

# New Mexico Geological Society

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## *Scenes from the past*

Sherman A. Wengerd

1982, pp. 139-140. <https://doi.org/10.56577/FFC-33.139>

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*This is one of many related papers that were included in the 1982 NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebook.*

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## **Annual NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebooks**

Every fall since 1950, the New Mexico Geological Society (NMGS) has held an annual [Fall Field Conference](#) that explores some region of New Mexico (or surrounding states). Always well attended, these conferences provide a guidebook to participants. Besides detailed road logs, the guidebooks contain many well written, edited, and peer-reviewed geoscience papers. These books have set the national standard for geologic guidebooks and are an essential geologic reference for anyone working in or around New Mexico.

### **Free Downloads**

NMGS has decided to make peer-reviewed papers from our Fall Field Conference guidebooks available for free download. This is in keeping with our mission of promoting interest, research, and cooperation regarding geology in New Mexico. However, guidebook sales represent a significant proportion of our operating budget. Therefore, only *research papers* are available for download. *Road logs*, *mini-papers*, and other selected content are available only in print for recent guidebooks.

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## SCENES FROM THE PAST

SHERMAN A. WENGERD

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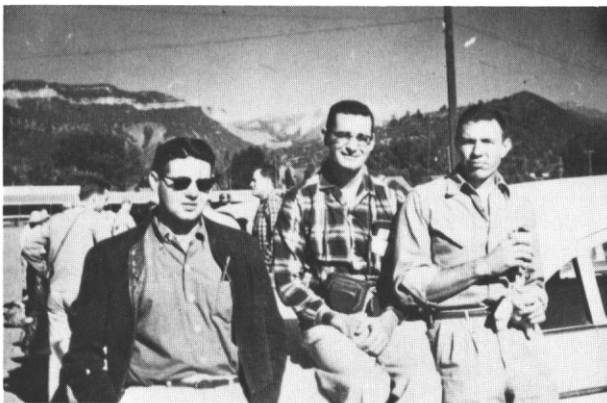
University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

The Eighth Field Conference of the New Mexico Geological Society was held September 5 to 7, 1957 in the San Juan Mountains of south-western Colorado. Those were the days when a dollar was worth almost a dollar, and there weren't many of them around. Brewster Baldwin, Editor of the Guidebook, with the blessing of Caswell Silver, President of the Society, Dick Holt, Chairman of the Field Conference, and Wally Bejnar, Chairman of Field Trip Committees, decided to continue publication of our Society's 8th Guidebook as a plastic-bound, soft cover book so the cost could be kept below \$8 per book (eight whole dollars? Ye gads!).

Frank "Irish" Kottowski was Co-Editor and Guidebook compiler. The Guidebook contains 18 papers and over a hundred illustrations. Other officers of the Society that year were John "Navajo Jack" Frost (U.S. Geological Survey), Vice-President; Jim Adams (Humble), Secretary; George Bachman (U.S. Geological Survey), Treasurer; and Clay Smith (New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology), Past-President. As is usual for such a cooperative effort, the Society had a Road Log Committee (13 members), a Trip Arrangements Committee (8 members), and a veritable host of Trip Leaders (11) because everyone wanted to get in on the action in this most scenic and complex region. There was an Advisory Committee of eight, seven of whom were real scientific heavy weights such as Wilbur Burbank (U.S. Geological Survey), Vin Kelley (University of New Mexico), Kirtley Mather (Harvard Emeritus Professor of Geology), Charlie Read (U.S. Geological Survey), Caswell Silver (consultant), Clay Smith, and Al Thompson (latter two at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology). I was on that committee simply because I weighed more than anyone else!

In 1957 the Society had eight life-time Honorary Members and 195 Active, Associate, and Student members. In 1981-82, there are 28 Honorary Members of whom eight have "shuffled off this mortal coil" and a total of 600 members, one of whom, Bill King, Professor of Geology at New Mexico State University, was designated as Honorary State Fossil in 1969!



