

New Mexico roots and peoples define a life's worth of writings

"The Writings of Eusebio Chacón" re-introduced, translated and edited by A. Gabriel Meléndez and Francisco A. Lomelí

UNM Press, \$45, 288 pp.

The Sunday (ABQ) Journal, 11/11/12

REVIEW BY KAREN R. ROYBAL p. F4.

Picturesque views of Truchas Peak envelop Peñasco, the perfectly situated valley town just miles from Taos and Picuris Pueblo.

This region inspired and is the birthplace of Eusebio Chacón (1869-1948), a well-regarded Nuevomexicano and Southern Colorado attorney.

Chacón's family moved to Colorado when he was a boy, yet he always held New Mexico near to his heart, and its history and peoples even closer. Aside from his role as a public servant, Chacón also was a gifted writer.



* UNM Professor A. Gabriel Meléndez reads from and discusses "The Writings of Eusebio Chacón" at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 13, at the UNM Bookstore, main campus near Central and Cornell.

"The Writings of Eusebio Chacón" is an impressive collection of novelettes, poems, letters and treatises that demonstrate this notable yet under-recognized writer. It is part of the "recovery work," popular in academic and community settings, that acknowledges those whose talents are buried in footnotes or tucked away in private archives.

Chacón's writing demonstrates his keen sense of history and literature. His treatises include details about early Spanish conquerors, and demonstrate *querencia*, or honor and respect, that he held for his beloved "homeland." These writings prove that distance could not separate him from his roots.

A lawyer who practiced in Trinidad, Colo., Chacón never lost sight of his heritage or the importance of documenting his history. The collection recognizes the value of Chacón's writings and reveals its importance to Southwest history and literature.

Two standout pieces that demonstrate eloquent prose are his novelettes "The Son of the Storm" and "The Calm After the Storm" — stories written in a style that makes it easy to imagine them as dramatic stage performances. They draw the reader in through a focus on honor, morality and romance.

El Boletín Popular, an early Santa Fe press, originally published much of Chacón's work, which shows a witty sense of humor and sophisticated rhetorical style. His poems and letters reveal a softer side of the man. The collection concludes with his obituary and family photographs that provide final imprints of Chacón's memorable life and career.

A. Gabriel Meléndez, a professor of American Studies at the University of New Mexico, and Francisco Lomelí, a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, translated and edited the collection.

Karen R. Roybal is a visiting scholar at UNM's Center for Regional Studies.