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Couse-Sharp benefit celebrates historic preservation

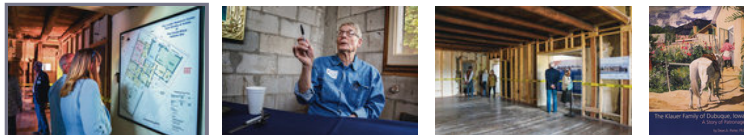
Gala event shows off budding research center and honors generous benefactors



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Visitors to the Friday (June 14) Hardhat Tour and opening reception for the Couse-Sharp Historic Site Biennial Gala visit the proposed Lunder Research Center in the former Mission Gallery on Kit Carson Road.

RICK ROMANCITO/ THE TAOS NEWS



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By Rick Romancito
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Even though the University of New Mexico-Taos Klauer Campus sits elegantly along a quiet road south of Ranchos de Taos and nearly everybody knows about it -- and a lot of Taoseños have even taken classes there -- not many know the family for whom the campus was named.

Once you do, your eyes will widen and suddenly pieces will begin to fall into place.

In many ways, if it were not for the Klauer family, many of the Taos Society of Artists painters would have never become as widely known and Taos itself might have never become famous as an art colony. All of this is illuminated in a fascinating book by Dr. Dean A. Porter, former director of the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame and a nationally known scholar and author who has devoted much of his career to scholarship relating to the Taos Society of Artists.

Porter, who just turned 80, was in Taos last weekend to take part in the sixth biennial Couse Foundation Gala and Art Auction, which also featured tours of the Lunder Research Center. After extensive renovation, the center, thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Lunder Family, will be housed in the former Mission Gallery next door to the Couse-Sharp Historic Site on Kit Carson Road.

Porter's book is titled "The Klauer Family of Dubuque, Iowa: A Story of Patronage." In his forward, Porter asks, "How often does the head of a corporation develop a close relationship with a group of relatively unknown artists, an association which would impact his and their lives for over two decades? William Henry Klauer and several members of the Taos Society of Artists developed a special kind of relationship, one that would advance their careers while also forming an important private collection for the industrialist."

Porter said he has often been asked why he would pursue writing this book about a family from Dubuque, of all places. "Well, they gave me all their papers, all their Walter Ufer [Taos Society of Artists member], William Klauer papers and a fellow by the name of Steve Good gave me his papers on Ufer and the other Taos artists, and so I was compelled. By the way, nobody twisted my arm."

Porter, incidentally, serves as an advisory director for The Couse Foundation and it will be his name that will be above the door of the Lunder Center's main gallery and reception room, thanks to the unanimous support of the Couse Foundation board of directors.

Porter said he's "like a member of the family now" after having known and been associated with the Klauers since 1974. During that time, he learned of the family's history going back to the 1800s when they developed a business that sold galvanized iron cornices, stoves, home furnishing goods, hot-air furnaces and tin roofs. Over time, the family became active in the city's political, social and cultural life, according to Porter's book. In the early part of the 20th century, William Henry Klauer, who was an avid outdoorsman, found a way to purchase land in the Ranchos de Taos area, which they intended to irrigate using a system of flumes.

Over time, however, the effort proved too costly but even though Klauer could not turn it into a prosperous investment, he held onto it. "We can't be sure when Klauer first met Walter Ufer or Victor Higgins [TSA members]," Porter writes. "He could have met them in Chicago, perhaps introduced by Mayor Carter Harrison or meat baron Oscar Meyer. However, we can't discount Taos as a possible meeting place. Both artists were in Taos by 1914. Bert Phillips was an early friend of Klauer, and if stays by Ufer and Higgins overlapped with Klauer's visits to Taos, they would have met."

Whatever the case, a long and fruitful relationship was started which resulted in decades of patronage that lasts to today. It is and will be seen in the new Lunder Center and in the prestige it will bring to Taos as a major cultural institution for the world.

Porter's book is available at *amazon.com*.