L. to R. Paul Rea, Hugh Bushell, and Marv Matheny, former UNM Geology students. Rea is now Vice President of Exploration for Spectrum 7 Energy Corporation in Midland; Bushnell is one of Exxon's honchos in Houston; and Matheny is Exploration Geologist with El Paso Exploration in Amarillo, Texas. Start of the 8th NMGS field trip at the Fairgrounds in Durango, Colorado. Looks like Marv is still eating breakfast. Thursday, September 5, 1957.

For this field trip in 1957, we registered at the Strater Hotel in Durango, Colorado on Wednesday evening, September 4th. The next morning, after hilarious parties, we gathered at the Fiesta Grounds, had several talks while waiting for the buses, and took off up the Animas Valley, topped Coal Bank Pass and Molas Pass, to the Grand Imperial Hotel in Silverton. After appropriate pre-prandial libations, a steak banquet was followed by some talks and associated foolishness with certain groups continuing arguments far into the late night, while others less attuned to the high altitude hit the sack.

On the far-too-early morning of the second day (September 6), the gang of 200 plus registrants and hangers-on bused from Silverton to Ouray for lunch at the classic old Beaumont Hotel, thence down the Uncompahgre River Valley and out to Ridgway for a look at Miller Mesa, famous locality for its San Juan tuff slab slide on top of Pleistocene Ridgway till. Back to Ouray for the night and more partying by the more stalwart of the participants who had regained their health by noon.

On Saturday morning September 7th, the buses took us to Eureka to visit the Mayflower mill, the Shenandoah-Dives and other mines, and to examine volcanic rocks east of Silverton. In the afternoon we all boarded the Denver and Rio Grande Western train for the ride down the spectacular Animas Canyon from Silverton to Durango. Our genial curmudgeon of a conductor was the inimitable A. F. Lyons, now long retired, one of the men most responsible for the success of maintaining this scenic railroad. During the railroad trip with its several stops for rock-pounding and general arm-waving, we followed the excellent "road" log by Caswell Silver who hiked every blessed mile to prepare the field-trip commentary.

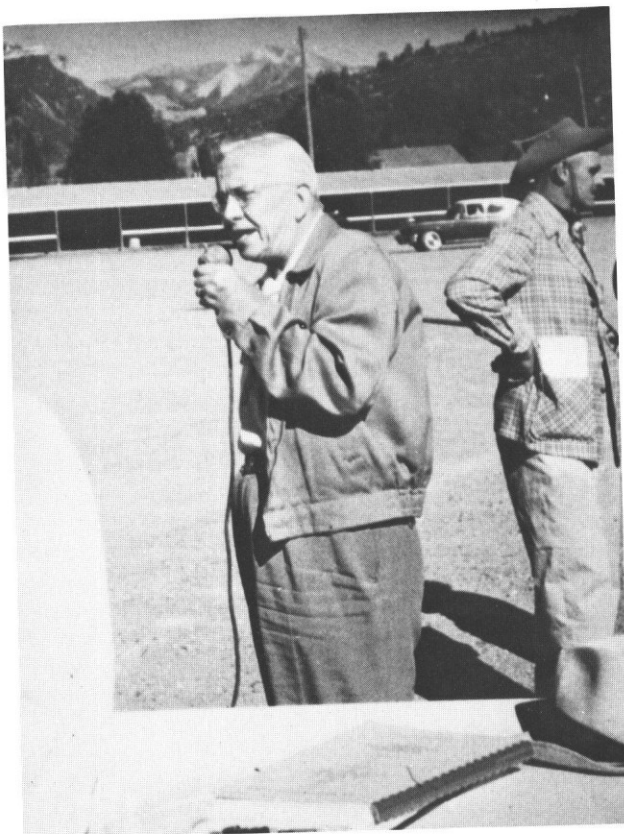
Back in Durango, the gang disbanded after another fantastic New Mexico Geological Society field trip, this time in the mountains of America's "Switzerland of the West."

With noted exceptions of photographs taken by Kirtley F. Mather and Martin Van Couvering, the photographs for this article were taken as color slides by the author. The series "Scenes from the Past" was started in 1974 for the 25th Field Conference Guidebook (Central and Northern New Mexico) by the then Society President William L. Hiss, U.S. Geological Survey geologist, now retired in California.

