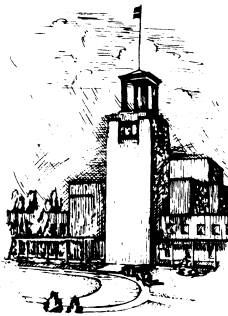




# *The Santa Fe* **SCENE**

*Weekly News and Features*®



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**WEEKLY  
TV & RADIO LOGS**

**GREGORIO RAEI  
LAST OF THE DONS**

## GREGORIO RAE, LAST OF THE DONs

If there is in Santa Fe an exemplification of the old Spanish don, a person of inherent, courtly and dignified mien, an unobtrusive adherent of the modes and manners of yesteryear, it is Gregorio Rael.

Don Rael isn't living in a dream world of a colorful aristocratic past, and despite his 84 years is surprisingly alert, active and progressive, cognizant of the fruitful present, confident of the future.

He does, however, behave like the almost completely vanished don, even unto his mode of attire which includes the undented severe black hat and dark suit, bow tie and footwear. On occasion he even wears boots and a long string tie.

Born in Santa Fe in 1876 in an old adobe on Palace Ave., the son of Antonio and Candelaria Ortega Rael, Gregorio's chief heritage was that of proud, honest ancestors. His father fought with the Union in the Civil War, his mother's



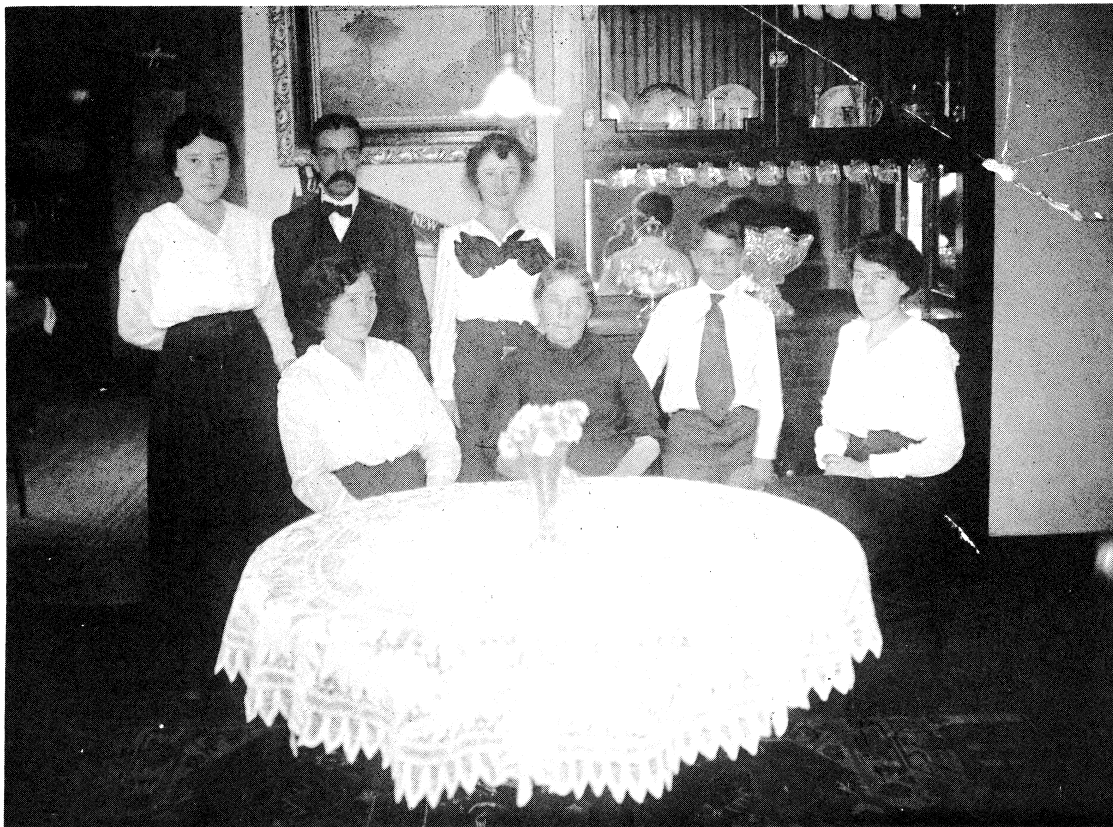
Gregorio Rael in the typical garb of a Spanish don.

father, Juan Ortega, was one of the 14 descendants of *Conquistadores* killed by a band of marauding Apaches.

