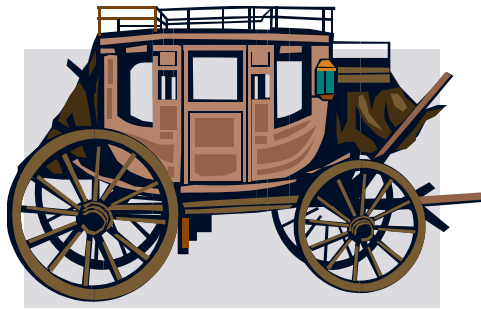


RECOLLECTIONS



JACK D. BUTTENHOUSE

Boy Scout
Magician
Hobo
Oil Industry Publicist
Publisher (Stage Coach Press)
UNM Press Editor
Historian of New Mexico
Rare Book Dealer

By
**JACK DEVERE
RIPPENHOUSE**
(1912 –1991)
Albuquerque, New Mexico

From his unpublished materials and
Annual Christmas newsletters
1975 through 1987

Composited, Illustrated, and Edited By Harry Briley

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CHAPTER 18 - CLOSING SHOP

Accolades

In the preface to his book, *The Spell of New Mexico* (1976), writer Tony Hillerman wrote of me “Rittenhouse ... my nominee for New Mexico's most erudite citizen.” I would be horrified to claim this [for myself], but the compliment was pleasant.

Another equally satisfying thing happened in the summer of 1987. Lannon Mintz, a local book collector who was an adult student in my first lecture course on the history of the book and later a steady customer, compiled a fine bibliography of books about the Oregon and California Trail. It was published in 1987 by the UNM Press, and, there was a dedication to me! I always envied somewhat those professors who had books dedicated to them, and here I had one. While I gave Lannon free access to my reference collection with no thought of reward, it was a deep satisfaction.

Cancer Diagnosis

What would you do if you knew you might have only two or three more months to live? That almost happened to me late in 1990. By combination of luck and work, it gave me one of the most productive years of my life.

By August 1989, I had a cancer beneath the skin. Dr. Porter Floyd removed it surgically very easily. After a few weeks, he said there was no sign that it immediately moved elsewhere. He told me that it probably would come back sometime, somewhere.

“If it comes back in certain places, we can go after it again. If it comes back in certain other places, it is probable that you will die. This particular type often comes back in the lymph nodes. It can be attacked there, not by surgery but only with X-ray radiation or by [chemotherapy], and their success on a man of your age is very, very slim,” he said.

I did not mentally climb the wall. Usually, I always had a certain amount of self-restraint and tended to accept major events philosophically, as inevitable. That November, I became seventy-seven. Most newspaper stories in 1989 on life expectancy said that an average white male would live to seventy-six, so I should have already been dead a year.

Charlotte and I chose not to reveal the cancer idea outside the family. I revealed it only to doctors and dentists, although I intensely wanted to tell several close friends. We knew that such a revelation would affect relationships. How could we go out with them to an anniversary dinner with them and know that they might be silently thinking this could be the last such dinner? It might have some effect on my business, although for many years I never needed or asked for any long-term arrangements in business.

In late October 1990, a swelling began on my lower right abdomen. Dr. Floyd diagnosed it as a cancer of the lymph node there. Dr. Floyd sent me to Dr. Barbara McEneny, a colleague who specialized in certain types of cancer.

She suggested we at least try a series of radiation treatments, which we did. These were successful in putting the cancer into remission for the time being. I remembered Dr. Floyd’s original two-month forecast, and seriously wondered what I should do with the two months left to me, in case radiation did not succeed

Looking at my life broadly, I felt I accomplished much of what I originally hoped to do. I never set down a specific track or goal, but one can look back and be satisfied with one’s achievements. No foreign place remained that I longed to visit.

Susan and Anne had grown, married and gone out into the world. There was enough money in the bank to pay off the balance due on our home mortgage. There were no other debts. My book business inventory was wholly paid for but there still were goals.

By Charlotte Rittenhouse, 11/21/1990 (and published for first time in 2021):

This letter is for both daughters [Susan and Anne] and both sisters [Ellen and Frances]. The reprieve we had last Friday was very short lived. On Monday morning, Jack received a call from the consulting urologist that an appointment had been made for him that same morning with an oncologist. Therefore, we learned that the later needle biopsy had picked up some cells, and that the CAT scan had shown a well-developed pelvic lymphoma. The oncologist set up an appointment for today with the radiation department of St. Joseph's Hospital.

Starting Monday, Jack starts a regimen of daily (five times a week) radiation treatments for three to five weeks; more if deemed advisable. The radiologist in charge of his case is [not] optimistic.

This affected lymph node is very near the major artery and nerve controlling the right leg. It is hoped that the radiation will prevent their being interfered with. Jack [might] refuse amputation if that should occur.

