

# Los Alamos Historical Society

## Newsletter

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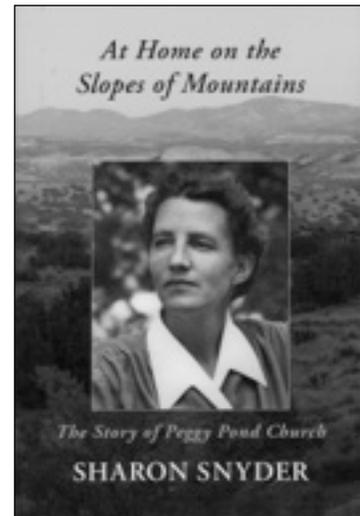
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Excerpt From Peggy Pond Church Biography

## At Home on the Slopes of Mountains

*On November 8, the Los Alamos Historical Society proudly released the long-awaited biography, At Home on the Slopes of Mountains: The Story of Peggy Pond Church, by Sharon Snyder. The hardcover book is \$30. It is available in the Museum or on our website, <http://www.shop.losalamoshistory.org>. Excerpts of the book begin on page 4.*



## Ground Broken for New Archives Facility



**Historical Society Director Emeritus Hedy Dunn, Executive Director Heather McClenahan, and Los Alamos County Council Chair Sharon Stover shovel dirt for the groundbreaking of the new Los Alamos County Municipal Building, which will include a new Los Alamos Historical Museum Archives. Staff, board members, and volunteers are working with architects and county employees on the design. The building is expected to be complete in October 2013. (Photo by John Ruminer)**

## Lectures for 2011-2012



**Los Alamos National Bank-sponsored Lecture Series.** All lectures are at 7:30 p.m. in the Pajarito Room of Fuller Lodge.

**December 13:** Las Conchas Panel Discussion: Join those who were in the thick of battling the fire and its aftermath.

**January 10, 2012:** Mary Mortensen Diecker, "It's fun! It's History! It's New Mexico!" Celebrate the state's centennial with stories and fun facts about the Land of Enchantment with this speaker, sponsored by the New Mexico Humanities Council.

**February 14:** James Hopkins, "Los Alamos, the Manhattan Project, and J. Robert Oppenheimer." A professor of history at

Southern Methodist University, Dr. Hopkins leads summer students to Los Alamos every year to learn about the community's history. He will talk about the defining event of Los Alamos history.

**March 13:** John Hopkins, "Los Alamos and the Cold War." Hopkins, retired Associate Director for Nuclear Weapons at Los Alamos National Laboratory, helped win the Cold War. He will talk about the role Los Alamos played in this often-overlooked segment of history.

**April 10:** Terry Foxx and John Hogan, "Los Alamos Then and Now." Ecologists and conservationists Foxx and Hogan will share how the landscape of the Pajarito Plateau has changed over the last 100+ years.

**May 8, 6 p.m.:** Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social featuring Richard Melzer. A history professor at UNM-Valencia and one of our most popular speakers, Melzer will talk about "New Mexico's Struggle for Statehood Featuring Political Cartoons Before 1912 Concerning New Mexico's Image."

## Programs for 2011-2012

### Museum Exhibits

**December 1-31:** *Community Photographs of Las Conchas Fire*

**January 1-February 29, 2012:** *100 Years of Los Alamos History: Community Connections* (in conjunction with Mesa Public Library)

**March 1-31:** *Inspired Excellence—Marie Curie and Lise Meitner*, an exhibit from the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History

**April 1-May 31:** *Los Alamos Then and Now—An Environmental History*

**June 1-July 31:** *Pot Sherds*

### Brown Bag with the Collection

**February 7, 2012:** Ceramics in the Collection

**May 1, 2012:** 2nd Annual What's In Your Historic Collection?

**August 7, 2012:** Textiles in the Collection

**November 6, 2012:** TBA

Watch your newsletters for more information!

