**A Century in New Mexico**

by Marian F. Love

Hansel Pflueger, son of John Pflueger, still runs the family store which was purchased by his father in 1910. Pflueger's Shoe Store celebrated its 70th anniversary April 10, 1980. [John Pflueger](http://www.lamymuseum.org/pfluegerfamily.html) bought the store from his father-in-law, Charles Haspelmath, Hansel's grandfather, and no one knows just when Charles first opened the store, but shoes were sold in the same location on West San Francisco Street until the spring of 1979, when Hansel and his brother Max, who had been partners for many years, moved the store to De Vargas Mall.

Pflueger's was in incorporated in 1978, a year before Max died, and his daughter and son-in-law, Martha and Jim Glendenning, have since joined the firm. Non-family salesmen include Johnny Gorman, who has been with the store for 53 years and Fred Balling, who has been an employee for 28 years. John Pflueger, himself, was a familiar figure in the store until his death in 1951. John was born in Regensburg, Bavaria, on October 29, 1865. His father, Maximilian, spelled the name Pflueger with an umlaut over the "u", and John must have changed the spelling when he came to America in 1882. Maximilian owned a handsome two-story building in Regensburg which held his *Royal Hairdresser Shop*. Henry Lutz, an older friend of John's from Regenburg, had immigrated to Trinidad, Colorado, and he wrote asking John to come to stay with him. John, then 17 years old, arrived at Ellis Island in ship's steerage, and his luggage promptly disappeared. He did, however, manage to reach Trinidad and Henry.

Henry went to Carrizozo south of Santa Fe to become a merchant later in the 1880's, and by then John and another friend set forth for El Paso. John had heard of a job offered for an interpreter and he meant to get it. Perhaps by then he had learned to speak both English and Spanish. The two young men didn't make it to El Paso because during the train's stopover in Albuquerque they tried their luck at the gaming tables and were broke in an hour.

John went to work in Charles Ilfeld's store, and while in Albuquerque, which was a railroad town of 4,000 people, he met Richard Heller who was to become a lifelong friend. Dick was a year older than John and he had immigrated in 1879 from Prague, Czechoslovakia. In 1889, a pair of traders in the remote village of Cabezon 70 miles from Santa Fe on the stage route to Fort Wingate went into debt to Ilfeld and he held a lien on their property. Ilfeld offered the property to John Pflueger on terms, and John agreed to buy it if Dick would be his partner. Each young man put up $100 and the partnership papers were signed on May 15.

Cabezon, on the Rio Puerco (Dirty River) of the East, lies beneath the towering volcanic plug known as Cabezon, Big Head Peak. It is now a fenced and locked ghost town virtually destroyed by vandals. The area had been inhabited by Navajos and some Apaches in the early times of the Spanish settlement of New Mexico, and it became a Spanish land grant. By the time John and Dick got there it had a small Spanish and Anglo population, but it served a wide region which included Pueblo and Navajo Indians, and various ranchers. John and Dick were warm, friendly, honest men and good merchants and it took them only six months to pay Charles Ilfeld and own their own business.

Their store carried ordinary staple foods, tools, and necessities for ranchers, and they also offered well-displayed luxuries. These were perfumes, powers and scented soaps, barrels of hard candies, boxes of cookies, and plain and sweet crackers. They purveyed chewing gum, fine metal buttons, and many bolts of fabric. They bartered merchandise with the Navajo in exchange for their beautiful handwoven blankets, handmade silver horse trappings and jewelry, and they conducted a thriving business in pawn and on long-term credit. Once a year, one or the other would go to those Navajo owing them money and collect lambs or young sheep for payment, then drive them to their pens. Besides sheep, they owned many head of cattle and they devised their brand. When the sheep were sheared, the wool was loaded on wagons and was taken to Albuquerque for cash sale to the highest bidder. In 1891, 17 wagonloads of wool weighing 40,000 pounds were driven there behind 67 horses.

John was also the postmaster of Cabezon, and his son, Hansel, has a check made out to John for three cents representing an overpayment in his records. The check is dated September 10, 1895, the year after John left Cabezon, and it is signed by the U.S. Postmaster in St. Louis. The village had no doctor, and when they were in Albuquerque John and Dick would consult doctors on symptoms and remedies. At last a Dr. Scott made out a list of simple medicines and how to use them. The traders bought these supplies from Dick's brother, George, a pharmacist in East St. Louis, Illinois. They kept them in a wooden chest which still belongs to a member of the family. Hansel said that his father told him that the most popular remedy came in small vials and was a specific for hangovers.

On one of his trips, John met a lovely young widow in Bernalillo and they fell in love. In 1887, Louise Engelke Haspelmath from Bavaria had married William Sayle, a merchant in Lamy, New Mexico, and they had two sons, Elmer and Robert (Robbie). William died in an extraordinary way. A man had robbed his general store and ran off, promptly followed by Sayle and a small posse who hopped into the cab of a Santa Fe Railway engine going east. They apparently spied the thief somewhere near Glorieta Pass , and Sayle pulled his hand gun in readiness. When the locomotive stopped, he took one step down the steep metal steps, the gun slipped from his hand, struck the step below him, fired and killed him.

John sold Dick Heller his partnership in the Cabazon trading post, and he and Louise were married in the summer of 1894. They were married by the pastor of the Christian German Lutheran Trinity Church in Santa Fe. There was no church building, but it was symbolized by a seal on the marriage certificate. John took over the Sayle store in Lamy, put up his sign over the front, and again became the postmaster. He added a smaller stone building on the right of his store, and imported a handsome cherrywood bar from Germany for it. The bar is so huge that it had to be shipped in three pieces, and it still stands in the *Legal Tender*, the present establishment.

The village of Lamy sprang up in 1879 because the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway bypassed Santa Fe. The first depot in Lamy burned in 1890, and the Santa Fe Railway with an eye to beauty, replaced it with a California mission-style building with arches and a red tile roof. There were maintenance buildings, a roundhouse, a coal chute, houses, stores, the post office and a church.

Sometime before 1910, the Railway built the beloved little Harvey House, *El Ortiz*. In those days, passengers left the trains at the various depots between Chicago and the west coast to eat, so the dining room was large. The rest of the hotel was like other Harvey Houses, but in miniature. There was a charming little central patio with ivied walls and a fountain, 12 guest rooms, and some of the finest Indian paintings, pottery and baskets from the famous Harvey collection for decoration. It was a prime attraction for tourists, and for the people of the region, and everyone despaired when it was closed in 1940. It was torn down a few years later, leaving nothing behind but a long strip of lawn and some huge cottonwood trees along the tracks.

The Pflugers settled down comfortably in Lamy and John ran the store and bar with his usual competence. Their son, Hansel, was born in Lamy in 1896, and grew up with his half-brothers. Hansel and his mother visited his Grandmother Haspelmath at her home in Las Angeles for three months every summer from the time that he was very young. There was no school in Lamy, so John hired a teacher and set up a schoolroom for Hansel, Elmer and Robbie, but it didn't work out well. Hansel's further schooling was in Las Vegas, Raton, Santa Fe and California.

When John and his family moved to Santa Fe after he'd bought his father-in-law's shoe store, an anonymous poem appeared in *The Santa Fe New Mexican: Lamy's Farewell to John Pflueger.*

"Dismal and dark is the dun atmosphere, Pflueger has vanished and Lamy is drear;

Farewell to jolity, mirth and good cheer, Pflueger has beat it and taken the beer.

The landscape is dreary enshrouded in gloom; the drummer has views of a horrible doom;

Stranded at Lamy the traveler wan pounds at the doorway but Pflueger has gone;

What though another stands back of the bar? Us to the smoker, the Dusty Chair car,

Pflueger, O Pflueger mere echo replies; with heartsinking horror the final hope dies.

Pflueger, O Pflueger; alas he has went; hark to the bitter and woeful lament!

What though the Harvey House beckons to us? For sinkers and sandwiches who gives a cuss?

The winter wind wails with sorrowful swoosh. The withered leaves fall from the Anhueser Busch;

No longer the foaming and amber hued draught brings back his youth to the statesman distraught;

The blue ribbon legend becomes but a mock; Pflueger has beat it and taken the bock;

Festoon the crepe to the windows and doors. Sackcloth and ashes all over the floor;

Flee far from Lamy and weep o'er the past; Pflueger has vanished has beat it at last!"

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