He is in no pain. The oncologist has promised that if worst comes to worst, the pain will be taken care of. She says scenes as in [the film] "Terms of Endearment" simply are not allowed to occur any more. Jack's principal symptom is lassitude and more lassitude, but is very clear headed when awake.

One small ray of hope was that the CAT scan showed only one node affected. However, that radiologist feels that there may be microscopic infections elsewhere. So he plans to do some lesser irradiation of the entire pelvic area.

Jack is spending most of his working time arranging sale of some Stagecoach Press assets. Offers have been accepted to buy the type, type cabinets, and Vandercook Press, although not yet finalized. Jack is working on selling his mailing list, and I am trying to get the reference collection in shape to sell.

Please do not broadcast this news. Tell nobody. Supposing that radiation does control this node for a reasonable length of time, we should not like to have the book community write Jack off prematurely. It is surprising how easily and fast such news spreads. We are both okay emotionally but I cannot talk about it very much. Love to you all.

Final Projects

Late 1989, I had just started work on two major projects. One was that I would give the keynote address at a summer school at the University of Denver for people learning how to enter the antiquarian book business. It was co-sponsored by Jacob Chernowsky of the trade magazine *Antiquarian Bookman*.

The other project was a commitment to do the major research for the author Tony Hillerman on his forthcoming book. I told both men I would proceed. I told neither about the cancer at the time.

On June 10, 1990, I fell down three steps and broke my right hip. An artificial metal hip was put in, and I made the Denver speech on August 5 on schedule. It was a surprising success.

Hillerman Best of West - 1991

[I did much of the research on *The Best of the West* for Anthony (Tony) Hillerman starting in 1989.]

Harper/Collins was due to publish *The Best of the West* in August 1991 and issued next as an alternate choice by the Book of the Month Club. I went on with the Hillerman book and eventually completed that project.

[Jack completed the following narrative on May 20, 1991 and died August 10. This specific section about his collaboration with Tony Hillerman is likely his last typed memoir source document.]

Of all the books on which I ever had a part (or whole), the one that gave me the greatest inner pleasure and satisfaction was *The Best of the West*, by Anthony (Tony) Hillerman. I did much of the research on it, starting in 1989. My name does not appear on the title page, but most of Tony's preface gives me more than ample credit. He wanted to put my name on the title page, but his publishers and I resisted this. Tony was famous. His latest paperback reprint was done with an initial press run of 850,000 copies. The Hillerman name would sell the book; the Rittenhouse name would not.

I was not a ghostwriter. It was at least as much Tony's book as mine, and probably more in the core idea, which is what counts most. I did not write an original word in it. Everything new in the text belonged to Tony.

Tony could not quite understand my reticence. It was nothing new to me. I liked the idea and wanted to help. I considered *The Best of the West* as a major contribution.

In the *New Yorker* magazine of April 1, 1991, there was an article by the Washington figure, Clark Clifford, recalling his years serving various US presidents. When President Truman, at the end of World War II, developed a plane for economic aid to Europe,

Clifford said it should be named the Truman Plan. Truman said that such a name might cause the opposition (Republican) party to vote against it. Therefore, it was named the Marshall Plan, after the popular chief of staff. It passed and was successful.

Clark wrote, "*I was reminded of the old aphorism, 'There is no limit to what a man can accomplish if he does not care who gets the credit'.*"

I did this before in the previous thirty years. I put together at least four books that were collections of items written in the past. We sought an editor whose name would add luster. In each case, the editor rejected some of my selections and added others, all good ones. The editor wrote the introduction and all of the new text to explain each choice. All books were well received. Mission accomplished.

There are some men I know who love to see their name in print and who sometimes put their name on shoddy work, just for the questionable glory. I already had that appetite satisfied with my *Guide Book to Highway 66* and with my *Santa Fe Trail Bibliography*. Therefore, the absence of my name from the title page did not bother me at all. I had the greatest inner satisfaction from seeing the book done.

The whole project began on September 28, 1989 with a letter to Tony from Maroon Waxman, executive director of book development of the Book of the Month Club in New York City. He proposed that Tony put together a broad-ranging but highly personal collection of pieces on the American West. It would be a diverse selection of fiction and non-fiction items of fiction and non-fiction, from the earliest writings to the present. It could utilize diaries, letters, travel writing, songs, circulars, posters, and anything pertinent and interesting.

I knew Tony for almost thirty years. I met him on the first day I moved the Stagecoach Press into Santa Fe, and Tony was then head of the local newspaper, the Santa Fe *New Mexican*. By the time I went to Albuquerque in 1968 to start work with the UNM Press, Tony had become head of the UNM journalism department. His office was in my building at the other end of the same floor. For the next eleven years, we often ate lunch together or stopped to visit. Therefore, Tony knew what I could do. By 1989, he retired from UNM.

He called me to ask if I would work with him. I told him yes. We got together and he outlined his ideas. The "West" would include only that area west of the hundredth meridian. Time span would be open. He did not want any emphasis on cowboys.

