

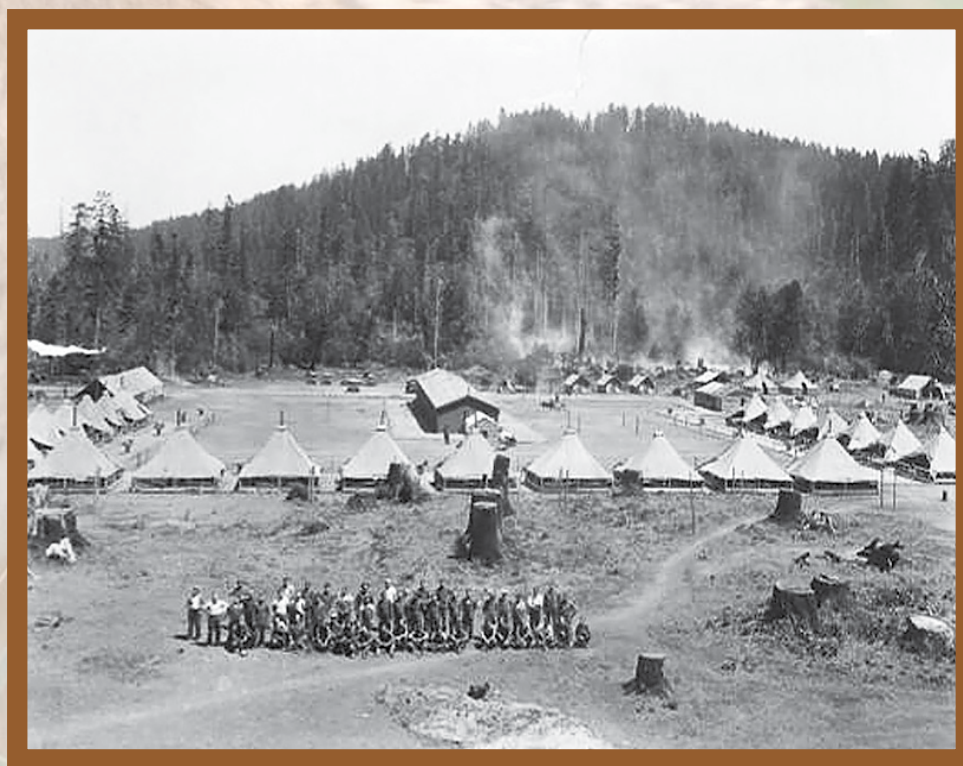
A Brief History of Thomas Village

Sometime before World War II, New Mexico native, Charles Mann Jr., and his wife Beatrice, who'd come from Missouri, bought a 100 acre farm in the North Valley of Albuquerque from the Catholic Church. The Church had obtained the property as payment for funerals. The actual address of the farm was 2407 Rio Grande Boulevard with the homestead farmhouse near the corner of Don Quixote and El Toboso, now Dulcinea Park. It consisted of a two story adobe with multiple additions built onto the main house over time and many out buildings. The old adobe had electricity but no indoor plumbing. There the Mann's raised their family of seven girls. Their one son died at age two from measles.



Charles Mann had never been a farmer since his family had mainly operated family mercantile and grocery stores for seventy-five years, including one in Old Town near the Plaza. To make the farm functional, Mr. Mann learned to farm from books, talking to people, and working with the County Agent who was his mentor. He spoke fluent Spanish and hired about thirty-five Spanish workers prior to WWII. However, once the war began, Mr. Mann needed extra workers, thus prompting the use of German POWs from Camp Albuquerque.

Camp Albuquerque was located north of the present day New Mexico BioPark's Rio Grande Zoo from July 1944 until March 1946, with peak occupancy of 171 German POWs. Although Clyde Tingley, Albuquerque "mayor", was upset that German POWs were being located in the area, they remained the primary workers on the Mann and other local farms until 1946 when they returned to England.



Top: The Charles Mann farm had Quonset huts similar to this one.
Bottom: POW Camp Albuquerque, 1944-46.

