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December 13, 1990

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**THROUGH THICK AND THIN: EVOLUTIONARY TRANSITIONS
OF *LAS VEGAS GRANDES* AND ITS *POBLADORES***

BY

ANSELMO F. ARELLANO

B.A., New Mexico Highlands University, 1968

M.A., New Mexico Highlands University, 1974

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 1990

THROUGH THICK AND THIN: EVOLUTIONARY TRANSITIONS
OF LAS VEGAS CHANGES AND ITS POBLADORES

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

Arizona State University

Tempe, Arizona

**THROUGH THICK AND THIN: EVOLUTIONARY TRANSITIONS
OF LAS VEGAS GRANDES AND ITS POBLADORES**

Anselmo F. Arellano

B.A. History, Languages,

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Ph.D. American Studies,

The University of New Mexico, 1980

From the end of the Spanish Colonial Period in New Mexico the evolution of the Santa Fe and Albuquerque areas has been a long and complex process. This dissertation is a study of the evolution of the Santa Fe and Albuquerque areas from the end of the Spanish Colonial Period to the present. It is a study of the evolution of the Santa Fe and Albuquerque areas from the end of the Spanish Colonial Period to the present. It is a study of the evolution of the Santa Fe and Albuquerque areas from the end of the Spanish Colonial Period to the present.

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Near the end of the Spanish Colonial Period in New Mexico, Hispano and *mestizo* citizens from the Santa Fe and San Miguel del Bado area cast their eyes on some longed-for fertile grazing lands called *las vegas grandes en el Río de las Gallinas*. Due to constant prevailing forays by Indians during this epoch, initial settlement efforts failed, but in 1835 a new thrust from San Miguel del Bado led to the permanent settlement of one of the last community land grants conceded in New Mexico during the Mexican Period.

This dissertation concerns itself with the history and culture of this intrepid, enduring group of individuals who settled this frontier area of New Mexico. Living on the

scattered settlements within the confines of the community land grant, these people survived the ravages of time and encounters with different cultures to emerge as a progressive community on the eve of New Mexico's statehood.

This study provides a sequence of historical accounts that track the societal development of these people. It begins with their early settlement patterns as they continued to seek lands with irrigation along the Pecos River on the eastern flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The population at San Miguel del Bado grew, fertile lands diminished, and these people continued their migratory movements towards the lands at Antón Chico, Tecolote, and Las Vegas—fully exposed and undaunted by their encroachments on Indian domain.

Once they were firmly established on the Las Vegas grant, the people continued their struggles with the Indians. Following the arrival of the Santa Fe Trail, their material culture and society received new infusions from the eastern United States. These cross-cultural interactions continued with the permanent arrival of Americans after 1846. The people adjusted, some slower than others, but collectively they faced cultural clashes, struggled for economic survival and continued to forge a new identity as foster children of the United States.

The many technological innovations and economic institutions brought to New Mexico radically altered their

pastoral-agrarian society. Many retained those traditions, but others adjusted to the pressures of Americanization. They fought for education and gradually established an ethnic consciousness. Many assumed new roles as educators, civic leaders, and politicians while others became members of an emerging working class. When their land grant was threatened by outside encroachments, the masses of poor people rose in protest. And again they prevailed.

Through the first decade of the 20th Century, these people addressed many societal issues that were important to them. They had been loyal patriots to the United States as trustworthy citizens and soldiers, although at times they had been compelled to prove that loyalty. And finally, their obstinacy and perseverance brought them the statehood status they had sought for over sixty years.

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INTRODUCTION

During the turbulent decade of the 1960s, student activism on university and college campuses throughout the United States reached its apex. Multi-faceted societal problems resulted in massive demonstrations and marches against poverty, racism, and other provocative issues such as the Vietnam war. Within this context of protest, minorities addressed their plight in American society, and enrollment in institutions of higher learning increased dramatically. New demands were placed on administrators and faculty as these groups sought new testimonies to their historical and cultural past.

For Mexican Americans, a new phenomenon called Chicano Studies erupted, creating a need and high demand for research and scholarship on the Chicano experience in the United States. Chicano comprised a culture that had occurred in the Southwest for almost four centuries, and those who migrated to contribute to the United States throughout the nineteenth century. Little published research was available, however, except for the classic studies of George I. Sanchez and Leo Peredo, Carey McWilliams, Ernesto Galarza, and Juanita Samora. In response to this paucity of available works, a new wave of dedication to research and

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scholarship developed, and the arduous process of piecing together the complex mosaic of historical and cultural experiences of Chicanos began.