Tony's most successful books were about a Navajo tribal police detective, and I knew Tony favored the Native Americans generally, so this meant there would be nothing on the Indian wars or any of the old "vicious savage" language. Even Custer would get no major attention. There would be no glorification of outlaws.

Chapter 18 – Closing Shop

He mentioned several topics on which he sought examples: vituperative editors, hoaxes, the oratory of famous courtroom sentencing, and material in that vein. As we went along, he added many other topics.

I went home and quickly organized a dozen examples. These went to the publisher who approved them enthusiastically. Tony signed the contract.

I began to organize my outline mentally. I had long known that most people in the west know their immediate locale fairly well and know a fair amount about their region. However, the longer the radius from home, the less they know. An Albuquerque person interested in Western history probably knows about Elfego Baca or even Dick Wootton but might know nothing of John Coulter or even Hugh Glass. A Hugh Glass fan may never have heard of Emperor Norton or Mercer's Girls.

What then would constitute the knowledge of a truly literate Westerner? That would give me the outline. As an aide memoire, I leafed through Howard Lamar's *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* and on a yellow pad started a list of topics. One key word was enough.

At the same time, I started around my book room. When I retired from the UNM at sixty-five, I resumed a long earlier occupation as an antiquarian rare book dealer, specializing only in books about the American West. At the time Tony first called me, I had about nine thousand books, but I was then age seventy-seven and started slowly selling off my stock at about a thousand titles a year.

Slowly, I worked my way around the room, book by book. A key word might send me darting temporarily to another sector. I was more or less familiar with each book. Some I scanned, other dipped into farther, and many read in the whole. A good bookman knows his books and knows them well.

The publisher agreed to pay a good, large amount for permissions to reprint. If an item was in print, it could not be reprinted without paying for the privilege unless the copyright expired legally. One had to know the law on this, for there was a great change in the 1970s. Practically all nineteenth century books, but not all, are in the public domain. Fortunately, I had the original editions on many items. If I copied from a recent reprint, courtesy would demand a request for permission and possibly a fee. This courtesy might apply to items that had just recently slipped into the public domain. We had no intention of being pirates.

On the matter of letters, diaries, or journals, the matter of permissions is even stricter. Mere possession of an original letter or diary does not give the owner freedom to print it for the first time. Tracking down the person who can give permission may require searches through generations of wills. Therefore, we used only such material as was printed and where permission of the publisher could be secured.

Chapter 18 – Closing Shop

In seeking items, I looked chiefly for first-hand account by actual participants. Emphasis was to be on the human experience. On Custer, there was only his last letter to his wife and her memoir of how she heard the news of his defeat. On Lewis and Clark, there was the letter they left with local chiefs telling of reaching the Pacific. They feared the nation might never know of the success if all of the party died en route home. The story of the snowbound Donner party was told in a letter from a teenage survivor.

While working on the material, PBS (Public Broadcasting System) ran the fabulously successful ten-segment television series on the Civil War.

I shouted to my wife, Charlotte, "*That's our book! Look, they are telling the story of the war as experienced by human individuals: letters from a farm wife to her soldier-husband, from a private to his mother, from an entry in a sergeant's diary. That's how we are trying to tell the story of the West!*"

Each week I took a sheaf of entries to Tony. Fortunately, I not only had the often-rare first editions to copy, but I had my own Minolta photocopy machine [in the garage]. I copied the pages and marked the pertinent sentences. My experience as an editor at the UNM Press told me to copy the title page and copyright page for each item, and adding a note on the copyright status and pertinent facts about the original writer, to reduce Tony's work in writing the lead-in. My knowledge of book production helped me gauge the space needed in the final book for each entry. The items were numbered from one up as they came to hand. Later, Tony and I grouped and arranged them into related sections. I made three sets on each entry: one for Tony, one for the publisher, and one for myself.

The book was planned for publication by Harper/Collins, descendant of Harper and Brothers. There was a difference of opinion at the start as to whether it should be a book of about 380 pages or 550 pages. We gave them enough for 550 pages, a total of about 163 selections. In the end, they did the shorter book. Harper/Collins would do the trade edition, and the Book of the Month Club would offer it as an alternate selection to their main choice in a certain month. The publisher would handle all requests for permission to reprint.

I knew from the outset that this might end up by being a "camel" book (i.e., a horse designed by a committee). There would be many judges. The choice would start with me, and then Tony would make choices. The Book of the Month Club people would certainly evaluate material, as would the senior editor at Harper/Collins and a later probable series of at least two successive Harper/Collins editors. However, I became thick-skinned to this through years of publishing and it did not upset me. All I could do was try to make each entry the best possible choice. I could see most reviewers decrying the omission of some favorite topic.

Finally, all was finished. Tony did his own writing, and the manuscript was sent off. Publication was set for July 7, 1991, but such dates are always tentative.