## In Memoriam: Agnew and Ramsey

### Reprinted from Los Alamos National Laboratory

Beverly Agnew, the wife of the Laboratory's third director, Harold Agnew, died October 11 in Solana Beach, California, where the Agnews have lived for more than 30 years.

Beverly Agnew was a Manhattan Project employee who worked in the office of J. Robert Oppenheimer. She also served as Robert Bacher's secretary in the Physics Division and in the former Gadget Division. Harold Agnew, now age 90, was the laboratory's director from 1970 to 1979.

Born in Trinidad, Colorado, Beverly Agnew graduated from South Denver High School and the University of Denver. After the war, Mrs. Agnew raised two children and was



**Beverly Agnew's 1945 badge photo. (Photo from the Los Alamos Historical Archives)**

devoted to public service. She served on the New Mexico Board of Education and also was an accomplished artist, with her paintings and other works appearing in

local galleries.

In 1979, the Agnews moved to Solana Beach, California, where she continued her artwork and involvement in community activities. She excelled at tennis and bridge and was an active member of the Lomas Santa Fe Country Club.

She is survived by Harold Agnew, daughter Nancy Chapman and son John, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Laboratory retiree John C. Hopkins, who led Los Alamos's weapons program under former director Donald Kerr, described Beverly Agnew as a friend, a colleague, and to many, a mentor. "She was very bright and almost always cheerful. For some years I knew her but had no idea who Harold was. Eventually that oversight was corrected and my wife, Adele, and I became close friends with both Harold and Beverly," said Hopkins. "She was a charming hostess and was noted far and wide as a superb chef. All our lives have been enriched by her many contributions to our community."

### Reprinted from LANL Highlights and the Los Angeles Times

Norman F. Ramsey, 96, Manhattan Project pioneer and Nobel Prize-winning physicist, died November 4 in Wayland, Mass. Ramsey, whose research led to the creation of the atomic clock and MRI machines, developed a precise method to probe the structure of atoms and molecules. In October 1943, Ramsey formed the laboratory group responsible for delivering atomic weapons and also played an important role in selecting and modifying the bombers that would be used to deliver the weapons. The work was consolidated under Project Alberta, which was led by Laboratory Associate Director William "Deak" Parsons. Ramsey served as the project's deputy group leader. He briefed Enola Gay pilot Paul Tibbetts upon Tibbetts's appointment as head of the 509th Composite Group and sent the message informing General Leslie Groves that the Hiroshima attack had been a success. After the World War II, Ramsey taught at Harvard for nearly four decades. After learning he had won the Nobel Prize, Ramsey attributed his long interest in science to the fact that "it's fun."

# Excerpts from *New Peggy Pond Church Biography*

## *From Chapter 3, The Michigan Years*

Ashley, Hazel, and year-old Peggy stayed with the elder Pond upon their arrival in Michigan, but they soon moved to nearby Bloomfield Hills, living there only long enough for a large two-story country home to be built on the shores of nearby Three Mile Lake. Ashley was well aware of his father's expectations and strongly felt the burden of the family name resting on his shoulders. Yielding to that responsibility, he accepted a position as vice-president of the Auto-Commercial Company of Pontiac and attempted to settle into the kind of life his father envisioned. He had returned to the scene of his unhappy childhood and resumed the role of dutiful son. Peggy commented on



**Peggy with her cherished teddy bear, Wahb, named for the bear in a popular 1900 book by Ernest Thompson Seton. (Photo courtesy of Peggy Pond Church Estate)**

the shaping influence that Ashley Sr. had in his son's life. "I could imagine my father," she said, "surviving son of a wealthy and presumably doting father. The great house on the corner of Woodward and Watson in Detroit, darkened with heavy draperies, filled to overflowing with its display of material possessions. [His] mother had died when he was seventeen, still in prep school.

The dour old man left alone with his only son and daughter. The daughter who kept his house, to whom Emily Post was god." It was not a setting to Ashley's liking, but he tried to adapt.