During the past twenty years, numerous dedicated researchers and scholars have contributed to the development of a body of scholarship about Chicanos. As they relate fundamentally to Chicanos, these studies continue to bridge the gap in various disciplines such as history, behavioral sciences, literature, language, economics, and politics. Quite appropriately, historian Carlos E. Cortés has defined the Chicano historiography as "that body of scholarship about the Mexican American past that has developed since the mid-1960s greatly as a result of the impetus of the Chicano movement."²

Chicanos who seek educational and scholarly attainments and others who address the Chicano experience have also sought alternative, graduate level academic programs that allow more flexibility, interdisciplinary study, and a level of individuality in completing masters' theses and dissertations. American Studies programs have effectively provided these types of viable alternatives to many of these individuals in a variety of academic areas. Since the late 1960s, the American Studies Department at the University of New Mexico has allowed students to pursue graduate work in regional studies, multi-cultural studies, and other areas that provide new interpretations of American culture and

society.

Much scholarship in American Studies has focused on interdisciplinary historical and cultural studies of ethnic minorities and other non-elites. These studies have allowed for scholarly approaches in examining and formulating new philosophies and theories that have been reshaping the study and understanding of various segments of American society and culture.

This dissertation will provide an interdisciplinary study and examination of the historical and cultural development of a group of Chicanos who colonized a community land grant in New Mexico as the Spanish Colonial Period came to a close. The study presents a regional focus on the northeastern sector of New Mexico, one of the last areas to be occupied by these stalwart colonists. Their presence in the northern frontier began much earlier with Juan de Oñate's pivotal and successful effort at colonizing New Mexico in 1598.

This study falls within the scope of the European and Mexican advance and settlement of the "Spanish Southwest," as it interacted with the settlement of the American West by the United States. Subsequently, these native New Mexicans, people from a different culture, fell in the wake that was being cut across the Western frontier by the American shapers of Manifest Destiny.

This study also comes at a time when traditional

American historians and active revisionists continue to produce works on the American West. Revisionist historians such as Patricia Limerick interpret and reassess Western History as being something besides the advancement of Anglo-European white males. Novelist Larry McMurtry refers to Limerick and the school of revisionists as "scrappers" for new interpretations and revelations of white male adventure, and new inclusion of the often ignored topics such as the destruction of the land and native peoples.³

In challenging the dominant school of American historians, revisionists continue to demonstrate that historians such as Ray Allen Billington were anything but correct when they stated that "The history of the American West is, almost by definition, a triumphal narrative, for it traces a virtually unbroken chain of successes in national expansion." "But," as McMurtry maintains, "attitudes can change, and to some extent the American attitude about America has changed. Conquest, once a national habit, almost a national ideal, is now despised."⁴

Like Cortés, other eminent Chicano historians and published scholars such as Albert Camarillo, Ricardo Romo, David Montejano, Rudolfo Acuña, and Mario García have provided much of the vanguard in Chicano history. Historians Robert J. Rosenbaum and Alvin R. Sunseri have also produced excellent works on Chicano history.

But, Chicano historians have agreed that to depict

Chicano history as "revisionist" is only partially correct. In some cases, it has reacted critically to previous historical studies, but it also has its individual, creative thrust and development. Cortés has stated that much of the new scholarship on Chicanos challenges "pre-1969 books on Mexican Americans [that] addressed the same underlying questions: How 'successful' has the United States been in assimilating Chicanos or how 'successful' have Chicanos been in assimilating into mainstream America?" He establishes the premise that the new Chicano historiography now redefines success in other terms. These can include "community survival, development of a dynamic, syncretic culture, resistance to the homogenizing forces of total assimilation, and political-economic progress without cultural surrender."⁵

Albert Camarillo maintains that Chicanos' position in American society cannot be fully comprehended without first having a knowledge of Anglo-Chicano relations. This historical background begins with Chicanos when they first emerged as a minority on the American scene—during their early nineteenth century experiences with Texans when the latter declared their War for Independence. It continues with the Mexican-American War, and the history of Chicanos is, consequently, "part of that larger history of westward expansion by the United States and its subsequent domination of societies with different racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and political characteristics."⁶

That history of westward expansion into the Southwest has many times ignored the presence of the Mexican population, especially that period between 1848 and the first decade of the 20th Century. And, while the West was being "won," it had already been "conquered"—by indigenous pre-columbian peoples and Spanish and *mestizo* colonists who followed during the Spanish and Mexican Periods. "Through Thick and Thin..." will cover a period of that "conquest" as it relates to the history and culture of a collective group of people who settled and lived within the confines of one of New Mexico's many community land grants—the Las Vegas Grant. While the central focus is the occupants themselves, this dissertation also seeks to place this community within the broader context of New Mexico as a whole.

The first part of the study will explore the character and culture of the original settlers before the American Occupation and Conquest of New Mexico in 1846. It continues with a sequence of historical accounts which highlight the societal developments of these people. Cultural clashes and battles for survival against the Indians were commonplace during their early settlement, much as it had been for their antecedents. Significant problems with the Indians continued well into the Territorial Period under American rule.

The material culture and early lifestyle before the conquest is also presented. Much of this was influenced

substantially with the arrival of American merchants along the Santa Fe Trail. Traditional *mexicano* economic and social structures were affected by the Santa Fe Trail, and change became more pronounced after the Mexican War. Under American rule, Las Vegas emerged as a leading ranching community and trade center.