Gregorio's first education was gained in the old brick school building at Canyon Road and Garcia Street. Later he entered St. Michael's and was better than an average student, according to the few of his surviving contemporaries.

Like most of the boys of that time, he played lustily and worked hard. He engaged in local baseball and ground hockey games and attended the social events.

His father was engaged in the mercantile business on Canyon Road, across from the present Gormley's and it was little Gregorio's after school, Saturday and summertime task to deliver groceries and meats. He trundled the goods in a wheelbarrow and as was the custom of the times, stopped in many of the customers' homes for refreshments, gossip and rest.



This faded and cracked photo was taken in 1916 at the home of Mrs. Aurelia Rodriguez, the mother of Mrs. Rael. Seated at table: Mrs. Gregorio Rael and Mrs. Rodriguez. Standing in back are: Mary Rodriguez, Mrs. Rael's sister; Gregorio Rael; Sophia Rodriguez, sister; 12-year-old Tony Rael, and the late Josie Rodriguez (seated).

## GREGORIO RAEI, LAST OF THE DONS

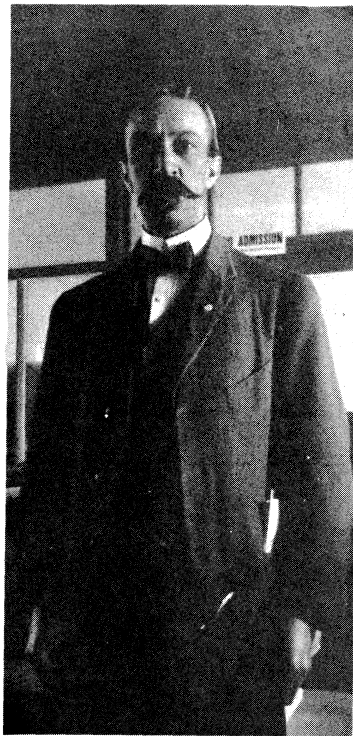


Printer Gregorio Rael poses with fellow workers some 30 years ago in the old plant, now the Bishop Building. Rael is at left with the late A. M. Kelley, S. C. Chatham and Bill Ireland next in line.

There were 10 children, six boys and four girls in the Rael household, and Gregorio had the usual companionship of large families; received stern and wise counseling from his parents.

One of the principal chores of young Rael was going to the foothills with burros to gather *pinones* and fire wood; had burros and other domestic animals as pets, and a reliable milch cow. On occasion the family rented a team of horses and a rig from the livery stable to take "extended" trips, but for the most part they traveled on foot, and from the time of his confirmation, Gregorio trudged the distance to the Cathedral for six o'clock Sunday mass, come rain, snow or shine.

As a young lad, Rael went to work for the daily paper in Santa Fe, hiring out in the capacity which at the time was called a "printer's devil." His early tasks were sweeping the place, filling the kerosene lights, cleaning the chimneys and trimming the wicks. In due time he did his stints at the stones as a makeup man or



Gregorio Rael, gentleman printer, poses for this photo as he dispatches a batch of proofs to the State Capitol.

hand compositor. He remembers the early days when the massive press was powered by steam and all the type was "hand pegged," even the very small or agate fonts. Most of the letters and figures were foundry cast metal, but there were some huge wooden faces for bold headlines and the usual dodgers that merchants, auctioneers and others seeking advertising had run off.

Printing and operating a newspaper was not the complex thing it is today, and when he worked for his first employer, Max Frost with the plant on San Francisco, the present site of DeCastro's photo shop, the methods were indeed primitive. The print shop extended through to Palace Ave. and as was the custom, more than one irate reader of the paper came in to flog the editor for what he deemed a derogatory editorial or a news item that held him up to ridicule. Those were the days when citizens carried their buggy whips with them, not caring to leave them in the sockets and

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risk theft, and it was not uncommon for a hot headed politician or merchant to use them as weapons against a fellow citizen.

Newspapers, when Rael first went to work as an apprentice printer, were really big, both in prestige and physical size, and the width of each was 13 ems as compared to the present 11 ems and was deeper than the present editions. This was before publishers shrank the size of their copies to make it more convenient for street car riders; was before they thought up the tabloid.