Chapter 18 – Closing Shop

Tony was most generous in the amount he paid me, a flat fee. He kept raising it as he became more pleased with the material I found. Any author receives less than half the usual royalty on such an edited collection, because it is chiefly the writings of others, not wholly original. I made a rough calculation comparing my fee with the total royalties on all of my previous books. They sold such small editions that this one project probably equaled the total of all others.

Beyond any financial reward is the satisfaction and pleasure of doing such a book. I told Tony afterward that it was as though I was preparing all my life to do such a book. Any bookman, through his reading, gathers a wealth of knowledge. When he passes on, the world regrets the loss of such knowledge. This was my chance to harvest all I knew and present it in one book. I knew well that others had as much knowledge as I to do such a book. Dale Morgan could have done it; Jack Reynolds, or Archibald Hanna, or Fred Rosenstock, could have done it. Certainly, Lawrence Clark Powell could have done it. I was fortunate that it fell to me.

If a publisher commissioned me to do the entire book, published over my own name, I would have been quite happy if the total royalties came to what Tony paid me. Tony's ideas and writing made the book come alive.

I told others that "I knew the kind of hunter's stew Tony wanted to cook, so I simply dug the potatoes and pulled up the [good] ones. He added the spices and cooked the stew."

The foregoing was written before the book was published. Should it succeed and they want a sequel, already a quarter of the work has been done in the selections they eliminated to trim its bulk. Another quarter lies ready at hand in selections I knew about and tracking when we reached the length desired. I only needed to visit the university library for a few selections no longer in my own stock. Many of those I did use would not be in the average university library, as each university first emphasizes its own region and not the entire West. The bureaucratic protocol of getting photocopies from a special collection would have made such a task quite bothersome. In general, I was quite pleased with what came of the task, and I am quite curious about its reception. Will the readers see that we tried to present the West through its human experiences rather than through its wars and politics?

Selective Selling

Charlotte's welfare in her life after [my death] was important. She was nine years younger than I. The house held many items that she might have to dispose of if she sold the place. Chief of these was a garage full of printing equipment of the Stagecoach Press, which sat used for twenty years. There were about 9000 books in my book stock. Add to this, memorabilia and miscellaneous items I gathered in forty years.

I remembered when my father died and my brother Howard went back to Fort Wayne to clear away everything at that home. He used the proceeds to buy a trailer home in which she [our mother] could live near him. Howard had to sell things at a sacrifice. We had so little time. Much went to charity; truckloads went to the dump or to Goodwill industries.

I started a list of large and small things to do. I kept adding to it and crossing off tasks that are completed. Big tasks took priority, governed by two principles, get rid of the things bulkiest and hardest to sell, and bring in the most money possible.

On the money, I added another \$50,000 to what was already in the bank. In the six months since the lymph node cancer began, this financial goal was reached. Following are some of the things I did as indications to my descendants of what can be done.

In the basement, I still had 175 copies of my own reprint of my Santa Fe Trail Bibliography. Many booksellers knew of the book, but many did not know it was still available. I made up a list of about 400 booksellers dealing in Western Americana and sent them a postal card saying it was still available in the reprint at \$16.50 net, wholesale, postpaid. This was the original price, not a fire sale price. It brought me at least \$1650 and cleared a couple of shelves.

I sold my mailing list. A book dealer's list is his most prized possession. In fifteen years, I had known of only two booksellers who sold their lists. I typed up my lists carefully on 8.5 x 11 inch sheets, each bearing 33 labels with pressure-sensitive backs. The lists were in three sections, first came about 500 individuals, all private collectors who bought books ranging in price from \$20 to \$3000. This was the most important sector. I removed the names of friends, relatives, fussy buyers that were not pleasant to deal with, people who bought only one book because a family name was mentioned, but I left in all the good names.

A colleague thought I might sell twenty-five or thirty sets. To sweeten the offer, I added a second section of a few hundred booksellers who dealt in Western Americana. A third section listed about sixty major libraries that were regular customers. I priced the set at \$195 and sent a postal card notice to a few hundred dealers in western Americana. From this, I received \$13,650 in [70] orders. Production, postage, and shipping containers for these cost me a total of less than \$650.