Throughout the Territorial Period, the people who lived in Las Vegas and other settlements on the land grant continued a progressive course. Exposed to many intercultural dynamics even before they confronted the dominant culture of the United States, these citizens were never a "traditional stagnant society," as Mexicans have usually been depicted. These people were able to resist Anglo dominance while they accommodated and adjusted to the new American order.

These New Mexicans were also quick to accept the responsibilities that accompanied American citizenship. They continued to be patriotic to their country, but their experience throughout the Territorial Period was also one of struggle and conflict while they continued to adjust to this process of accommodation. The citizens of Las Vegas and San Miguel County underwent various transitions, but they always seemed to be in a state of collective awareness about themselves, their needs, and their survival. This progressive course persisted after the railroad arrived, and the people continued to advance educationally, intellectually and politically until they finally achieved statehood status in

1912.

In a relatively short period of time—or about one century—the *pobladores* of *Las Vegas Grandes* had emerged as a mature and well-adjusted community, and they commenced a new journey into the Twentieth Century. They were scathed, but the scars came from experiences they were long accustomed to since their forbearers ventured north to colonize the northern reaches of Nueva España.

The methodological framework for this dissertation envelops an interdisciplinary approach to capturing the historical and cultural development of the people who settled the Las Vegas Land Grant. The study attempts to place them within the whole societal structure of the different cultures that surrounded them since they colonized the area through the end of New Mexico's Territorial Period.

This dissertation reviews and analyzes different elements of the history, social structure, and culture of these people through a series of topics that address some of the most significant periods of their progressional development. Existing historical accounts and related literature about New Mexico have been reviewed to lay the groundwork for this study. Primary sources that probe their life experiences are also integrated into this historical examination. A major contribution of this dissertation is the use of primary sources that have never been used before. The Spanish Archives, the Mexican Archives, and the Catholic

Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe contain a major part of a history of New Mexicans that has never been written. Similarly, the Spanish-language newspapers are a virtually untapped medium that contain an understanding on the development of New Mexicans during the Territorial Period.

Finally, it has been the intent of this writer to develop a historical dissertation that fits into the contemporary scheme of Chicano history. Hopefully, it will fill a gap that will bring others to a better understanding of the Chicano experience in American society. This study is not a complete historical assessment of the people who settled the Las Vegas Land Grant. Instead, it begins to lay some of the groundwork for expansion by others who harbor an interest in this and other related areas.

The completion of this manuscript was the collective result of various individuals to whom I am deeply grateful. First, I would like to thank Dr. Richard N. Ellis, now at Fort Lewis College, for directing the early portions of this project. Dr. Charles D. Biebel, professor of American Studies and chairman of this dissertation, critically reviewed this work and provided many helpful suggestions as it reached fruition. My thanks are also extended to the other members of my committee, Professors Tobías Durán, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, and F. Chris García who likewise reviewed the manuscript and provided constructive, beneficial suggestions.

To Professor Felipe Gonzales and Malcolm Ebright, friends and fellow scholars, I also owe a great deal for the many labors they extended in this final production. I would also like to thank Edwina Romero for providing a final review and helpful suggestions on the manuscript. Special acknowledgements and courtesies are extended to my friends at the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute (SHRI) headed by Professor José Rivera. I am indebted to SHRI's Frances Rico and Rosemarie Romero for their early assistance and unflinching words of encouragement. A most helpful research award from SHRI's new affiliate, the Center for Regional Studies, assisted financially during the final two months of this project.

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To all of these individuals, and others who helped in various ways, I am sincerely indebted. Should any failings arise in this dissertation, they are mine alone.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. See the following works by these scholars: George I. Sánchez, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940); Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949); Julian Samora, ed. *La Raza: Forgotten Americans* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966); Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor* (Santa Barbara, California: McNally and Loftin, 1964).

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3. Larry McMurtry, "How the West Was Won or Lost," *The New Republic*, October 22, 1990, pp 32-33.

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6. Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in A Changing Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 1-2.

CHAPTER I

EARLY SETTLEMENT PERIOD OF EL BADO AND ITS ENVIRONS THROUGH THE 1820s

Don Juan Bautista de Anza arrived in New Mexico as the new governor and military commander of the province in 1778. Prior to his arrival, incessant conflict and raids by the nomadic tribes of New Mexico threatened the survival of the Spanish and Pueblo Indian settlements. As governor, de Anza's major task was to carry out a military campaign against the Comanche Indians, lords of the plains and most feared warriors of all tribes. Once having defeated them, New Mexico would seek peace and gain their alliance to fight the Apaches and other tribes who would remain unfriendly to the Spaniards and their Pueblo Indian allies.