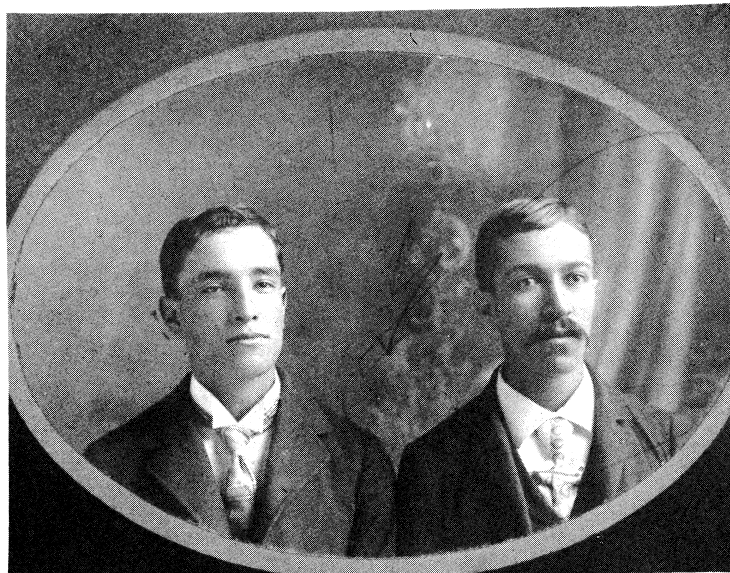
Following Frost's tenure as owner and editor of the paper, Paul Walter took charge, and Rael, a full-fledged journeyman, continued to work at the stone putting type in chases for lockup and transportation to the press. Gregorio remembers distinctly the early days of stereotyping when those "new fangled" matrices were dried out by kerosene heaters before being placed in the casting box to receive their molten lead.

When Linotypes came into use, Gregorio, then a specialist and an artisan in commercial makeup work, and the man charged with making up the ads, did not take a fling at the keyboard, not even out of curiosity.

Rael worked for the newspaper at three locations, the early home on San Francisco, at the corner of Lincoln and Palace, present location of the First National Bank, and later in Sen. Bronson Cutting's first location on the land formerly occupied as a Ft. Marcy's officer's quarters, razed to make way for the paper and print shop and ultimately rebuilt and enlarged by Carl Bishop.

So steady and so astute was Rael that he worked his way up to foreman of his department. One of the pioneer members of the Typographical Union, Gregorio, was admitted in 1906 and still carries card No. 405. He has served as secretary of the local and continues to keep abreast of the union's doings.

An editorial executive, Alex Barnes was one of Rael's favorites, and the admiration was mutual. Alex early had a bit of



Gregorio Rael, at right, poses with a fellow printer.



Mr. and Mrs. Gregorio Rael pose for a slightly out-of-focus snapshot during a Fiesta in the 1920's.

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trouble with the Spanish language and Gregorio, despite the fact he spoke, read and wrote English fluently, refused to talk to young Barnes in anything but the Castilian tongue.

Gregorio's first duties, by the way, were with the old El Nuevo Mexicano, the Spanish language edition of the paper, and some of his early meticulous job work was with Spanish language books and manuals, printed for libraries, book stalls and the state Capitol.

His transition to English was painless and not only did he do a lot of typesetting but reading of his handiwork.

Don Rael continues to read avidly, and without benefit of eye glasses, if you please. Also his hearing is keen and his step firm. He does not have a television set simply because he feels that he can best entertain himself by perusing good tomes.