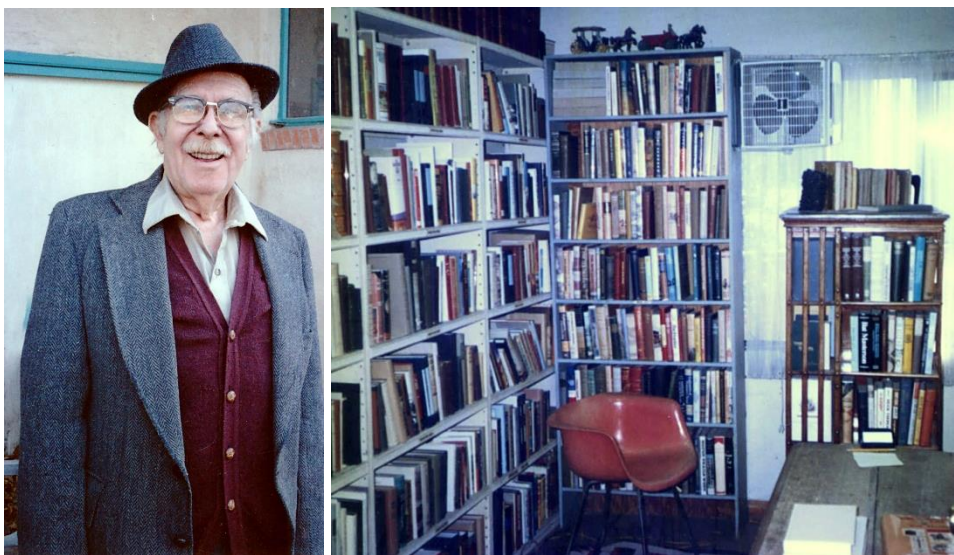


Figure 1 – Jack and First Floor Reference Collection - 1991

Next, I sold off my reference collection, except for the bare few that were absolute necessities for as long as I might continue to issue catalogs. After the first cancer operation, I typed up the copy, ready for-the printer, on over 700 books and pamphlets. [Charlotte] could simply send these catalogs to the printer and mail them in the event of my [earlier] death.

Now I tried to sell these books as a lot. I sent a Xeroxed copy of the draft catalogs to one large dealer who specialized in such books. He turned down the offer, because there were not many low-priced pamphlets in the lot. Next, I tried the library of a new university. They bought about 150 items. Then I found a new dealer just starting in the business. He bought another 150 items. In this fashion, I raised about \$8,500. I still had more than half of the items left on hand. I did not print and mail the catalogs.

Word Leaks Out

The sale of my mailing list and many of my reference works undoubtedly leaked news to the trade that something was amiss with Rittenhouse, but only three or four ever eventually brought up the subject. I told them I was simply trimming my stock.

After the first cancer operation, the broken hip, and the radiation treatments for the second cancer, I found that I could not work as hard any more. I was late in making shipments; the time between catalogs became six months instead of three; I was laggard in answering letters. I could start work by seven in the morning, but by noon, I was exhausted and I often needed an hour's nap in the morning. During the afternoon and evening, I lay around in no pain but lethargic and apathetic. I could not face the typewriter or the wrapping table, and I seldom cared to read

Chapter 18 – Closing Shop

I worked toward reducing my basic book stock. I specialized only in Western Americana books about our seventeen westernmost states. I classed them roughly in the following categories:

- really rare books selling for \$85 to \$3,000
- general books about the West selling for \$40-\$85
- uncommon books about New Mexico
- a back room with about 1500 duplicates of ordinary books, acquired as I bought over the years;
- Another basement room of other miscellaneous books about the West

If I were to try to sell the stock all to one dealer, I might have a problem. Very few dealers have money enough to buy it all. If I sold only the non-rare items (those under \$85), I might, at best, find one or two who would offer as much as \$5 per volume, which would not equal my costs. So I chose to "sell down," not "sell out" at a low price.

In my catalogs, I list those books on which I have multiple copies. I sometimes make trades: twenty cheap books for one good one. I give a better discount off the marked price if a dealer buys several books.

I have sought books to fill out multi-volume sets; have sent out books for repair from a shelf of crippled volumes; have given away books that should have been discarded long ago. In this shakeout process, small treasures turned up.

Nearly all of my bookcases are six shelves high. Already the bottom shelf is empty around all rooms. With a bad hip, I could not reach that [lower shelf] anyway. The strategy is to continue "selling down" without replacements until the two basement rooms are empty and the remaining upper room has only the \$85+ books, the New Mexico books at lower prices, and as many medium-priced Western books as needed to make a good showing.

In the end, the books under \$85 could be sold in one or two lots, and the \$85+ items sent off to an auction house after allowing selected dealers to buy at what I would get (net) from an auction.

When I started selling antiquarian books, I handled many new books on the West. These were usually in my basement salesroom. When publishers raised their prices, I marked in the new price. In time, this was too much trouble. When I started "selling down," I let the old prices remain, and both customers and dealers found many bargains. I still made the profit I originally planned.

Jack's End of Life

[Write an epilogue from this point on.]

Memorial Activity

Hospice Care

Dying among the Books He Loved

Jack Rittenhouse Memorial Service – August 1991

Newspaper Articles – August 1991

Book Urn at Cemetery, Fairview Memorial Park, Albuquerque



Figure 2 - Cemetery Urn Repository, Albuquerque, NM



Figure 3 - Rittenhouse Book Urn – 8/1991

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In Passing: Jack D. Rittenhouse, 1912-1991 (edited)

Jack Rittenhouse shared his love of western history through his writing, publishing, and book collecting. In all endeavors, Jack, pipe in hand and ever the thoughtful bookman, displayed his characteristic humbleness and good humor.