In August 1779, de Anza launched a major military campaign against the Comanches and their undaunted leader, Cuerno Verde. Pueblo, Ute, and Jicarilla Apache allies were recruited to join the campaign and march against the common enemy. The force of 800 marched to the Comanche stronghold in present southern Colorado where Cuerno Verde and many of his braves were routed and killed in surprise attacks. This major defeat of the Comanche nation weakened them to the extent that a few years later in 1786, their reigning chief,

Ecueraçapa, met with de Anza at Pecos to enter negotiations for a lasting peace between both groups. On this memorable occasion, de Anza bestowed upon Ecueraçapa a staff "as an insignia of authority and presented him with a uniform and a medal with the king's likeness."¹

On their part, the Comanches were allowed to move closer to the New Mexico settlements and reign over their domain on the plains as long as they agreed to remain peaceful with other Indians who were friendly to Spanish authority and its colonists. The *españoles* and Comanches also agreed on a common bond to join ranks and fight the Apaches.²

Despite the expanding settlement and continual growth of New Mexico during this period, the province remained sparsely populated as the eighteenth century was drawing to a close. The total population in 1793 was 30,953, consisting of 11,175 Indians who lived in 25 pueblos and 19,778 Spaniards and *castas* living in 18 villas and smaller settlements—the majority adjacent to Indian pueblos where a stronger defense against nomadic Indians was afforded.³

During the 1700s, while they became firmly established in New Mexico, Spanish soldiers, livestock herders, buffalo hunters, and traders among the Indians developed a keen familiarity with the topography of the province. Lush grazing lands and fertile valleys with water for irrigation were continually observed and given new place names by these

daring travelers. Only the hostility and depredations of marauding Indian tribes kept these frontier zones unsettled for many years.

One of these unoccupied frontier areas lay along the eastern flank of the *Sangre de Cristos* east from Santa Fe, and the grazing lands and river valleys which extended into the eastern plains. Cuerno Verde's defeat and the new truce established with the Comanches brought a new sense of security to *nuevomexicanos*, and consequently, it allowed for the beginning of settlement extensions into these longed for fertile lands. By 1793, the population of the capital city of Santa Fe had grown to a total of 2,419 souls, making it the second largest *villa* in the province after El Paso.⁴

Many of the *españoles, mestizos, castas, and genízaros* who lived there were distraught as they found themselves without employment or water for their lands and domestic use. In 1794, citizen Lorenzo Márquez petitioned the Spanish Crown for a tract of land for himself and fifty-one other residents. Thirteen of the petitioners were Hispanicized *genízaro* Indians. In his petition, Márquez requested a colonization grant of land at the place commonly known as El Bado and stated that

...though we have some land in this town, it is not sufficient for our support, on account of its smallness and the great scarcity of water, which owing

to the great number of people we cannot
all enjoy, wherefore we have entered a
tract of land on the Río Pecos, vacant
and unsettled, at the place commonly
called El Bado, and where there is room
enough, not only for us, the 51 who ask
for it, but for everyone in the province
not supplied.⁵

Although the request was granted and people were placed
in possession of the lands at El Vado, official settlement
and occupation did not occur until 1798. The initial 52
families were to live at Pecos Pueblo until their homes at
El Vado were built and the settlement was ready for
occupation.⁶

The settlers of San Miguel followed a popular Spanish
tradition for new settlements whereby construction of the
acequia madre was the first and foremost priority. The dry,
arid climate of New Mexico compelled new settlers to seek
farmlands along the narrow mountain valleys where streams
and rivers would provide water for irrigation. Without the
life-sustaining *acequia* water, new settlements had no chance
for survival. Once the ditches began conveying water to the
farm plots, construction of homes, the church, and other
buildings could continue.⁷

A document dated March 12, 1798, signed by Pedro
Bautista Pino, Justice of the Second Rate from Santa Fe,

reveals that he acted under orders of Governor Fernando Chácon and distributed lands at El Bado to fifty-eight families.⁸ The conditions of settlement placed on the settlers of the new community of San Miguel del Bado called for the construction of a plaza and irrigation ditches for the common welfare of the community. Due to the Indian dangers which still threatened, all citizens were to equip themselves with firearms and bows and arrows for their protection. After two years of settlement had elapsed, all were to have firearms, or they would be sent away from the community.⁹

By 1806, the people began construction of a church having rock walls three feet thick and twenty feet high. Two large belfry towers were built in front of the church, giving it an assertive and imposing presence. Soon after by 1812, the new settlement of San Miguel had grown to 230, and that year the colonists petitioned the church for a resident priest.¹⁰ A small military garrison to protect the settlers was also established there since 1808.¹¹

San Miguel del Bado quickly replaced Pecos Pueblo as the eastern outpost for New Mexico. It maintained a constant surveillance on the plains and the Apaches, Kiowas, Pawnees, Utes, and other tribes who roamed and pillaged that sector of New Mexico. With time, the community provided the nucleus for the continued expansion into the remaining river valleys and northeastern plains of New Mexico. As early as

1803, the sister community of San José del Bado was settled by forty-seven families in another colonization effort.¹²