Just more than a year after moving to Michigan, Hazel gave birth to a second daughter, Dorothy, born May 20, 1906. For two-year-old Peggy, life changed in a major way. "I have no recollection at all of her presence until she was able to toddle," said Peggy of her little sister, but "after that, until I was about six, many of my memories are connected with an intense jealousy of her because she was amiable and good-humored and everything that I seemed to have been told I was not but ought to be." She was deeply wounded by her parents' reaction to the new baby. Evidence of her feelings of rejection still showed later in life when Peggy wrote her poem entitled "Sister."

*Until you came  
I had been the one and only;  
played with, recited rhymes to,  
scolded*

She referred to herself as "the unloved elder sister," and lamented,

*When you came along it was evident  
you were the golden-haired true  
princess.*

Ashley doted on blonde-haired, blue-eyed Dorothy, and Hazel was obvious in her special affection for a son born two years later. Unintentional or not, they created a devastating situation in which Peggy felt herself to be the extra child. As a result, there were few meaningful times with her parents as Peggy grew up. The most lighthearted childhood memory she retained was of something that happened when she was very young. "I think how it is the

moments of joy we remember through our lives," she wrote. "I remember a humorous game with father and mother and some pillow throwing when I was, perhaps, not more than three. Mother and father and child united in an interlude of pure fun." No other such instances of togetherness are recorded in her daily journals.

Another incident that Peggy recalled from childhood revealed just how much she wanted a closeness with her parents. "I was mortally afraid of crossing bridges," she admitted. "There was one footbridge I was especially afraid of where our nurse used to take us to walk. She was a devout Irish Catholic, and she gave me a holy card showing a guardian angel hovering protectively above a child crossing a tiny bridge over a black abyss. That picture was a great comfort to me. I used to sleep with it under my pillow and to rely on it for all the comfort my parents never gave me and which I so deeply craved."

In 1906, a person who would make a lasting impression on Peggy reentered her life. Ashley persuaded Albert and Gertie Horton to come to Michigan. They accompanied a shipment of horses from the New Mexico ranch so that Ashley could "show what western horses were like." Albert remained to work for Pond for a few months, and Gertie again helped with three-year-old Peggy as well as seven-month-old Dorothy, by then known as Dottie. She was a natural with the children, and Peggy came to love and respect her. The warmth Peggy felt for Gertie remained even after she had grown up and lost touch with her. In 1976, when Peggy was researching her family history, she began to look for Gertie and found her living in Craig, Colorado, where she and Albert had homesteaded in 1908. Gertie recounted stories from both Watrous and Three Mile Lake and filled in gaps in Peggy's memory of her younger years. Despite her advancing age, Gertie's mind was sharp and full of details. "When we landed in Detroit," she

recalled, "we had your grandfather's address—Woodward Ave—and we went to his house. The butler took us in. We had lake trout for dinner. Oh, so good."



*On a chilly May evening in 1977, in the high country of Colorado, three elderly women sat around a kitchen table, finishing a good supper. Gertie, the woman who had once been Gertrude Tipton, born in the brick house in Boone Valley and married to Albert Horton, was ninety years old. Peggy, once a toddler in Gertie's care, had raised three sons and become a grandmother, but at that moment the years didn't matter very much. The important thing was the love the two women still felt for each other and for those shared days almost three quarters of a century before. Gertie's daughter, Iva, was nearing seventy herself but still doing the lambing and other chores on the ranch. She cleared the dishes as she listened intently.*

*In the glow of the wood-paneled room, Gertie's eyes sparkled as she talked of her youthful days in Michigan. "Your father met us at your grandfather's house and took us to Bloomfield Hills, about four miles from Pontiac, but we didn't live there more than a few months before we moved into that big, luxurious house at Three Mile Lake. The new house was four or five miles from Bloomfield Hills. Albert and I lived in the big house. We had a room on the east side, next to the nursery. Your mother's and dad's room was on the other side, but your mother took care of you at night."*

