

**Enchantment Beyond Route 66**

Like most SCA members attending the 2008 conference in Albuquerque, I'm looking forward to seeing friends, filling my camera's memory card with cool Route 66 images, savoring the aroma of freshly roasted chili peppers along the roadside, and enjoying cheese enchiladas topped with fried eggs over easy—a regional twist on an old favorite. I'll also, in homage to my first trip to the Land of Enchantment way back when, keep a sharp eye out for a morada—the house of worship of an unusual religious group found only in the region north of the “Duke City.”

A “whirlwind of adventure” best describes my initial visit to New Mexico in 1980 when I motored around the state in a Vega station wagon with three friends. After two fun-filled days, we started the long drive back to Denver and, after dinner in Albuquerque, headed north into the Rio Grande Valley of north-central New Mexico. It was in this isolated place where our resident raconteur, John Burbank, made a statement sure to grab the attention of the vehicle's

exhausted, bleary-eyed occupants. “I hope this oil-burning Vega doesn't break down,” he said, pausing for effect in the pre-dawn darkness, “because these mountains around us, the Sangre de Christos, were the last stronghold of the blood-thirsty Penitente Brotherhood!”

“The what?!” we responded, intrigued but ever suspicious that he was pulling our leg.

Although Burbank's initial statement was embellished for maximum impact—the gore was self-inflicted—later research would reveal his story correct. Of Native American

and Hispanic origin, the Los Hermanos Penitente were a Roman Catholic brotherhood whose fundamental principle was that sin could only be expiated by suffering, and that forgiveness was most surely obtained by self-inflicted torture. Their 18th-century rituals included fasting, self-flagellation, and even crucifixions. In 1888, these ceremonies were witnessed by Charles Lummis, a writer who stumbled upon a Penitente procession at Easter. His coverage and shocking photos of the Holy Week rituals were carried by newspapers nationwide. Eventually moderating their rituals, the Penitente reconciled with the Church in 1947. They remain active in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado where their moradas—usually plain, windowless adobe buildings with a simple cross above the lone entrance—can still be found.

This tale about the Penitente Brotherhood is to remind readers that, although there's no doubt the SCA Albuquerque conference is going to be an amazing trip down Route 66—one of the world's most famous highways

lined with oodles of stunning neon signs and curious roadside attractions sure to satisfy the most demanding commercial archeologist—there's so much more to New Mexico. For those of you driving to Albuquerque, or who have the luxury of spending additional time in the area, don't forget about the many unique roadside



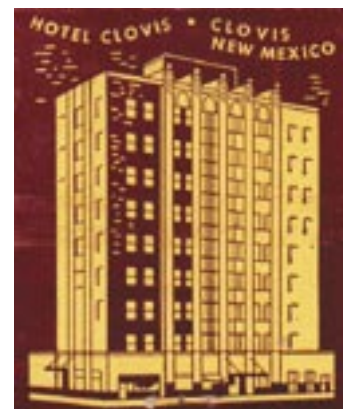
sights—Penitente moradas or other more traditional SCA fare—found along the state's other highways.

Another exciting road for commercial archeologists in New Mexico is U.S. 70, nicknamed “the Broadway of America” for its popularity as a transcontinental route that once ran from Atlantic, N.C. to Los Angeles, Calif. In New Mexico, the highway runs from Clovis, near the Texas

border, southwest through the towns of Portales, Roswell, Ruidoso, Tularosa, and Alamogordo before crossing the White Sands Missile Range. At Las Cruces, U.S. 70 joins with Interstate 10 and heads west through Deming and Lordsburg before splitting off to the northwest near the Arizona border. The highway's charms—and photo opportunities—are numerous, but there's one stop in particular where you'll want to do more than get out your camera: Lordsburg.

At first glance, Lordsburg is a sleepy, somewhat forlorn town with a multitude of fast food franchises sprouting around its three freeway interchanges. Additional exploration

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OPPOSITE: 1940 postcard advertising U.S. Highway 70 thru New Mexico.

THIS PAGE: Clovis Hotel matchbook, Lyceum Theater, Zia Lodge, and Alamo Motel, all in Clovis, N.M. — *All images courtesy the author.*



*Hotel Hidalgo*  
Lordsburg, New Mexico

Air Conditioned • Free Parking  
Coffee Shop • Cocktail Lounge  
Rates from \$3.00 with Bath

**MILEAGE TABLE**  
From Lordsburg

WEST		WEST	
VIA U. S. 80	Miles	VIA U. S. 70	Miles
Douglas .....	99	Coolidge Dam .....	142
Bisbee .....	124	Globe .....	167
Benson .....	175	Miami .....	174
Tucson .....	225	Phoenix .....	260
Casa Grande .....	291	Blythe .....	448
Phoenix .....	351	Los Angeles .....	689
Gila Bend .....	427	<b>EAST</b>	
Yuma .....	547	VIA U. S. 80—U. S. 90	
El Centro .....	607	El Paso .....	164
San Diego .....	727	Van Horn .....	283
Los Angeles .....	818	Marfa .....	357
<b>WEST</b>		Del Rio .....	588
U. S. 80 VIA CUTOFF		San Antonio .....	744
Benson .....	115	Houston .....	957
Tucson .....	165	New Orleans .....	1356
Casa Grande .....	231	<b>EAST</b>	
Gila Bend .....	290	U. S. 80	
Yuma .....	409	El Paso .....	164
El Centro .....	469	Van Horn .....	283
San Diego .....	591	Pecos .....	375
Los Angeles .....	689	Abilene .....	616
<b>WEST</b>		Mineral Wells .....	727
VIA U. S. 70		Fort Worth .....	775
Duncan .....	36	Dallas .....	808
Safford .....	78	Texarkana .....	1002

**NAT GAMMON**  
Manager

We Recommend This Hotel

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reveals a charming roadside strip along the Interstate 10 Business Route—old U.S. Highway 70. Also known as Railroad Avenue, the street parallels the main rail line of what was the Southern Pacific before its acquisition by Union Pacific.

Located on the proverbial “other side of the tracks” is a Lordsburg institution: El Charro Restaurant. This café is everything you’d want in a roadside stop: a classic neon sign, a mural on the façade, worn but charming art deco tables adorned with boomerang patterns, a pool table, jukebox, reasonable prices, full bar, and most importantly—the best chili rellenos I’ve ever found.

During one memorable autumn stop long ago, with the chili peppers fresh from Hatch, N.M., I ordered so many of these delectable treats (green Anaheim-variety chili peppers roasted, then stuffed with cheese and covered in an egg batter and fried) that the curious chef came out from the kitchen to personally meet this strange gringo with an insatiable appetite for his rellenos.

By all means, if you’re in the vicinity, plan for a meal at this classic establishment. Don’t worry about what time you

stop there, as the café is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I can’t guarantee a tableside visit by the chef, but I’ll be surprised if you don’t enjoy the ambiance and your meal. ●



OPPOSITE: Roswell Motor Supply, Roswell, N.M.; Pioneer Tavern, near Clovis; Butterfield Stage Motel, Deming; Mileage Chart from Hotel Hidalgo, Lordsburg, NM.

THIS PAGE: Navajo Motel postcard, Roswell; El Charro Restaurant, Lordsburg, with Maureen Towne at an outside mural.