Other land concessions went to wealthy, influential leaders from Santa Fe. They received *sitios*, or grants of lands intended primarily for grazing purposes. These individuals possessed large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, horses and mules. In 1819, Antonio Ortiz was awarded a *sitio* on the eastern plains along a branch of the Canadian River. Juan Esteban Pino received another grant for grazing near present Santa Rosa in 1823. And the following year, Pablo Montoya acquired an extensive grant of 655,408 acres further east along the Canadian River Valley.¹³

Because of the Comanche stronghold and other marauding tribes traversing the far eastern plains, it is unlikely that these large tracts of land were occupied on a permanent basis during the Mexican Period. Most were probably occupied on an intermittent seasonal basis by shepherds and herders under the employ of the wealthier owners.

During the summer months, people from San Miguel ventured away from the immediate area in a southeasterly direction to pasture their goats and flocks of sheep along the valleys and meadows of the Pecos River at a place known as *La Cuesta* (presently Villanueva). Northeast from the population center, they would take their animals to *El Tecolotito* along the *Tecolote* River. Some of the most

daring ventured a few miles further to the fertile, grassy meadows at the *Río de las Gallinas*. These three locations were popularly known, and they were to become the sites for three major settlement efforts. Sometime before 1820, one Luis María Cabesa de Baca from Peña Blanca came to San José where he became the *Alcalde Mayor*.¹⁴

It did not take Luis María long to become interested in the fertile meadows situated along the Gallinas River. Cabesa de Baca and eight men from San Miguel petitioned for and received concession to the lands known as *Las Vegas Grandes en el Río de las Gallinas* on February 18, 1820. The eight other individuals acquired land elsewhere, according to C. de Baca, and they relinquished their interest in the Las Vegas land to him. The following year on January 16, 1821, C. de Baca again officially petitioned the Provincial Deputation of the State of Durango for the same tract of land. During this late Spanish period, Durango still held jurisdiction over the colonial province of New Mexico. The new petition for the Las Vegas Grant was made on behalf of C. de Baca and his seventeen male children. The boundaries described in his land request were: "On the north the *Sapelló* River, on the South the boundary of *El Bado*, on the west the summit of the Pecos Mountain, on the east the *Aguage de la Llegua* and the boundary of Don Antonio Ortiz."¹⁵

On May 29, 1821, Diego García Conde and Miguel Zubiría,

president and secretary of the Provincial Deputation of Durango respectively, informed the governor of New Mexico, Facundo Melgares, that in the event Luis María's eight companions had other lands on which to pasture their cattle, the Deputation would grant C. de Baca the petitioned for land called *Las Vegas Grandes*. Additionally, it was required that the other parties could not have any buildings or other improvements on the petitioned land. If such improvements had occurred, C. de Baca was to reimburse them, and equal quantities of land should be given to them, wherever they chose to replace those given to Luis María. The Deputation also requested that Governor Melgares inform the parties involved of the action taken to carry out the order.¹⁶

Two years later on October 17, 1823, the Political Chief of New Mexico, Bartolomé Baca, instructed the *alcalde* of San Miguel del Bado to place C. de Baca in possession of the land for which he had petitioned. By this time, it had apparently been determined that the eight individuals who accompanied the first petition had forfeited any claim or reimbursement to the property. The *alcalde* was also required to attest, at the bottom of the decree, that he had indeed carried out the land concession and placed Luis María C. de Baca in its lawful possession.¹⁷

On February 16, 1825, Juan Bautista Vigil, Secretary of the Territorial Deputation of New Mexico, later certified a

petition filed by Juan Antonio Cabeza de Baca, grantee and son of Luis María. The petition covered the first land grant petition and the events which had transpired up to that time. It claimed that the *alcalde* at San Miguel had legally delivered possession of the grant to the family although no family member possessed the document to prove it. Juan Antonio was now asking the Territorial Deputation to ratify and legalize all prior proceedings related to the grant.¹⁸

The territorial officials reviewed and considered Juan Antonio's petition with close scrutiny. Luis María's initial petition had been made to the Spanish Provincial Deputation in January of 1821.¹⁹ Although it was unknown to New Mexicans at the time, one month after Luis María's initial request for the land grant was made, Agustín de Iturbide announced his famous Plan of Iguala, declaring Mexico's Independence,²⁰ and seven months later, on September 27, Iturbide marched into Mexico City to officially establish independence for the new republic. News of the "Plan de Iguala" drafted in February finally reached Santa Fe on September 11, 1821,²¹ and a dispatch announcing Iturbide's subsequent march into Mexico City arrived in New Mexico's capital on December 26. Governor Facundo Melgares and the citizens of New Mexico patriotically pledged allegiance to their independence that same day.²²