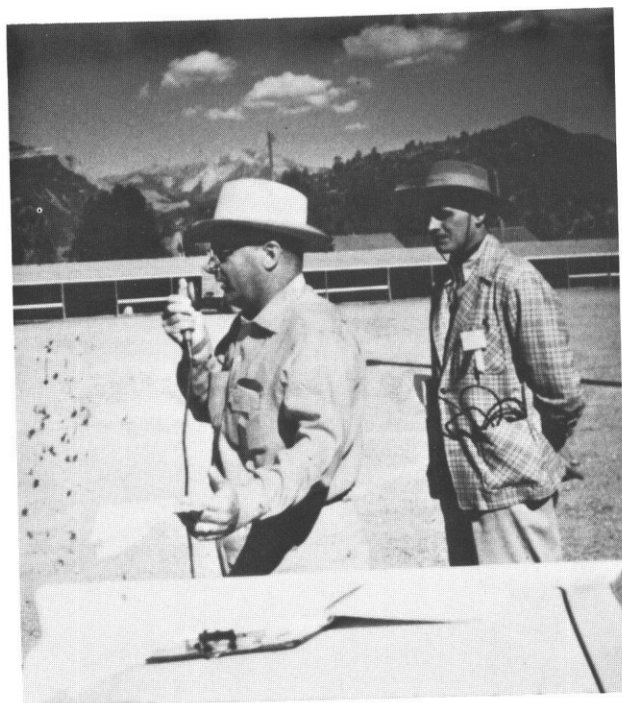
The *Scenes from the Past* will be found throughout the guidebook on pages 140, 146, 152, and 158.



Five buses, all full, plus several cars for some field trip leaders and flagmen. All waiting to start the field trip out of the Fiesta Fairgrounds, Durango.



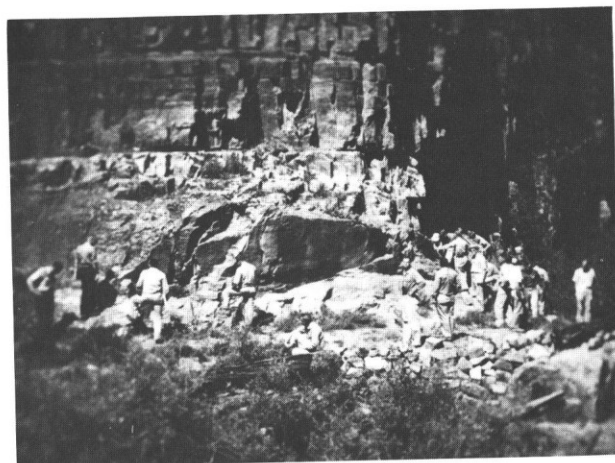
*Kirtley Mather gives an initial run-down on glaciation in the San Juan Mountains before the trip starts. Wally Bejnar with the Aussie hat looks around for missing field trip leaders who partied a bit too strenuously the night before.*



*Dick Holt of Humble fills in the assembling crowd on the stratigraphic section in the Animas Valley north of Durango while we wait for stragglers. Dick is now a consultant in Denver. The ever-worried Wally Bejnar, field trip committees chairman, looks on, hoping the loud speaker system keeps working.*



*Back to glaciation as Kirtley Mather tells us how he and Wallace Atwood mapped tills, moraines, and reconstructed the eroded mature surfaces of San Juan Dome as it looked prior to glaciation. They used oil exploration mapping techniques that Professor Mather learned while mapping the Osage Nation in Oklahoma with Kenneth Heald's U.S. Geological Survey parties during the early part of World War I. Stop #2, Thursday, September 5.*



*What's a field trip in the Four Corners region without a visit to Baker's Bridge? So we can argue about Harley Barnes' idea that the Precambrian granite intrudes the Cambrian Ignacio quartzite, of course. We had the same argument at the same spot on the 1950 trip. Stratigraphers have always had their troubles with the igneous petrologists! Stop #5, September 5.*



*Sherm Wengerd regales the group about a white horse in a pasture, seen at this same spot during the 1950 field trip, and, sure enough, the horse was in the same pasture seven years later. Incidentally, he also talked about the Permian-Pennsylvanian section measured in detail by Strickland and Wengerd in 1951 for the Continental Oil Company. Stop #2, September 5. Photo by K. F. Mather.*