*His openness attracted people eager to talk about books at such gatherings as Western History Association annual meetings or at Westerners Corral sessions in New Mexico. His numerous professional commitments included serving the Historical Society of New Mexico as its president from 1968 to 1972 and, in 1971, helping launch and then remaining as an officer in the New Mexico Book League and its publication, **Book Talk**, the premier book review newsletter for southwestern titles. Jack lectured widely on a number of book-related topics, from aspects of letterpress printing, design, and binding to accounts of book searches he conducted worldwide.*

*Jack's [birth] family moved from Michigan to Arizona in 1916, and he claimed that he had been a westerner in heart ever since. In 1946 he self-published his first volume, **A Guide Book to Highway 66** (facsimile edition; UNM Press, 1989).*

*Jack became interested in bibliographic research in southwestern history in the early 1950s while working in advertising in Texas. Over the next three decades, the published results of his work included such indispensable volumes as **The Santa Fe Trail: A Historical Bibliography** (UNM Press, 1971).*

*In his two most recent books he shared some of what he had found fascinating in western lore and history: **Maverick Tales of the Southwest** (UNM Press, 1987) and with Tony Hillerman, **The Best of the West: An Anthology of Classic Writing from the American West** (HarperCollins, 1991). His collaboration with Tony Hillerman is illustrative of Jack's work "behind the scenes," either as a publisher or as an editor. In both capacities, he suggested ideas for books and then recruited authors to assist in assembling the volumes. In this role, Jack was the invisible hand of the publisher behind such regional favorites as **Spell of New Mexico** (UNM Press, 1976) edited by Tony Hillerman.*

In Jack's publishing philosophy, the regional book was all-important—that is, books about where one lived. He founded Stagecoach Press, now a sought-after

*collector's imprint, in the 1950s as a way to publish New Mexicana, including such works of his own as **The Man Who Owned Too Much: Maxwell's Land Grant** (1958), **New Mexico's Civil War Bibliography, 1861-1865** (1961), and **Baca's Battle: Elfego Baca's Epic Gunfight** (1962). Stagecoach Press published limited editions of books by other authors, and Jack's keen editorial sense is evident in having published Marc Simmons' first book, **Indian and Mission Affairs in New Mexico, 1773**, and David Weber's second, **The Extranjeros: Selected Documents from the Mexican Side of the Santa Fe Trail**.*

As a publisher, Jack headed the Museum of New Mexico Press in the early and mid-1960s, and then served as business manager and western history editor at the UNM Press for over ten years until his retirement in 1978. The last dozen years of his life he was self-employed in Albuquerque as a rare book dealer of Western Americana and, with his usual consummate professionalism, he brought together books on the West and people seeking to read and own them.

By David V. Holtby (Editor, University of New Mexico Press),
New Mexico Historical Review, 4/1993, v68 n2, p.199-200

Publishers Association of The West

In 1991, the Rocky Mountain Book Publishers Association, now the Publishers Association of the West (www.pubwest.org) began the annual **Jack D. Rittenhouse Award**. The award includes an engraved Nambe' plate, a two-page biographical summary, a list of annual winners, a summary of the current winner's accomplishments, and a description of how the Award came into existence.

Kent Watson, Director of PubWest, commented in July 2014:

The Jack D. Rittenhouse Award means a lot to the board of directors, PubWest members, the media, and myself. We honor his commitment to publishing each year with a highly qualified and vetted award winner. Officers for 2014 include Dave Trendler, president, Zoe Katie Burke, vice-president, Derek Lawrence, president emeritus. We host numerous events and hope you can attend.

Dave Trendler, president, affirmed in July 2014:

Jack D. Rittenhouse is still an icon of publishing in the West. PubWest's over 100 publisher members would enjoy hearing more about your ongoing Rittenhouse-related projects. Keep us informed of milestones in your projects, we'd very much appreciate the opportunity to spread the word among our members

Doug Pfeiffe, former PubWest president, wrote the Award text (extracted):

When Jack D. Rittenhouse passed away on August 10, 1991, at the age of 78, he was heralded by many to be the final authority on books of the West— especially Southwestern Americana books. He wrote to his close friend, Dwight Myers, about his passionate interest in the literature of the West, "I wanted to write it, read it, print it, sell it, collect it, evangelize upon it, talk about it, teach about it, study about it, and travel to all the places mentioned in it." He also once wrote, "Books became as natural a part of my life as breathing."

Jack Rittenhouse's life touched on almost every possible facet relating to books. He was known to be the gentlest of men and a person who always had time to teach anyone who asked about the world of books. During his long career, he moved in several different professional directions, sometimes simultaneously. His life's work encompassed writing, editing, advertising, compiling bibliographies, printing and book binding, working in libraries, bookselling, and book publishing among his many pursuits, but he always remained centered on his love of books and the American West.