When the Territorial Deputation reviewed the C. de Baca petition to ratify and legalize all prior action taken on the Las Vegas grant, they were in agreement that official conveyance of the grant to the C. De Baca's had not yet occurred. The question arose as to the authority the State of Durango held over New Mexico in May 1821, since Mexico was already independent and a new political process had been initiated. Some of the Mexican states had not yet recognized the new changes, and the officials of the State of Durango had exercised their powers in accordance with those entrusted to them by the king of Spain. The territorial officials of New Mexico concluded that the Deputation of Durango had acted in good faith, and within the scope of its authority, when the land was officially granted to the C. de Baca family.²³

The Territorial Deputation of New Mexico consequently affirmed in 1825 that "the province of New Mexico was under the jurisdiction of that state in 1821, and that any grant made by its legally constituted authorities was a good and valid one."²⁴ That same year Governor Melgares of New Mexico was satisfied that the Durango officials were correct in making the concession, and consequently, he ordered that the grantees be given possession. It was also felt that had Melgares doubted the authority of Durango, he would not have decreed that the family should be placed in possession of the land grant.

The Territorial Deputation finally ratified and confirmed the grant and ordered the *alcalde* of San Miguel to again place the grantees in legal possession of the land grant. Soon after, Miguel and Mateo Baca appeared before the *alcalde* on December 20, 1825, complaining that he had not yet placed them in legal possession. *Alcalde* Tomás Sena replied that he had been unable to carry out his formal duty because he had been sick. Then in January of 1826, Luis María himself remonstrated to the governor that they had repeatedly requested *Alcalde* Sena to place them in possession of the land to no avail. Governor Antonio Narbona ordered the new *alcalde* at San Miguel, Manuel Antonio Baca, to immediately carry out the legal placement of the land to the C. de Bacas. The *alcalde* fully complied on the same day, and after years of requests and appeals Luis María and his family finally held legal title to the land.²⁵

Part of the C. de Baca family had occupied the lands at *Las Vegas Grandes* since Luis María first became interested in them in 1820. The family stated that they took possession of the lands and established a ranch. Servants and livestock consisting of six hundred mules and horses, many cattle, and about 3,000 sheep accompanied the family to their new lands. They had remained there a few years until they were pillaged and driven away by the Pawnee Indians. Family members claimed tremendous losses in livestock to the Indians estimated at \$36,000.²⁶

José Francisco Salas, an employee of the C. de Baca family, stated that the family was there for about fourteen years and that the family patriarch, Luis María, resided there for ten of those years.²⁷ It is unlikely, however, that Luis María lived at Las Vegas for more than five years. It is also probable that due to his advancing age and other reasons, he only spent time there on a seasonal basis. In 1824, he was back at Peña Blanca performing the duties of *procurador síndico* (town clerk) at the age of seventy.²⁸

Three years later in 1827, Luis María's son, Juan Antonio, was reported to be hiding thirteen bundles of contraband furs belonging to Ewing Young, an American trapper. When Governor Antonio de Narbona sent a soldier, Comandante Juan José Arrocha, to seize the furs, the old man Luis María had the misfortune of being there.²⁹ He apparently resisted a search of the house and was killed defending the furs, and in all likelihood, his honor.

The sons of Luis María, who did occupy the lands at Las Vegas, were driven off by the Indians more than once, but they would regroup and return when the Indian problem would quiet. Salas reported that only Luis María and his sons resided at Las Vegas and made any improvements on the land before they were driven off the final time. At Las Vegas Grandes, Salas said that Luis María

...had a hut built at Loma Montosa,
where himself and his cattle remained

for a greater portion of the time. I did not see any other improvements. I had charge of the sheep herd and sometimes would come to his hut, but the greater portion of the time I was in another direction with the sheep.³⁰

In his petition of 1821, Luis María had requested "*un propio sitio para labor y pasteos*" ("a proper location for cultivation and pasturing"), but Salas reported that they had never engaged in farming. Six members of Luis María's family were still at Las Vegas when they were finally driven off in the early 1830s by the Pawnees. The Indians never killed any of the C. de Baca party at Las Vegas, but the great losses they encountered finally compelled them to abandon their lands.³¹

One recorded attack on the C. de Baca ranch occurred in 1826, but only a horse belonging to a resident from "Xemes" and four cows belonging to the family were taken.³² The family was there as late as 1831. That year the trader Josiah Gregg was on the road to Santa Fe when he arrived at the Gallinas River, which he called the "first of the Río del Norte Waters."³³ When he arrived near present Las Vegas, Gregg reported that at

...Gallinas Creek we found a large flock of sheep grazing upon the adjacent plain; while a little hovel at the foot

of a cliff showed it to be a rancho. A swarthy rancho soon made his appearance, from whom we procured a treat of goat's milk, with some dirty ewe's milk curdle cheese to supply the place of bread.³⁴

During this formative decade of the 1820s, San Miguel del Bado established itself as a center of busy activity, while the population in the immediate area of the narrow valley continued to grow. It became a popular stopover for Americans and foreigners who were welcomed into New Mexico by the young Mexican Republic. Comanches and Pueblo Indians continued to stop in the settlement on trading excursions, or as they traveled back and forth across the plains. About the same time the C. de Bacas were occupying their lands at Las Vegas, another group from San Miguel was moving south-eastwardly along the Pecos River to establish another colony on unoccupied lands.

