

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WNMU MUSEUM EXHIBITION TELLS EARLY HISTORY OF WNMU

Silver City, NM – Did you know that Western New Mexico University sits on 20 acres of land donated to the Board of Regents of the Normal School in 1893 by the Town of Silver City? Did you know that the first president of the board of Regents was D. P. Carr, the Town of Silver City Assessor?

Learn about the people that bind a municipality and an institution of higher learning in Western New Mexico University Museum's newest exhibition, *Aspiration, Politics and Willpower: The People behind the Formation of the Normal School at Silver City*. The exhibit's opening reception is Friday, February 10 at 4:30 p.m. in the WNMU Museum.

Aspiration, Politics and Willpower reveals the history, the politics, and struggles during the early 1890s as citizens of Silver City pursued establishment of a Normal School in Silver City. Included in the exhibition are artifacts such as the original box and contents buried during the laying of the cornerstone ceremony at Old Main on September 14, 1894, a white gown and shoes worn by female graduates, and personal chalkboards and teaching materials from the Training School where area school children went to school and teachers in training practiced.

Photographs and newspapers articles highlight Silver City citizens such as Silver City Mayor John W. Fleming and Mrs. Elizabeth Warren, both icons across the New Mexico Territory and the nation, and state politicians such as Representative Albert B. Fall (Las Cruces) and Representative Felix Martinez (Las Vegas), whom were instrumental in the establishment and the development of the Normal School at Silver City during the Territorial Legislature of 1893.

The exhibition discloses little known facts, such as Representative Felix Martinez's last minute adjustment to Council Bill 20, authored by Representative Albert B. Fall, to include Las Vegas as the home of another Normal School giving birth to what is now called New Mexico Highlands University in the same legislation as Western New Mexico University.

Starting as a small mining camp after small deposits of silver ore were found at Boston Hill in the 1870s and more lucrative silver ore deposits were found in nearby Chloride Flats and Fleming Camp, Silver City is known for developing with an eye towards permanence and progress. As the oldest incorporated community in New Mexico, this

territorial frontier mining town through the actions of its citizenry can boast having early electric and telephone services, railroad connections and a hospital, the first waterworks to provide water to its residents, New Mexico's first independent school system in, established in 1882, and the laying of the cornerstone of New Mexico's first Normal School in 1894.

The exhibition opening is part of the 2012 WNMU Founders Day celebration and a State of New Mexico Centennial Event. The exhibition reception theme and refreshments will be consistent with the Victorian era. Visitors have the option of attending in period dress. At 5:00 p.m., University Museum Director Dr. Cynthia Ann Bettison will provide short welcoming remarks. The exhibition is funded in part by student fees from the Associated Students of WNMU.

A State of New Mexico Centennial Exhibition, *Aspiration, Politics and Willpower* will run from February 10, 2012 through July 15, 2012. For more information about this exhibition, please contact Acting Assistant Director and Curator of Education & History, Phillip Cave at 575-538-6386 or at cavep@wnmu.edu.

Western New Mexico University Museum is open Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am to 4:30 p.m. It is closed university holidays. Admission is free. The University Museum is located at the top of 10 Street within the university campus and is handicap accessible. For more information about the University Museum, upcoming exhibitions, and events, please visit www.wnmuseum.org.



Pictured is Colonel John Fleming. Courtesy of the WNMU Museum, President's Office Collection.

Located in Silver City, New Mexico, Western New Mexico University has served the people of the state of New Mexico and its surrounding areas as a comprehensive, regional, rural, public coeducational university since 1893 and caters to a student body diverse in age, culture, language and ethnic background.

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