK: *News in brief*

As our Chair detailed in her column on page 3, **Holly Azzari** and **Robert Berquist** have retired from the board of directors . . . We note with gratitude that **Rich Coffman** has become Vice Chair and **Betty Brownlee** has stepped up to serve as Secretary; two more board members are expected to be confirmed at the November meeting . . . We also highlight additions to our National Advisory Council and Board Advisory Committees since the last *Legacy*: **Doug & Susie Haugen**, **JR Henneman**, **Lenore Macdonald**, **Jeff Murray**, and **Liz Murray** joined the NAC, and **David Scott** and **Don Zillioux** are now serving on committees. CSHS thanks all of our volunteer board members and advisors for their generosity with their time and expertise.

We bid bon voyage in March to Colby College fellow **Mary Bevilacqua** and welcomed in July new fellow **Hannah Rosenberg**. Thanks to them for their work, and to **The Lunder Foundation** for funding the year-long fellowship program with the Maine institution . . . In the archives article on page 4, you'll read more about Hannah's work, our Taos Center for the Arts Inter-Arts interns, and the accomplishments of **Juliana Trillo**, University of Oklahoma summer fellow for 2025 . . . In May and June, we were delighted to have the help of intern **Lila Plaut** from the Milwaukee College of Art and Design, and hope to see her again next year.

In staff news, **Rachel Daley Brown** has returned after a leave of absence as Donor Relations Manager. **Jake Cisneros** has been promoted to Site Manager and Exhibitions Coordinator and also serves as Chair of the Board of the Paseo Project in Taos.

THROUGH THE LENS OF TAOS DAY SCHOOL

On May 1, we'll debut the second edition of the program/exhibition *Through the Lens*, showing the photography of a group of Day School students from Taos Pueblo. The program consists of a weeks-long photography workshop with equipment provided, sponsored by the Taos Pueblo Day School Art Education Fund and Carol & Rich Rinehart, with a resulting exhibition and sale. The work will be on view and available for purchase in the Luna Chapel through the end of September.

IAIA FELLOWSHIP DEBUTS

A new initiative is our project-based fellowship with the **Institute for American Indian Arts** in Santa Fe. Funded by a grant from **Native American Jump Start**, **Imogene Scheele** has launched a Taos Pueblo oral history project on the life and legacy of Ben Lujan, one of E. I. Couse's favorite models and a close associate of the family for decades. Imogene will produce a research report and assessment of the initial phase of the Lujan project.

COUSE LEGACY SOCIETY: A PERPETUAL GIFT TO HISTORY AND ART

Since its inception, bequests and other types of planned gifts have strengthened the Couse-Sharp Historic Site's financial stability, providing vital support for exhibitions, educational programming, and the care of our collection. We now formally recognize such extraordinary dedication through induction into the Couse Legacy Society.

The Society is named after E. I. Couse, Virginia Couse Leavitt, and the entire Couse family in honor of their steadfast commitment to the preservation of the Site. The name reflects the Couse Legacy Society's important role in ensuring that art continues to be celebrated in Taos. As an expression of our gratitude, members receive a variety of exclusive benefits as well.

We hope you will consider joining the Society. There are many ways to include CSHS in your long-term plans that can benefit you and your loved ones, increase income, and reduce taxes, while fulfilling your financial goals. Donors have provided for the CSHS through instruments including wills or trusts, retirement accounts, life income grant arrangements, real estate, and collections of artwork.

The Couse Legacy Society honors the generosity and foresight of those who have left a legacy to support the future of the Site. Their thoughtful dedication provides a dependable foundation of funding to welcome and engage future generations of visitors and to care for the CSHS's grounds, collections, and extraordinary archives.

For more information about the Society, our Estate Art Program, or the Taos Society of Patrons, please call Donor Relations Manager Rachel Daley Brown at 575.249.0561 or email giving@couse-sharp.org.

Every Penny Counts

HELP PRESERVE OUR NATIONAL TREASURE

Financial support of Couse-Sharp Historic Site is not only a gift to the present but also an investment in the future. Every donation to The Couse Foundation is greatly appreciated.

Gold
Transparency
2025

Candid.

WE ARE A GOLD SEAL ORGANIZATION!

The Couse Foundation has achieved the designation of Gold Seal from Guide Star, the world's largest source of information on nonprofits. See our profile at [Guidestar.org](https://www.guidestar.org)

ESTATE ART PROGRAM and COUSE LEGACY SOCIETY

If you collect art and have been contemplating your estate planning, consider our program to coordinate the donation (full or partial) and sale of your artwork, thus enabling you to "do well and do good." Similarly, we invite you to think about CSHS as a potential recipient for other estate elements such as bequests and real estate. Contact us at 575.751.0369 or giving@couse-sharp.org to inquire.

