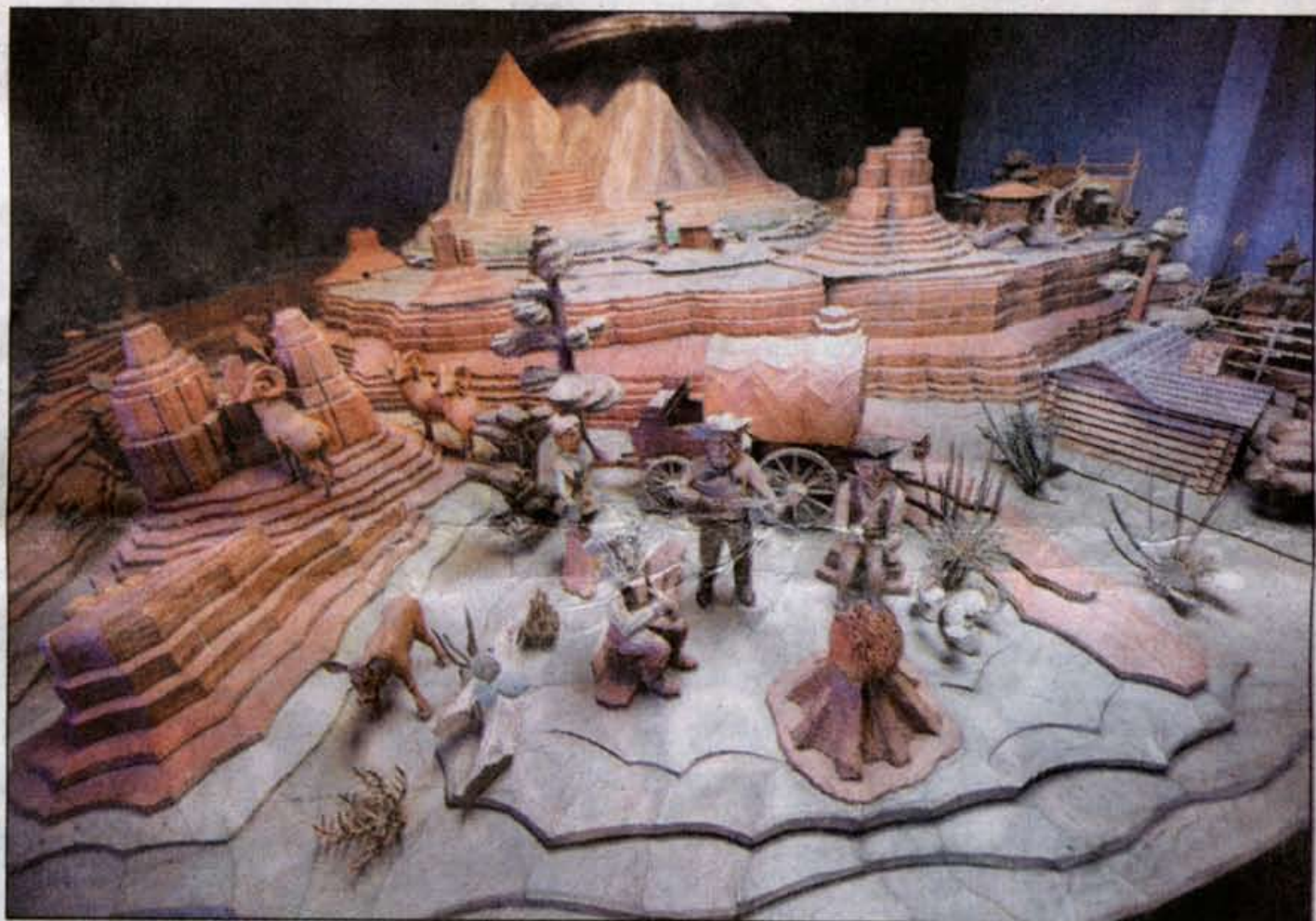


CYCLORAMA MAKES DEBUT



JON AUSTRIA — THE DAILY TIMES

Pecos West, a cyclorama carved by Valenty Zaharek, is seen Tuesday at the Aztec Museum and Pioneer Village in Aztec.

Carved circular tableau rotates to reveal history of Southwest

By Hannah Grover

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AZTEC » Visitors to the Aztec Museum and Pioneer Village will have the opportunity to see history represented in a panoramic setting.

In January, the museum received packages containing an 18-foot diameter wooden cyclorama weighing approximately 3,500 pounds.

The cyclorama, known as Pecos West, is a tableau that moves slowly in a circle displaying different images of what the West might have looked like.

"It basically will make one complete rotation in six and a half minutes," said Jimmy Miller, the museum association's board president.

+ **Online:** See a video and photo gallery of the Pecos West exhibit at DAILY-TIMES.COM

The cyclorama exhibit, located inside the museum's Atwood Annex, will open to the public on Memorial Day.

The hand-carved piece of folk art was created by World War II veteran Valenty Zaharek, who created it over the course of two decades while living in Sedona, Ariz.

Zaharek carved more than 100 separate scenes depicting people, animals, plants, vehicles and other symbols of the desert Southwest.

"Look at these," Miller said, pointing to a carving of mounted bandits during a preview event on Tuesday. "They just robbed Wells Fargo

or they were going to."

Angela Watkins, a member of the museum's board of directors, expressed amazement at the detail of the piece after seeing it Tuesday.

"I don't know if I could have stuck with that for 20 years," she said.