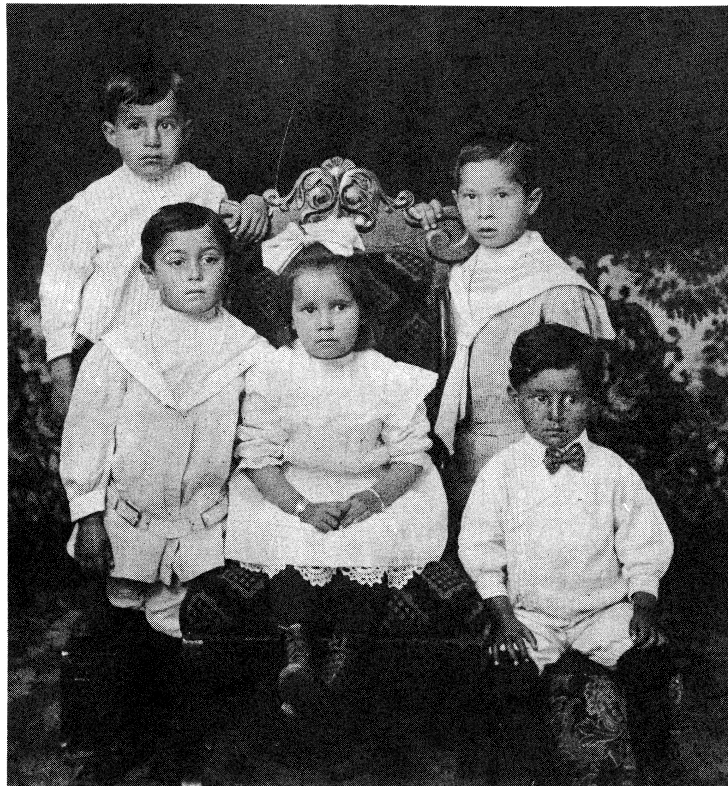
He and Mrs. Rael built the present residence on Shelby in 1924 and the couple was "in the center" of things, within easy walking distance of church, the post office and the markets.

After serving faithfully in the only trade he ever engaged in, Gregorio retired in 1937, fully intending to spend many leisurely, happy years with Mrs. Rael. His wife died in 1938, however, and there came a great void in the life of the don. But he did not waste away, and in due time was preparing his own meals, Spanish and American fare, and was happy indeed when his son, Jacobo (Jake) moved in with him to help share the tasks and to offer companionship. Jake works for the State Highway Dept., having a night job, so the senior Rael still has long hours for reading and meditation.

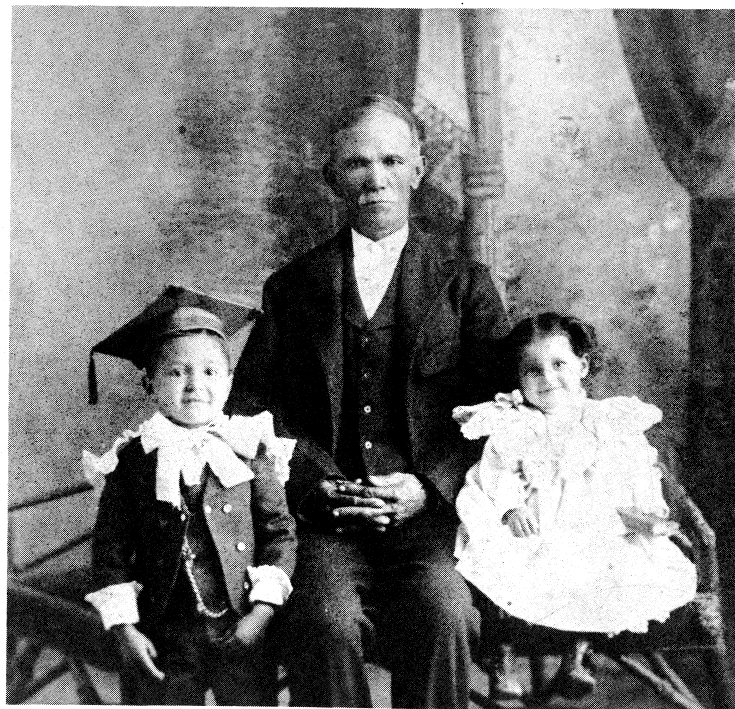
The other surviving Rael offspring is Antonio (Tony) who works for the New Mexico National Guard.

Gregorio Rael's father, like his commander-in-chief Abraham Lincoln, was an early Republican and Gregorio has also been a life-long rock-ribbed GOP although not a confirmed

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Relatives and friends of Gregorio Rael pose for this old photo, showing son Jacobo front and left.



Gregorio Rael's father, Civil War veteran Antonio Rael, sits between the late Vicente Martinez and Flora LaBadie.

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combatant in the political arena.

One of Gregorio's greatest pleasures is discourse and when he makes his daily trips to the Post Office and to the grocery store, he stops for long and pleasant chats with his friends, old and new.