In 1822, seventeen men from San Miguel petitioned the Mexican administration for lands at Antón Chico, twenty miles down river. Their request was approved, and they soon established the settlement of Antón Chico. These people also suffered repeated attacks by Comanches and other Indians until they too were compelled to abandon the area in 1830. They returned to the protection and sanctuary of San Miguel for four years. In 1834, a larger group of settlers

returned to settle permanently at the old site.³⁵

Another effort to occupy lands occurred two years after Antón Chico was first settled, but these people were interested in lands northeast from San Miguel at a place known as *El Tecolotito*. On October 8, 1824, Salvador Montoya and five other residents from San Miguel petitioned the Territorial Deputation in Santa Fe for those lands which followed the course of the Tecolote River. Montoya was requesting soil where he could "...scatter a few grains of corn and other seed for my support, and that of the large family I have..."³⁶ Montoya's petition stated that they were not including common streams, pastures, and watering places in their request. These lands would apparently remain open as common lands for all people to enjoy.

Montoya and his associates were placed in possession of their lands on April 23, 1825. The grantees and their employees settled on the land and cultivated and raised crops for about four years until hostile tribes, commonly known as the "*naciones del norte*" (northern tribes or nations), attacked their *ranchos* killing some of their employees. These Indian incursions against the Montoyas occurred at different intervals until they too abandoned their holdings around 1829. Nine years later, the Montoyas returned to remain permanently.³⁷

The most harrowing and bewildering experience these unfortunate but determined members of the Montoya party

encountered occurred in October 1826. Indians attacked and scalped three sheep herders at Tecolote, and one of them had part of his skull chipped off. Luckily, the terrified men lived to talk about their experience. Following the attack, Juan José Cabesa de Baca from San Miguel dispatched a small band of eight soldiers to search for the culpable Indians and scout for further Indian threats to area citizens. The search was carried out to no avail.³⁸ The early Indian encounters at Las Vegas, Antón Chico, and Tecolote were just the beginning of many hard realities emerging settlements and the growing population in the San Miguel del Bado district would face for years to come.

The establishment of the Mexican Republic in 1821 brought significant, positive results to the frontier citizenry. The new flow of foreigners to New Mexico brought San Miguel into major contact with trappers, traders, and other adventurers. Two months after Governor Facundo Melgares swore allegiance to Mexican Independence, William Becknell and a small contingent of traders traveling amidst the plains encountered a military patrol from New Mexico. Upon learning about the new political order and receiving an hospitable invitation to enter New Mexico, they were escorted to San Miguel del Bado. They visited and traded some of their wares with the people before continuing through Glòrieta Pass into Santa Fe.³⁹

Becknell's landmark stop at Bado initiated the Santa Fe

Trail Trade, and it consequently launched the community into becoming a major trade and political center. One detrimental development which resulted from the opening of the Santa Fe Trail was the importation and sale of firearms to hostile tribes. Although New Mexicans needed fire power for their defense, the availability of guns to nomadic tribes gave them new strength, posing a greater threat to *nuevomexicanos* during the Mexican Period. Guns were traded to Apaches, Navajos, Comanches, and other tribes. In 1823, New Mexican officials learned that Americans had furnished weapons and ammunition to the Navajo, and consequently, it did not take them too long to realize that these armaments were gradually shifting the balance of power to the Indians.⁴⁰

Crops, cattle, sheep, goats, and horses were raided and driven off by Utes, Pawnees, Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Kansas, and Navajos, causing much distress and anguish to these hardy, determined colonists of the northeastern New Mexico frontier. The worst which could befall a family during these forays was the tragic loss of one or more of their endeared members. Occasionally, younger children and women were spared and taken to live as captives among the Indians. Sometimes these *cautivos* were able to escape while others were purchased or bartered and allowed to return to their homes. A few became acculturated into the Indian way of life, living out their remaining days with their Indian foster parents.

Some of the wealthier Spanish families of New Mexico similarly engaged in this cruel custom of purchasing or capturing Indian children for resale as *cautivos* or to raise them as their own *criados*. Many of these *genízaros* grew to adulthood and intermarried among *mexicano* families, engendering the growth of *mestizaje* in the territory.

Frontier buffer zones, such as the San Miguel district, were in a continuous state of desperation and defenselessness. This state of affairs existed through most of the Mexican Period. Much of it can be attributed to: small numbers of people occupying the frontier settlements; the inadequate and inferior weapons of the people; a poorly equipped and undermanned army; the poverty of the province of New Mexico; and the corresponding neglect of the territory by the central authority in Mexico. In addition, the dreaded Indian threat kept people clustered and crowded in population centers such as San Miguel, creating social, economic, and other pressures on the citizenry.

