



Cuentos de Newkirk

Daniel B. Flores

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Cuentos de Newkirk, is about the eastern Guadalupe county community of Newkirk, New Mexico. It traces the history of Newkirk back to its early days when the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad first came into the area in 1901 which led to the settlement of the area. The newborn community sprang up to meet the needs of the new railroad, its workers and their families. The new community was first known as Conant until its name was changed to Newkirk in 1910. The area was quickly populated as homesteaders were also attracted by the Homestead Act. They earned their living by ranching and farming their homesteads. Later, in the 1920s a new highway came into the area, a highway that would eventually evolve into U. S. Highway 66. The community adapted to help meet the needs of travelers on the new highway. The community boomed in the 1930s by construction workers who poured into the area to help build Conchas Dam. While most of the nation suffered in the throes of the Great Depression, businesses in Newkirk were re-vitalized by the construction of the dam and increasing traffic on Highway 66. The small community of Newkirk even had several nightclubs, some of which operated around the clock, to meet the needs of highway travelers and construction workers. The boom ended after Conchas Dam was completed. However, the community continued to rely on Highway 66 traffic. Unfortunately, that came to an end in the 1960s when Interstate 40 replaced Highway 66 and Newkirk found itself bypassed by the new four-lane road which passed through the area south of the historic old U. S. Highway 66. The many old crumbling buildings and houses in the Newkirk area today remain as silent reminders to its once glory days. Interstate 40 traffic zips by at seventy-five miles an hour. Only an infrequent car will take the single exit into the now mostly deserted community. There is a single gasoline station located at the intersection of the Conchas Dam road, NM 129, and the forgotten remains of old Route 66. Cuentos de Newkirk consists of a series of vignettes, each telling a story about the Newkirk of yore. Most of the information has been taken from old newspaper articles about Conant and Newkirk. Included are articles about many of the inhabitants who once considered Newkirk their home.

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