In the 1960s, Zaharek took the Pecos West to the New Mexico State Fair as well as Navajo tribal fairs before he moved it to an exhibit hall he had built in Sedona.

It remained on display in Sedona until the 1970s, when he placed it in storage for safety reasons.

After Zaharek's death in 1979, his cousin inherited the cyclorama and tried to sell it in New Jersey. Seventeen years later, a museum

Debut

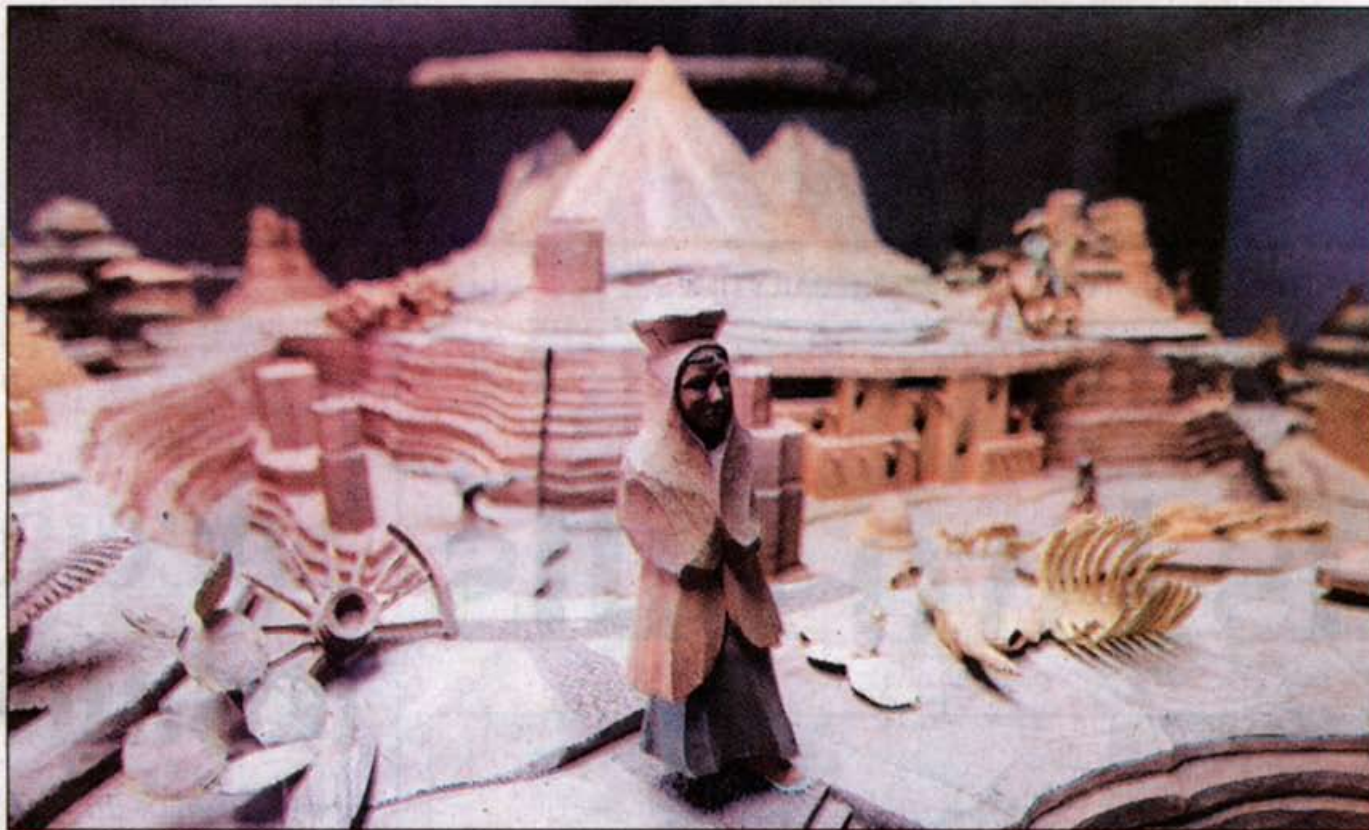
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in Maryland bought the display from the cousin's widow.

When the Maryland museum closed in 2011, the cyclorama was purchased by a private museum in North Carolina. That museum's owner believed Pecos West should be located in the Four Corners area and last year he gave the cyclorama — which Miller said has been appraised at \$220,000 — to the Aztec Museum and Pioneer Village free of charge. When the Aztec Museum and Pioneer Village received it, there was no base, so Jim McCaw, the museum's maintenance supervisor, and Dale Anderson, the museum association vice president, constructed a base and reassembled the cyclorama from photographs.

Although the museum allowed city officials and a few others to view Pecos West on Tuesday, some assembly is still required.

"If we get it all hooked up, you can even display a thunderstorm through this," he said, pointing out a cloud that still has to be



PHOTOS BY JON AUSTRIA — THE DAILY TIMES

Details of a cyclorama created by artist Valenty Zaharek are seen Tuesday.



installed on the exhibit.

Miller said eventually the museum hopes to have the cyclorama start whenever the door to the Atwood An-

nex is opened, accompanied by a recording that will tell the story of Pecos West. He paused to watch it rotate.

"Every time it goes

IF YOU GO

What: Pecos West exhibit

When: The museum will open at 10 a.m. May 24. Its hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Where: Aztec Museum and Pioneer Village, 125 N Main Ave.

Admission: \$5 for adults, \$3 for students

around, I see something I haven't seen before," Miller said.

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