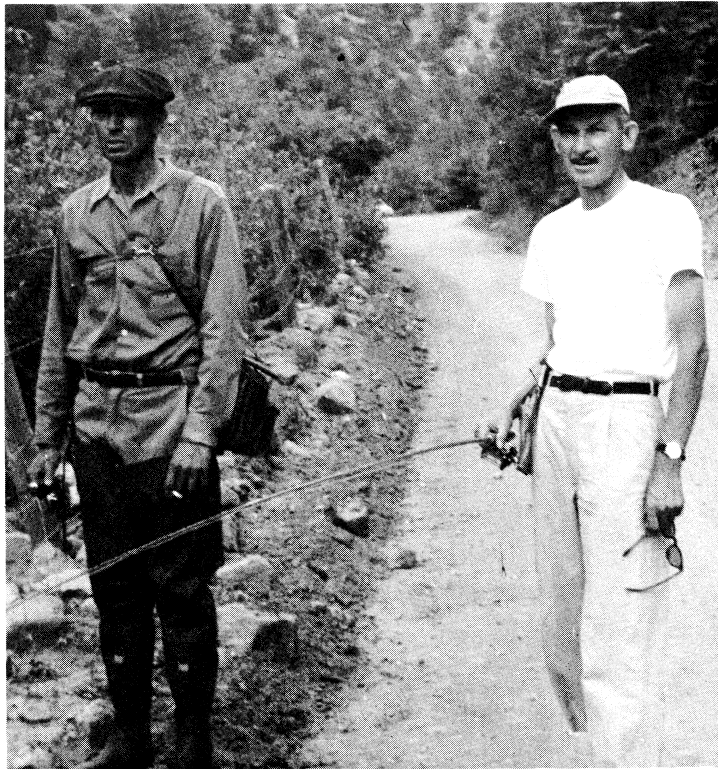
Never garrulous, Rael is nevertheless a fluent conversationalist and even his mode of address gives him the stamp of the don. He enunciates in a moderate tone, shrugging occasionally for emphasis, switching from Spanish to English without shifting gears and always maintains a friendly attitude, a sparkle still in his eyes.

Gregorio Rael is one of the final links to a glorious past, the personification of the Spanish Don.

### Ferdon and Heyerdahl Write Publication

Edwin N. Ferdon, Jr., acting director of the Folk Art unit of the Museum of New Mexico, is presently in Italy working with Thor Heyerdahl on the official publication concerning Heyerdahl's Eastern Island expedition. Ferdon, who has been an anthropologist on the Museum staff for more than 20 years, was a member of the Heyerdahl junket and the scientists account, edited by Ferdon, will be published under the sponsorship of the Museum of New Mexico and the School of American Research.

"Aku-Aku," which was the popular account written by Heyerdahl, has been on the best seller lists for months and is now available in 23 different languages. His documentary film "Aku-Aku" was premiered in Norway in January and was attended by Ferdon and other members of the expedition who were seated with King Olav and Princess Astrid. The Swedish premiere followed on Jan. 25 and expedition members were presented to the King and Queen, with diplomatic representatives of more than 30 countries being present. King Gustav is himself an amateur archeologist. The American version of "Aku-Aku" is to have its premiere at a date to be announced later this year.



Jacobo (Jake) Rael, left, fishes with an old friend, J. Leo Romero, now a full-fledged consul stationed in the Holy Land.

### PEN POINT PERSONALITIES

By Alicia V. Romero

*Certified Grapho-Analyst*

'Tis only natural that during the Golden Years of an individual's life the ability and power of manipulating a writing instrument becomes somewhat impaired and fluidity of writing gradually declines. The writing movement is not as free or rhythmical and the line quality is not as smooth; however, the basic characteristics of the strokes remain unchanged as a result of design and fixed habit which has been formed throughout the years. Thus it is that neither age nor intentional disguise of handwriting can change the character traits which have been imbedded in an individual's personality.

*my friend  
amigos  
Gregorio Rael*

Gregorio Rael, most of the time you manage to keep a cheerful attitude towards life, barring little annoyances which creep into your life now and then. You are congenial towards your friends and you like to be appreciated by them.

Your writing indicates an analytical and investigative nature. In spite of being shrewd, you do not always acquire the right information, therefore, there are many times when you are apt to be misinformed. As an independent thinker, you prefer not to seek help or advice from others.

You have conservative principles. You will not squander or spend your money extravagantly or unwisely.

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