*Peggy remembered no such nightly care. In fact she once said in a poem,*

*If I cried at night I can remember no one  
who came to comfort, but rather only to  
rebuke my nightmares.  
Who was it told me, 'Stop crying. You  
must not wake the baby?'*

(Continued on next page)

## Peggy Pond Church Biography Excerpts, Continued

*She kept the thoughts to herself, not wanting to disrupt the flow of Gertie's story.*

*"Do you remember the woman who did the cooking?" Gertie asked. "She used to come out on Monday morning and stay till Saturday. She was a good cook. She made wonderful creamed codfish. I never ate anything like it. We all ate together." Gertie stopped for a moment, and her memories flowed in another direction. "I always thought your mother was a pretty woman," she said. "And she was a good mother. She wanted children to mind. Always wanted a boy."*

*She got her boy, after you left to go to Colorado, Peggy reminded Gertie, but the older woman was already recalling other images.*

*"Your mother and dad were devoted. I can remember seeing them in the yard with arms around each other. Made me feel*



**Peggy has a good hold on little sister, Dottie, as Mom takes them for a ride in their Hupmobile Runabout, ca. 1909-1910. (Photo from the Los Alamos Historical Museum Archives)**

*good." Peggy nodded and smiled but knew secretly that the devotion hadn't lasted.*

*"They had lots of company out at the lake," Gertie added.*

*Those months must have been an exciting time for Gertie compared to the small town life she had known in Watrous, Peggy thought. Her mother had enjoyed the years in Michigan. Past the carefree childhood days on the Clyde, Hazel had never particularly liked the western scene. None of the women in the family had.*

*"My husband didn't want to go to Michigan," Gertie was saying. "Mr. Pond coaxed him."*

*That was my father, Peggy thought, nodding in agreement. Always good at persuading people to do what he wanted. She watched Gertie closely as she related story after story, taking her life beyond the Michigan years and telling of her homesteading days with Albert in the mountains of Colorado. Gertie had experienced a hard life but had triumphed. Words began to form in Peggy's mind.*

*At night  
your face is still beautiful,  
You are not wrinkled  
nor stooped, nor scarcely shriveled.  
Your strong bones  
hold you erect still.  
Your eyes are the color of mountain  
water,  
hazel eyes, the same color, I remember  
as my mother's.*



*From Chapter 8, Uprooted*

Peggy left Los Angeles with difficult issues to face as well as the serious work ahead to help Ferm set up the Los Alamos School in Taos. She had admitted to Ted months

earlier that she and Ferm had never had aspirations of running a school or of Ferm being a headmaster, but, she added, “there doesn’t seem to be anyone else to do it!—and we don’t want to let a good cause die.” Those words were written with cautious optimism in February as she and Ferm planned for a new school, still not knowing at that time if they could get the necessary backing to make their plan a reality. “Hurry up and get the war over, will you,” she told Ted, “so you can come back and help us if we do!”

Staffing the school would be difficult, but the greatest stumbling block was money. In the spring, Ferm consulted Hitchcock and others about acquiring funds from the Los Alamos Foundation, the controlling entity for the Ranch School’s assets. Recent action by the foundation had provided pensions for a few long-term administrators and masters from the school, but the main mission was to support education. With that in mind, funds were allocated to the restart effort in Taos. Not many months before, money had been made available to former Ranch School master Tommy Waring to move his Waring School for younger boys from Santa Fe to less-crowded quarters in Pojoaque. Thus, the foundation had hopes for two schools to carry on the Los Alamos educational traditions.

By the time Peggy got to New Mexico, Ferm had rented the buildings and grounds of the Sagebrush Inn south of Taos for the new campus, and he had found an old adobe home for sale in Ranchos de Taos, a rural community not far from the school. The house needed work, but its character suited Peggy’s sense of tradition perfectly. She and the boys set to work on the house at the same time Ferm and those same two boys began making needed improvements at the school site. Hugh and Allen helped build corrals and a tennis court and renovated an existing adobe building for a tack room at the Sagebrush Inn, and when they weren’t working for their father, Peggy had them



**Hugh, Peggy, and Ferm pose in the doorway of their home in Ranchos de Taos, an old, traditional adobe. (Photo courtesy of Peggy Pond Church Estate)**

planting trees, lending a hand with construction of a wooden garage, and building a fence on their new property. Those were the major outside chores, but inside a more tedious task awaited them.