Jack authored more than ten books. Jack began running ads in the Antiquarian Bookman in 1948, selling some used and rare books he had in his own library. But being an antiquarian bookseller was not his goal for the future. Jack was more interested in putting together geographic or thematic collections of books and other materials that specific libraries would purchase. Jack created and sold a number of these collections during his life and he filled many holes in the

collections of major universities with his bibliographic efforts. Yet, he amassed a great personal library of books on the West and Southwest.

During the 1950s, he wrote about 250 articles on the history of the West as well as the history of petroleum, often under pen names. Jack was a charter member of the New Mexico Book League. He was an active member and a frequent contributor to their publication, Book Talk, for over twenty years.

Dwight Myers ended his letter to the editor of Bookman's Weekly for the Specialist Book World, published October 7, 1991, this way: "Goodbye, Jack. The book world is far better for your having passed among us."

Source Notes

Chernofsky, Jacob L. "The Book Worlds of Jack D. Rittenhouse." Bookman's Weekly for the Specialist Book World, Special Western Americana Issue dedicated to Jack D. Rittenhouse, 10/7/1991.

Myers, Dwight A. "Jack D. Rittenhouse." Memorial Keepsake Booklet, 1991.

Polese, Richard (Ocean Tree Books, Santa Fe, New Mexico). Correspondence to Alan Stark, Executive Director, RMBPA, Boulder, Colorado, 2/4/1992.

Rio Grande Historical Collections. New Mexico State University Library, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

"Tributes." Letter to the Editor. Bookman's Weekly for the Specialist Book World, Special Western Americana Issue dedicated to Jack D. Rittenhouse, 10/7/1991.

The Rittenhouse Award

The award [is] given in the form of a Nambé plate or tray [in November at the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe]. It is engraved with "The Jack D. Rittenhouse Award," the recipient's name, "for outstanding contributions to publishing in the West, Publishers Association of the West," and the year.

The Nambé plate [an 8-metal alloy of the Santa Fe area] has significance because the association's first gathering was held in the bar of the La Fonda Inn in Santa Fe, during the Western History Association's 11th annual conference in 1971, to discuss forming a trade association. This discussion eventually led to the formal creation of this nonprofit association for book publishers.

Past Recipients

The Rittenhouse Award was established in 1990 by the Rocky Mountain Book Publishers Association, now the Publishers Association of the West, as a way to

recognize and honor those who have made significant and noteworthy contributions to the Western community of the book.

Charlotte Rittenhouse, the widow of Jack D. Rittenhouse, was present at the 1991 association banquet when the first Rittenhouse award was presented.

1991 Jene and Jetta Lyon

1992 Fred Pruett

1993 David Flaccus

*1994 **Dwight and Carol Myers***

1995 Gordon Saull (posthumously)

1996 Tom Auer

1997 Joyce Meskis

*1998 **Tony Hillerman***

1999 Katharine J. McCanna

2000 Lisa Knudsen

2001 Robert C. Baron

2002 Mary Powell

2003 Frederick A. Praeger (posthumously)

2004 Dick and Judy Noyes

2005 Elizabeth A. Geiser

2006 Linda Ligon

2007 Gibbs Smith

2008 Richard Abel

2009 Charles (Chuck) S. Hutchinson, Jr.

2010 Eric H. Boehm

2011 Jack Jensen

2012 Pennie Clark Ianniciello

2013 Jack Shoemaker

Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico

[Jack and Charlotte hauled the family to every county in New Mexico to photograph deteriorating historic buildings, pueblos, and ghost towns. He used a large-frame reporter's camera to get the largest possible negative. His daughter Anne complained that she visited every ghost town in New Mexico before she turned 17 and never wanted to see another ghost town on a vacation. She relented in her adult years. - Editor]

I started carrying a camera in the car on trips. At each locality, I got out of the car to look for something to photograph. I was surprised at what I found. I learned that when you look for anything specific you see more of everything. So often we look without seeing and pass by some interesting [landmarks] without realizing they are there. My small collection of pictures is only a fraction of the possibilities. [Attributed 1990, but from an interview response to the Rio Grande Historical Collections Library on 4/22/1991.]

The Rio Grande Historical Collections includes all types of records and papers relating to the New Mexican and Southwestern experience. It serves as a permanent repository for all kinds of documentary source materials. These form the basis for complete research on the history, folklore, and literature of this region, as well as its social, economic, and technical development.

Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library
P.O. Box 30006, Department 3475, Las Cruces, NM 88003-0006

Photo history of buildings may lead to ongoing record (1993, edited)

*A legacy of photographs, the late Jack Rittenhouse's images of New Mexico buildings taken between 1949 and 1972, goes on display kicking off a movement to interest others in continuing the practice. **The Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico** exhibit will be on display at the New Mexico State University Museum in Kent Hall through 12/19/1993. Other photographs round out this account of the past. Eventually, this will become a traveling exhibit.*



Hotel Southern at Silver City, Grant County, 1956
photo courtesy of Rio Grande Historical Collections

This 1956 photograph of the Hotel Southern in Silver City was taken by the late photographer Jack Rittenhouse, and is one of about 50 photographs being exhibited at the NMSU Museum in Kent Hall.