Mann employed about twenty POWs every other day year-round to maintain the crops. The crops grown on his produce farm, also called "The Ranch", included apples, peaches, cherries, lettuce, tomatoes, strawberries, cabbage, and celery. The celery was shipped to the White House with the other produce sold in local specialty stores. The fruit orchard covered seven acres with eleven acres planted in strawberries. In addition to his crops, the farm also had cows, chickens, goats, pigs, dogs and cats. After the POWs returned to England, Charles Mann primarily raised alfalfa and maintained the orchard with hired local farm help and young students from the Albuquerque Indian School.

Later on Charles Mann operated a feed, hardware store, gas station and a branch of the Post Office on Rio Grande and Don Quixote. Charles Mann died in 1968 and per the provision of his will, the farm was sold and subdivided into 10 acre tracts by Jan Leppke of Jan Leppke Realtors. And this is where the history of Thomas Village begins.

In 1971 a master plan was developed for these subdivided tracts. Starting in the mid-1970s through the 1980s Thomas Village Estates came into existence in four phases; the first three were developed by Thomas W. Krupiak Construction & Development Company (hence the name "Thomas Village") and the fourth by John Leslie. These homes were constructed on the alfalfa fields where Mr. Krupiak raised Black Angus. During early development, new residents sometimes had to return those cows to their pasture.

Since Don Quixote Drive was the initial entrance to this development and because Thomas Krupiak loved the book *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, some of the street names within Thomas Village continued the theme of the book. La Mancha

came into being with David Grady incorporator and first TVNA president. Initially, it existed to allow input by residents on further development in the neighborhood. Construction of Thomas

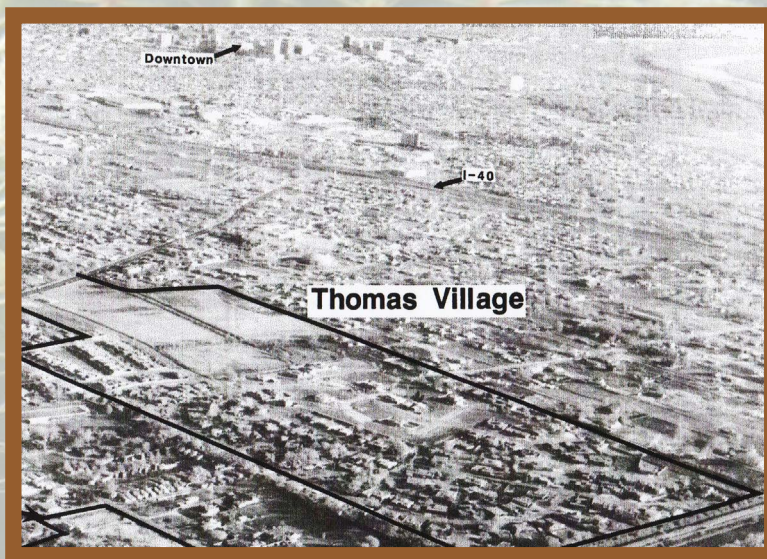
Village Patio homes by John Leslie began in the late 1980s where cattle had grazed. TVNA worked closely with Mr. Leslie to determine the number of homes that currently exist on this parcel of land. Continuing the Don Quixote inspiration, it is possible that the street, Don Pedro, was named after Pedro Perez, the village priest, who watched over a wounded Don Quixote.

Tim Brennan was the developer of the nine townhomes of Abby Jean in the late 1980s.

In the early 1990s Leslie

Construction initiated development of the Meadows on Rio Grande, on a combination of both Mann farm and Thatcher's Dairy farm properties. It is with the Meadows development that issues arose over what is now Dulcinea Park.

In 1988, an agreement between TVNA and Leslie Construction had been drafted, but never signed, that stated that the Meadows would contain 150 homes without the contractor providing a



An eagle's eye view of Thomas Village in January 1987. Thomas Village Estates and the Patio Homes are mostly built with The Meadows and Abby Jean not yet developed.

SINCE DON QUIXOTE DRIVE WAS THE INITIAL ENTRANCE TO THIS DEVELOPMENT AND BECAUSE THOMAS KRUPIAK LOVED THE BOOK *DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA*, SOME OF THE STREET NAMES WITHIN THOMAS VILLAGE CONTINUED THE THEME OF THE BOOK. LA MANCHA WAS THE HOME OF DON QUIXOTE.

was the home of Don Quixote. Sancho Panza (Calle de Sancho and Calle de Panza) was the unorthodox rustic squire to Don Quixote. Calle de Real, or "Royal Street" ties in again with Don Quixote trying to be a chivalrous knight. Other streets were named after Thomas Krupiak family members: Calle de Estevan, Calle de Estella, Calle de Laura and Calle de Deborah. The Albuquerque Fire Department requested a second street be added as an entrance/exit to the development and it was named Don Fernando.

In 1981 Thomas Village Neighborhood Association (TVNA)

village amenity (park) or up to 165 homes if a park was included. Leslie Construction was to contribute to the park construction with monies, land, fixtures and possibly a pool. A group of TVNA neighbors collected monies from forty households to create a pool membership fund. Because of limited "members" and high construction costs, the funds were returned and the pool project ended.

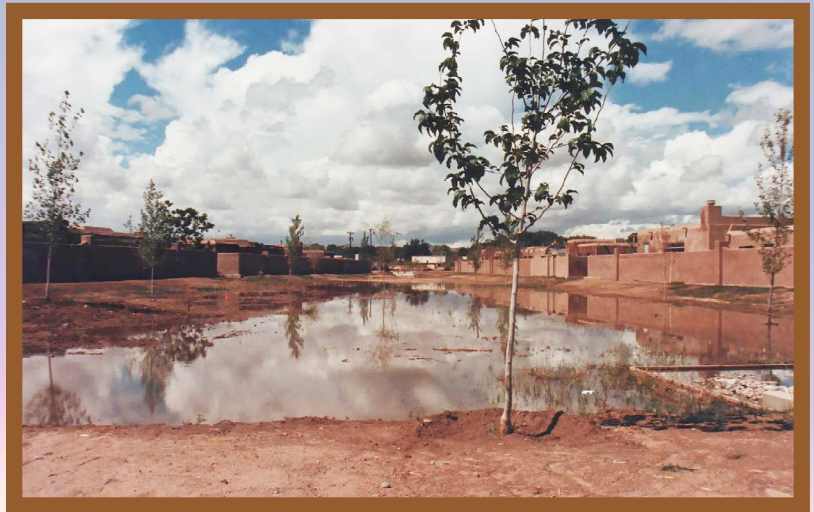
In 1989, a consensus evolved (finally signed in 1992) between TVNA and Leslie Construction to include a neighborhood park within the Meadows development. At some point the

Meadows property ownership changed hands. The new developer and the City of Albuquerque came to a different agreement; the City would develop the park with the Meadows developer contributing \$20,000. TVNA was never informed of this “new” agreement. Later the City discovered they did not have the money to finish the park’s development.

On October 8, 1994 fifty Thomas Village residents held a public protest about the “not-yet-developed” park. A suit was later filed by TVNA against the then developer, Los Poblanos/Ralph Stone & Associates, which was dropped. After much back and forth with the developer, TVNA, and the City, the park was completed in the Spring of 1999. Through the efforts of Clea Gutterson and Pat Rogers, the park was named Dulcinea, the great love of Cervantes’ Don Quixote.

Early on, TVNA recognized the need for formal communication among residents. The first neighborhood directory was published in August 1988. Mary Molina Mescall was one of the first editors of the TVNA newsletter. It was a cut-and-paste operation then and called *The Village Voice*. The TVNA newsletter, now called the *Communicator*, is distributed quarterly to residents in the four “neighborhoods”. Both the Patio Homes and the Meadows also have their own newsletters. In the mid-1990s Bruce Mann began exploring the possibility of on-line communication which later became the Yahoo Groups TVNA Listserv which now has over 250 subscribers.

Crime prevention and response have been present since the development began and has changed over time. Vandalism, bike thefts, and break-ins were reported as early as 1987 when Bobbie Miller was the contact for crime and these crimes continue today. In the late 1980s with the Neighborhood Watch program, promoted by APD, TVNA initiated neighborhood Block Captain groups, held crime prevention meetings and installed Crime Watch signs. Currently TVNA promotes neighborhood crime prevention by participating in Police Councils, neighbors using the listserv to alert neighbors of issues, and providing public meetings in



Drainage water in 1985 after an unusually heavy rainstorm in what is now known as “Patio Homes Park”. Originally the park was to be a drainage area with rocks and cattails. However the builder later agreed to landscape it as a real park.



The corner of Calle Real and Rozinante facing East at the early stages of the Meadows development. (1994).

conjunction with APD’s Crime Prevention unit. TVNA initiated vehicle stickers/clings to identify residents’ cars/trucks from others and recently discontinued a costly and unsuccessful surveillance camera system that could not clearly display vehicle license plates. Neighbor cyclists and walkers

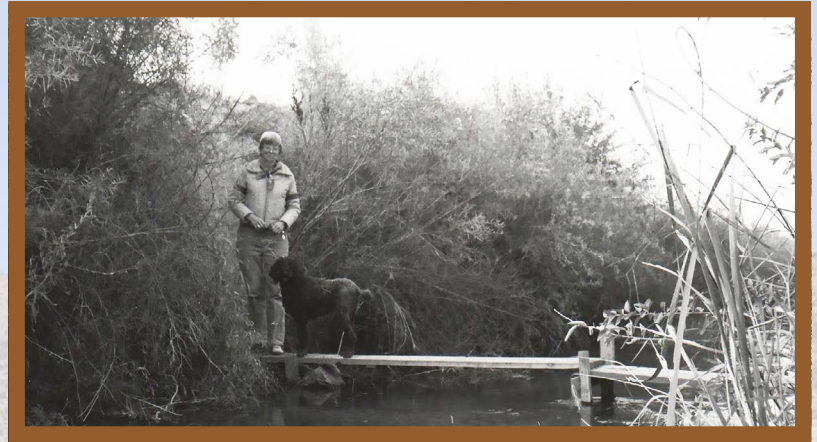
EARLY ON, TVNA RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR FORMAL COMMUNICATION AMONG RESIDENTS. THE FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD DIRECTORY WAS PUBLISHED IN AUGUST 1988. MARY MOLINA MESCALL WAS ONE OF THE FIRST EDITORS OF THE TVNA NEWSLETTER.

THROUGHOUT THOMAS VILLAGE HISTORY, NEIGHBORS HAVE ENJOYED TIMES TOGETHER. AT ONE POINT THERE WERE RIO GRANDE RAFT RACES THAT EXTENDED FROM THE ALAMEDA BRIDGE THROUGH TINGLEY PARK. MANY THOMAS VILLAGE NEIGHBORS JOINED IN THE SUMMER FUN WITH KAYAKS, CANOES AND HOMEMADE RAFTS. MANY HOMES WITHIN THOMAS VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ENJOY HOLIDAYS WITH DELIGHTFUL HALLOWEEN DISPLAYS AND LUMINARIAS ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

report suspicious activity on the listserv whenever they see it. Currently residents are contributing to APD's Chief's Overtime (COT) program allowing TVNA to schedule police presence randomly within the neighborhoods.

Stop signs within Thomas Village were requested as early as mid-1980s with the City agreeing to yield signs at Don Quixote and El Toboso/La Mancha in 1989 and finally a 4-way stop at that intersection. Some neighbors wanted speed humps on Don Fernando to Don Quixote; in late 1990s the City did install 25mph speed limit signs.

Throughout Thomas Village history, neighbors have enjoyed times together. At one point there were Rio Grande Raft Races that extended from the Alameda Bridge through Tingley Park. Many Thomas Village neighbors joined in the summer fun with kayaks, canoes and homemade



Marilyn Smith and her dog Zeke standing on the first "bridge" to the bosque trail. (October 1982)

rafts. Many homes within Thomas Village neighborhood enjoy holidays with delightful Halloween displays and luminarias on Christmas Eve. Dulcinea Park is home to National Night Out and many family and friend get togethers. 2nd Friday lunches at local restaurants and book groups encourage friendship among neighbors.

When the portion of Thomas Village Estates near what is now the "bike trail" was being developed, a right-of-way was incorporated between two lots so neighbors had easy access to the overflow ditch and bosque. In 1982 Carl Smith got some scrap lumber and constructed a little bridge about six inches above the water level! Later TVNA worked on finding a better way to span the ditch. In 1983 Don Hurst, TVNA president at that time, discovered that Hydro Conduit Company had an unused concrete beam they were willing to deliver if



L to R: Ron and Bonny Hone, David Grady, Gabe Brito, Don and Mary Hurst with Ian standing on the completed beam bridge to the bosque trail. (November 1983).

TVNA would pay for the crane for beam placement. PNM then agreed to partially pay for the crane cost. Neighbors then worked together to finalize and secure the bridge placement. Volunteers often helped cut weeds along the bike path. In 1988 heavy rains eroded the ditch banks along the bike path and eroded the embankment. TVNA neighbors worked with the City to secure and improve the bridge. In July 2003, a fire in the bosque jumped the ditch requiring voluntary evacuation of some Thomas Village Estate neighbors. AFD and many other fire departments responded for days to put out the fire, flare ups and preventing any homes from burning. During the next year, TVNA neighbors helped in the planting of new seedlings to rebuild the bosque.

And let's not forget the Annual Picnic. Initially the picnic was held near July 4th, and later the date was moved to an August/September time frame. In the early days the picnic was a potluck held in Synda and Sealy Cavin's backyard on Calle de Deborah. Activities included an auction, clown, kiddy games, ping pong, volley ball plus a band. Later parades featuring children with bikes and pets were added. A few times TVNA sponsored an Olympics in the morning of the picnic day with a 5K run, 1 mile walk, and a basketball tournament. The Patio Homes Park hosted the picnic in 1997. In August 1999 the picnic was finally moved to the "new" Dulcinea Park where it has been held since. Recently the picnic has been a catered barbecue gathering with nearly 150 neighbors usually attending. A clown gleefully paints kids' faces. AFD local Fire Fighters bring the hook and ladder truck. Parks and



Annual picnic at Dulcinea Park.

Rec has supplied and supervised a climbing wall. Bingo games with prizes and a dessert contest have rounded out the TVNA picnic celebration. Volunteers to host this picnic have been few in number in recent years. New recruits are needed for this annual event to continue. However, recently a monthly "meetup" group for families and kids began with a park BBQ and a backyard birthday party.

Thomas Village is a jewel of a neighborhood within Albuquerque. With over 350 homes, tree lined streets, a beautiful park, nearby bike/hiking trail, and friendly people, we have much to be thankful for. As one long-time neighbor recently said: "There's no better place in Albuquerque to live."

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Caleb Jones, age 2, exploring the meadow on the south side of Don Quixote in 1984.

Joan M. Wierzbica, November 2016

My husband and I moved to Albuquerque from Minnesota in 2013. We found our new neighborhood, Thomas Village, so beautiful and friendly. I became curious about how it all began. The results of my curiosity are this report; my resources are listed below. In many cases I was able to confirm certain details. Any errors are entirely mine, and I apologize.

Research materials included:

- “New Mexico Farm & Ranch Oral History Program”, Interview with June Mann in 2006.
- “Thomas Village A Little History” prepared by Lois B. Ranfile for the 30th anniversary of Jan Leppke Realtors.
- “Your Homeowners News”, Meadows Newsletter, Summer 2015.
- TVNA records, minutes and the TVNA Newsletters, *Communicator*, especially the Winter 2004 issue.
- *Albuquerque Remembered* by Howard Bryan.
- *Stories behind the Street Names of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, & Taos* by Donald A. Gill, Ph.D.
- Conversations with and articles from current residents.