*She said, raising a fastidious brow,  
Your floors are made of dirt!*

*Indeed, the floors of the Ranchos house were dirt, but so were the floors of many old northern New Mexico adobe homes built before the twentieth century. It was not a disgrace, as Peggy’s out-of-state visitor implied, but a part of the traditional architecture of early Hispanic colonists who began settling New Mexico in the seventeenth century. They brought with*

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## Peggy Pond Church Biography Excerpts, Continued

*them the wooden forms for making adobes from the mud of the new land, and to their homes made of the sun-dried bricks they added such embellishments as carved corbels and posts along shaded portals and lush flower gardens in interior courtyards. They imported not only remnants of their Spanish-Moorish background but also a gracious style of living that reflected their roots. For Peggy, the Ranchos house embodied all of that.*

*Yes, made of dirt, I said,  
of earth mixed well with straw  
that once was a sunned field  
mellowed and rotted to pliability  
by the skilled chemistry of rain.*

*The heritage that made New Mexico unique found its way into many of Peggy's poems. In the late summer of 1944, that much-loved heritage slipped easily into some lines about her dirt floors. She was pleased with her "new" Taos home, but as anyone who has lived in an adobe with dirt floors will tell you, the upkeep is not the pleasing element. The walls of an adobe must be remudded with regularity, and the floors require a special treatment to keep them sealed to prevent erosion and wear. The floors in the Ranchos house had not known such attention. They were worn, and the dirt was thin in places.*

*An old man, laughing, mixed it,  
stirred dirt and water to an almost fluid  
boggy consistency, carried it in pails  
indoors. An old woman laid it  
deftly smooth between four white walls,  
kneaded and leveled it and smoothed it,  
with only a skilled eye to measure it,  
only two good firm hands to marry it  
to the hard ribs of earth beneath.*

*The rebuilding of the floors had to begin immediately, before furniture could be moved in. In addition to her own efforts, she had a ready, if less-than-willing, pair of helpers. Two strong young sons! Thinking of the long days on hands and knees, she built her poem as she and the boys rebuilt the floor.*

*She washed it often  
with water and a grimy piece of  
sheep's wool, pressed it harder,  
firmer . . .*

*Buckets of mud mixed with straw were hauled in and smoothed and leveled into the thinning sections. The settlers of earlier centuries had applied animal blood to the drying floor as a sealant, giving their floors a rich red color, but Peggy's floors were sealed with multiple applications of linseed oil and turpentine. It took many days of coating the floor and waiting for the oil and spirits to season and dry.*

*Yes, they are made of dirt,  
my floors. They say the Lord God  
formed man of the same stuff.  
I walk upon them  
reverently, most often without shoes,  
feeling the holy oneness of all living.*

*After a while the furnishings were moved into the restored rooms and they were occupied. Visitors could be entertained, but only those with knowledge of the old Southwest understood—and appreciated.*

*My visitor's lifted eyebrows  
frowned still, spurning still the humble  
dust-colored texture of my floors.  
I think her ashes  
will rest in a cold urn, well  
mausoleumed,*

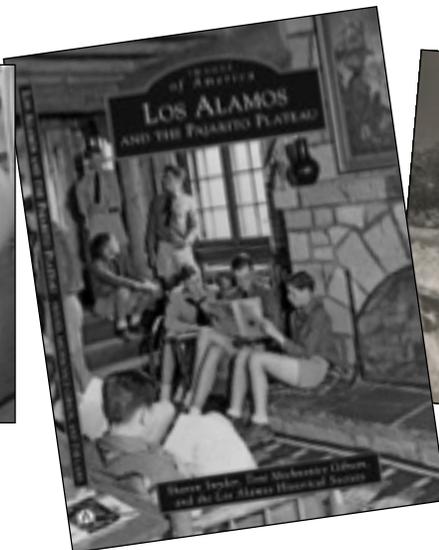
*for centuries after mine have joined the  
living  
passionate texture of earth . . .*