Rittenhouse worried that history would be incomplete without a photographic record of changes in “significant structures.” His dream to enlist photographers to chronicle this metamorphosis never fully materialized. The exhibit creators, staffers of the Rio Grande Historical Collections, seek to attract volunteers to take pictures of specific locations at five-year intervals for the Archives.

Rittenhouse donated more than 240 photographic negatives to the University five months before his death in 8/1991 at age 78. Rittenhouse, of Albuquerque, was a bookseller who traveled the State with his wife, Charlotte, taking pictures.

By Karen Williams, Las Cruces Sun-News, page B8, 11/4/1993

The Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico

An exhibition documenting the
changing appearance of buildings
and towns in New Mexico
November 4 - December 19, 1993



Figure 4 – Photo Exhibit Announcement (NMSU, 11/1993)

Rittenhouse Project Records Vanishing N.M. Landmarks (edited, 1994)

*The **Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico** is a project conceived by the late Jack Rittenhouse, a prominent Western bookman, while president of the Historical Society of New Mexico (1967-71). Rittenhouse was concerned that no readily available photograph exists for many significant sites and structures, some of which disappear each year. He and his wife Charlotte identified over 1,000 places which might be candidates for photographic documentation, including every place that ever had a post office, ghost towns, mining camps, forts, and Indian ruins. Rittenhouse made black-and-white photographs of many of the locations, and over 300 Rittenhouse negatives are now part of the Rio Grande Historical Collections (RGHC) at New Mexico State University Library.*

The RGHC is continuing Jack Rittenhouse's effort by coordinating the survey. The purpose is to document the changing appearance of buildings, towns, and other landmarks in the New Mexico of the 1990s in order to preserve a visual record for future generations of researchers.

Volunteers will consult the list of localities, adopt places in the State to document, and preserve on black-and-white film. They will photograph important structures such as churches, hotels, stores, houses, train stations, main streets, and other landmarks. Periodically, the assigned localities will be revisited and the changes documented. Prints and negatives housed in the RGHC will be acknowledged in future publications, exhibits, and scholarly research.

*A traveling exhibit entitled **The Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico** contains 52 photographs of towns and building throughout New Mexico dating from the turn-of-the-century to the early 1990s. It is available at no charge to museums, libraries and other public institutions throughout the State to publicize the project. The exhibit compares [selected] Rittenhouse photographs with earlier photos from the RGHC. The exhibit opens at the Silver City Museum on Memorial Day and remains on display through 12/1994.*

It shows photographs of places that no longer exist, demonstrating the changes of our communities over time. A photograph may be all that is left of a place such as Estey City (used for bombing practice on the Alamogordo Precision Bombing and Gunnery Range) or Santa Rita where the very earth under the town vanished when the Santa Rita Copper Pit was dug.

By Patricia McCann, Visual Matter Technician
Rio Grande Historical Collections, NMSU Library Newsletter, v9 n2, 1994, p.4)

Continued Interest

[Select sample magazine Articles about Route 66 from Charlotte’s Estate papers]

Charlotte’s End of Life

House Sale Solves Assisted Living Need

Oxygen Tanks

Completing the Sale of the Books and Shelving Units

Outliving Her Children - Relay for Life



Figure 5 - Lumanarios to Honor the Rittenhouse Family

Dublin, California. Jack Rittenhouse, Susan Blair, and Anne Briley (then in nursing care)
Harry Briley walked the school track in honor of all three.

“90 is not old!” – Charlotte (at age 89).

Libraries with Archival Material

Aside from Libraries with Stagecoach Press books on their shelves, some libraries contain Jack's personal papers and lifetime ephemeral.

Fray Angelico Chavez History Library

Writings and Publications of Jack Rittenhouse (Baroid, Stagecoach Press, others)
Private collection donated in 2022 by Zane Wood of Farmington, NM
New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Institute of Texan Cultures

Rittenhouse Collection of Wendish Language printing material, ephemeral, and history
University of Texas, San Antonio, Texas (Smithsonian Affiliate)

Rio Grande Historical Collections, NMSU Library

Rittenhouse Photographic Survey of New Mexico and several file cabinets of materials donated by Charlotte Rittenhouse. It contains Jack's many articles that he wrote for the Fort Wayne, Indiana newspaper(s).
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico

Zane Wood, oil-field friend of Jack, in 10/1999 (transcribed)

I spent two and a half days in the archives at Las Cruces. It contains Jack's many articles that he wrote for the Fort Wayne newspaper(s). I felt as if I was rummaging through his personal affairs [which was the intent of the archives.]

Southwest Research and Special Collections, Zimmerman Library

A small archival collection on Jack's Santa Fe Trail bibliography and the archive for UNM Press for the years he worked there.
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM