

NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM



BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Frances Levine, Director

The tale of history museums as places of community pride is not something Frances Levine learned in a course on how to be a museum director. She learned it as a child in Fairfield, Connecticut, a historic New England community where she and her parents and siblings spent free time visiting historical sites and living-history museums.

"I knew I'd have a career doing something in the field of history," she says.

Levine pursued art history at the University of Colorado—Boulder until one professor noted her obsession with past cultures and peoples and suggested she try archeology. Before long, Levine was in graduate school studying archeology at Southern Methodist University where she was assigned to direct a public project in New Mexico.

While her task was to research prehistoric sites near Santa Rosa, the historical sites she encountered along a stretch of the Pecos River fascinated her more. There at Horseshoe Bend, Plains Indian campsites and Hispanic land-grant villages rich with artifacts and architecture told tales of buffalo hunters and traders. Levine next researched the documentary history at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives and the artifact collections at the Palace of the Governors and the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe.

"I always wanted to be in a place where my love of Spanish and my love of history and archeology could come together," she says. "There's no better place for that than New Mexico."

After receiving advanced degrees in anthropology, Levine moved from Santa Rosa, where she learned area history from local elders, to Santa Fe, where she taught New Mexico history and Pueblo and Hispanic ethno-history at Santa Fe Community College before becoming Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for Arts and Science. In 2002, Levine became the director of the state's oldest architectural treasure—the nearly 400-year-old Palace of the Governors, which in 1909 became the birthplace of the New Mexico state museum system. Her charge was to transform the Palace from a historic site into a world-class state history museum complex.

Levine holds degrees in anthropology: a Ph.D. and M.A. from Southern Methodist University and a B.A. from the University of Colorado. Among a list of distinguished professional honors and awards, she received the Fray Atanasio Dominguez Award for Historical Survey from the New Mexico Historical Society in 2000 for her book on Pecos Pueblo. She also has published extensively on New Mexico history and archeology and is an active contributor to numerous professional associations and committees.

Dr. Levine lives with her husband and two children in Santa Fe's Cristo Rey neighborhood where the sense of New Mexico's landscape and history are always close at hand.