In getting the school stocked and ready, one item was necessary above all others for the success of a ranch school: horses! The government had commandeered the Los Alamos Ranch School horses the year before and used them for mounted security patrols in the first months of the Manhattan Project, but the horse patrols were eventually cut back. In mid-summer of 1944, Ferm Church and Tommy Waring bought back some of the school's stock, and in August, Ferm, Allen, Hugh, and former master Manuel Diaz, drove a dozen of the horses to Taos from Pojoaque. Hugh Church, a twelve-year-old that summer, remembered sixty years later the route they took. For him, the excitement of the horse drive marked his first official task as a student at the new Los Alamos

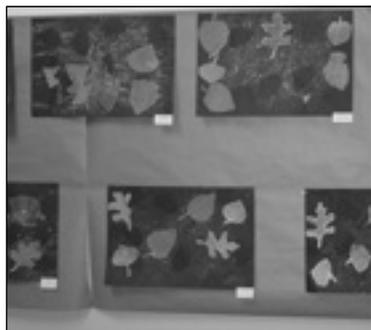
School in Taos, something that he had thought the previous year he would never be. He and the other drovers took the horses on the high road through Chimayó and Truchas and into Peñasco, where they put up their herd for the night in a forest ranger's pasture. The next day, Hugh recalled, "we deviated from the highway and went over the pass west of U.S. Hill and down Miranda Canyon into Ranchos." The entire journey led them through a historical adventure in northern New Mexico, but in the last miles they retraced a route that men and horses had traveled for almost three centuries—a northern extension of El Camino Real, the Royal Road that once connected Mexico City with the early settlements in the Rio Grande Valley. It was a passage not only for settlers and livestock but for a language and a culture. Fermor Church, Manuel Diaz, and the two boys were most likely among the last drovers to bring horses over that route into Taos.

## Museum Shop has Great Gifts for the Season



With new book titles, notecards featuring scenes from Los Alamos history, and gift items, the Los Alamos Historical Museum Shop has something for everyone this holiday season. Members receive a 10 percent discount, and sales support the Museum and other programs of the Los Alamos Historical Society. Shop early and often!

## News Briefs



### Aspen School Features *The Forest and the Fire* in Art Exhibit

Second grade students of art teacher Mary Grace at Aspen Elementary

School read *The Forest and The Fire*, a book published by the Los Alamos Historical Society. Then they created aspen leaf art projects that reflected their experiences with the Las Conchas fire.

### Christmas Tree Permits Will Not Be Sold at Historical Museum This Year

Because of the Las Conchas Fire, the U.S. Forest Service has fewer Christmas tree permits than in past years. As a result, the Forest Service has enough staffing in its own office to handle the load, and permits will not be sold at the Historical Museum as they have in past years. Please contact the Forest Service in Los Alamos at 667-5120 or the

Espanola office at 753-7331 for more information.

### Looking for Outreach Suitcase Items

The Historical Society's outreach suitcase program is nearing 25 years of age. Over that time, some items have been lost or wandered away. We are especially looking for hands-on artifacts, slide carousels, and 35 mm slides for archaeology, homesteading, the Manhattan Project, and early Los Alamos. If you know of the whereabouts of any of the original items or possible replacements, please contact Museum Educator Bryan O'Hare at 505-695-5251.

### What Do You Remember About 109 E. Palace Avenue?

The University of California had five offices around the patio at 109 E. Palace during World War II. Some are now occupied by The Rainbow Man shop, and one is vacant. Do you remember which one was Dorothy McKibbin's office? If so, we'd love to talk to you. Please call our office at 505-662-6272 or e-mail [heather@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:heather@losalamoshistory.org).