DONATE TODAY!

The Couse Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization; contributions are tax deductible. Donate by credit card via PayPal at couse-sharp.org/donate (or use the QR code in this box). You can also donate by check or credit card with the enclosed remittance envelope to PO Box 1436, Taos NM 87571.

For information about gifts of securities or naming opportunities, see couse-sharp.org/ways-to-give



La Luz de Taos 2026 gala weekend will be June 5–6 in Taos. Watch couse-sharp.org and the gala site, LaLuzdeTaos.org, for the announcement of ticket and art sale ballot availability, and when the exhibition will be on view online and in person! We've already confirmed several exciting artists, including Sean Michael Chavez, John Coleman, and Josh Elliott. We hope to see you there!



La Luz de Taos 2024 fills the Dean Porter Gallery

DONORS TO COUSE-SHARP HISTORIC SITE

SEPTEMBER 2024–AUGUST 2025

Donors with gifts including an in-kind or artwork component are marked with *. Donors with gifts that include a contribution in memory of Virginia Couse Leavitt are marked with ‡. Taos Society of Patrons members are marked with §. The many donors of gifts up to \$999 are listed at couse-sharp.org/news. Every penny counts!

\$50,000 OR MORE

Bedford Family Foundation*
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SPECIAL DONATIONS

In addition to memorial donations marked above, we received many donations in memory of Ginnie Leavitt, Tom Harper, Margaret Phillips, and Claudia Schirmer. Please see a list of those donors at couse-sharp.org/news.

PRICELESS DONATIONS OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS & BOOKS

Maria Akin
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Carl & Rebecca Calvert
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GENEROUS GIFTS TO OUR COLLECTIONS OR ESTATE ART PROGRAM



E. I. Couse, Sketch for *Duck Hunter*, ca. 1914, oil on board, 8 x 10 in.

The Bedford Family Foundation:
E. I. Couse, *The Duck Hunter*, oil on board

Billy Schenck: Billy Schenck, *Ranchos Church*, oil on canvas

Will and Marcia Johnson of Denver: Gene Kloss, *Dance at Domingo*, drypoint and aquatint; Kloss, *Saints Day Processional*, drypoint

David Clemmer in memory of Virginia Couse Leavitt: Four prints, one copperplate

Barbara Brenner: Charles Berninghaus, *Chamisa in Bloom*, oil on board; Bettina Steinke, *Untitled (portrait of Winnie Berninghaus)*, charcoal and pastel on paper

Gift of Rena Rosequist Family: Mary Hoeksens, *Silhouettes*, monoprint

Gary Kravit: Gary Kravit, *Rosie*, oil on canvas

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**HISTORIC ARTISTS'
HOMES & STUDIOS**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

INSIDE

Farewell to Virginia Couse Leavitt and Alan J. Olson

What is iQue Vival and why was it such a hit?

Enhance your legacy along with ours

Weaving the New World opens in December

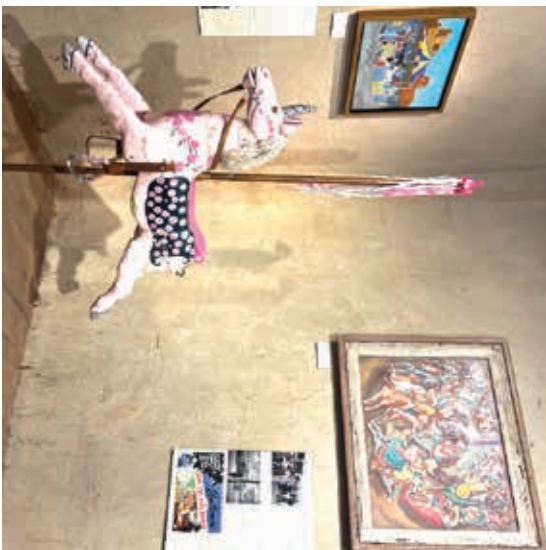
Thank you to volunteers, donors, and sponsors

La Luz de Taos returns June 5–6, 2026

OUR PURPOSE

Through its archives, collections, and programming, the Couse-Sharp Historic Site preserves and interprets Taos' crossroads of cultures, promoting research, education, and new perspectives on the Taos Society of Artists, early artists of Taos, and interpretation of Native communities in relation to the greater story of the multicultural American West.

Timeless Turns: The Legacy of Tio Vivo tells the story of the historic merry-go-round and the art it has inspired for more than a century. Along with the pink unicorn that is part of the carousel, on the right is *Tio Vivo #12*, ca. 1949, by Howard Cook, courtesy Harwood Museum of Art; and *Santiago y Santana*, 2025, by Ryan Suazo (Taos Pueblo). The exhibition and sale (of the contemporary works) runs through October 31.



OCTOBER 2025 | FALL
THE LEGACY