## Los Alamos Historical Society Staff

Executive Director Heather McClenahan  
662-6272 [heather@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:heather@losalamoshistory.org)

Museum Specialist Judith Stauber  
662-6272 [judith@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:judith@losalamoshistory.org)

Museum Shop Manager Kathy Ankeny  
662-5250 [museumshop@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:museumshop@losalamoshistory.org)

Museum Educator Bryan O'Hare  
695-5251 [educator@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:educator@losalamoshistory.org)

Archivist Rebecca Collinsworth  
695-5252 [archives@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:archives@losalamoshistory.org)

Registrar Stephanie Yeaman  
695-5253 [registrar@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:registrar@losalamoshistory.org)

Publications Dept. Diane Starkovich  
662-2660 [publications@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:publications@losalamoshistory.org)

## Mission

The Los Alamos Historical Society preserves, promotes, and communicates the remarkable history and inspiring stories of Los Alamos and its people for our community, for the global audience, and for future generations.

## Vision

Los Alamos Historical Society is respected worldwide as the source and repository for the compelling history of Los Alamos and its people from prehistory to contemporary times.

## WINTERFEST, DEC. 3, 2011

### ENCHANTED HOLIDAYS

Join in the community-wide celebration of WinterFest at the Fuller Lodge Open House, sponsored by the Los Alamos Arts Council and the Los Alamos Historical Society. A full day of fun, entertainment, and food is planned. It's also a great time to get gifts and stocking stuffers for everyone on your list while supporting local, non-profit organizations.

WinterFest events will be happening all over town. Visit the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce website at [fyila.com](http://fyila.com) for more details.



**With lights, greenery, and a little fun, Fuller Lodge is always spectacularly decorated for the holidays. Join the celebration on Saturday, Dec. 3.**

### WinterFest Schedule (subject to change)

10:00 a.m.	Chamisa Singings
11:00 a.m.	Los Alamos High School Band
11:30 a.m.	Lads of Enchantment Barbershop Quartet
11:30-1:00 p.m.	Posole lunch and Visit with Los Alamos Living Treasures
Noon-1:00 p.m.	Holiday Music with Frances Meir
1:00 p.m.	New Mexico Dance Theater
2:00 p.m.	Holiday Sing-a-long, Los Alamos Arts Council cookies and punch



**The Los Alamos Historical Society will have gift items, books, and stocking stuffers for sale throughout the day at WinterFest. Boy Scout Troop 71 (some adult helpers at left) will sell Christmas wreaths, and the Los Alamos High School Band Boosters (below) will sell poinsettias. Also on hand will be the Empty Bowls Project, Friends of the Los Alamos Animal Shelter, and the Pajarito Environmental Education Center.**



### The Los Alamos Historical Society and Museum

Open free of charge every day except New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Winter: Mon.-Fri. 10-4, Sat. 11-4, Sun. 1-4

Summer: Mon.-Fri. 9:30-4:30, Sat. 11-4, Sun 1-4

**Address:**

P.O. Box 43, 1050 Bathtub Row  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

**Administrative Offices:** 505-662-6272

**Archives:** 505-695-5252

**Museum Educator:** 505-695-5251

**Publications:** 505-662-2660

**Shop Manager:** 505-695-5250

**Email:** *historicalsociety@losalamoshistory.org*

**Website:** *www.losalamoshistory.org*

**Online shop:** *www.shop.losalamoshistory.org*

**Facebook:** Search for Los Alamos Historical Museum

**Twitter:** *twitter.com/losalamosmuseum*

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### Los Alamos Historical Society 2011-2012 Membership

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Gift \_\_\_\_\_ Donation

Heritage Benefactor \$2,500+

Heritage Supporter \$1,000-\$2,499

Heritage Contributor \$500-\$999

Heritage Friend \$100-\$499

Family \$50

Individual \$40

Student/Senior Individual \$35

Youth, 18 and under \$10

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Additional Contribution

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_