Native Hispanic youth of New Mexico had traditionally proven to be good soldiers and volunteer fighters since their victorious battles over the Comanches during the late 1700s ensured the survival of the New Mexico frontier province and settlements. Like their Pueblo allies, *mexicanos* relied primarily on the bow and arrow, pikes, and lances when they engaged in battle. Notwithstanding their self-preservation and fighting abilities, settlers and the

military endured a dire handicap in the absence of firearms and gunpowder.

By the late 1770s, it was reported that the shortage of guns in New Mexico was partially alleviated, but other documents reveal few improvements occurred, and New Mexico's military and its ability to defend the province continued to deteriorate. A command inspection of soldiers stationed at San Miguel del Bado, during the late summer of 1821, produced two cavalry and eleven infantry present. Four were absent, and eight others were out working to support their families. Their mounts, arms, and munitions amounted to a paltry four horses, three rifles, two lances, ten bows and 235 arrows—a small contingent to defend such a vast area.⁴¹

Besides being undermanned and poorly equipped, soldiers had to endure many hardships. They experienced critical shortages of food, clothing, and other supplies. They went without pay for long periods of time, and the actual survival of soldiers and their families was threatened. Troops in the frontier were regularly released on furlough to support themselves by hunting, farming, and ranching.

Military campaigns against the Indians required much organization and the recruitment of many volunteers. In some campaigns the regular enlisted army was made up of less than ten per cent of the fighting force. Volunteers had to provide their own weapons and provisions, and consequently, many were reluctant to participate. These military

assemblages carried the burden of defending the frontier against the marauding tribes while suffering many privations.⁴²

Support for the frontier province of New Mexico began to diminish and worsen after the struggle for Mexican independence was launched in 1810. Resources and monetary reserves in Mexico were diverted by the crown to fighting the revolutionary forces. Government aid was no longer sent to the military garrisons in New Mexico and the northern frontier. This situation, along with the tithing and taxing of the people in New Mexico, prevailed during the early Mexican period. The church, too, had done little to meet the spiritual needs of New Mexicans, while it drained the people of their limited resources.

Sixty-four years of neglect by the bishop and Catholic church in Durango reached a culminating apex in New Mexico during this early period of Mexican sovereignty. Revenues from tithing and other taxes which normally went to the presidial companies and public schools had long been denied to the New Mexico province under the Spanish crown. Most of the tithing had gone to ecclesiastical authority outside the province, and the trend continued to follow the same course after Mexican Independence. In 1824, the military commander of New Mexico loudly complained that the veteran troop of the territory was almost dying of starvation. A few months later, the total number of enlisted soldiers in the terri-

tory had dropped to thirty men, causing much alarm among church and government officials at Santa Fe.⁴³

A cash economy was virtually non-existent in New Mexico, making currency extremely scarce. The consequent poor economic state of the people generated little revenue, and as a result, the church and Territorial Deputation of New Mexico were finally compelled to seek some relief for the people. A special request and plea sought to allow tithes collected in New Mexico to remain at home in order to alleviate pressing local needs. The request was approved, and in addition, national taxes were suspended for the impoverished northern territory for a period of ten years. Mexican authority stipulated that collected tithes had to be used to relieve the two most pressing needs of New Mexico—the military and education.⁴⁴

Despite the well-intended and generous gesture by the Mexican government, New Mexico's poverty could generate but small revenues, and the military continued to function in a poorly-manned and ill-equipped condition. Attacks by nomadic tribes were too numerous to be contained by the *presidio* at Santa Fe and its small military force which seldom had more than one hundred enlisted men. Small patrols were sent to places such as Santa Cruz, Taos, and San Miguel to man the small garrisons, and although mandated by law, military personnel were not always present at these locations.⁴⁵

Nuevomexicanos estimated that the territory was

continuously surrounded by over thirty tribes of marauding Indians.⁴⁶ These estimates were based on the various tribes found within the Comanche, Apache, Navajo, and other Indian nations. Reports of raids, captives being taken, and occasional killings by Indians poured into Santa Fe from San Miguel del Bado and other *alcaldías*. Even the Navajo, whose raids were usually contained to the Río Abajo and frontier settlements west of the Sangre de Cristos, occasionally ventured to the eastern plains near San Miguel.⁴⁷

Comanches continued to be the most numerous and powerful of all the Indian tribes, and New Mexicans emphasized the need to maintain their old allegiance with them. Mexican officials and the militia were usually successful in negotiating with the Comanche and preventing them from forming new alliances with Americans and other foreigners who began to make inroads into the plains and New Mexico during the 1820s.⁴⁸

Since the Comanches still maintained their alliance with the *nuevomexicanos*, the most ferocious Indians threatening the territory during this time were the Apaches who "treacherously killed and robbed; torturing their prisoners and scalping their victims while yet alive,..."⁴⁹ They were constantly at war, causing great damage to the settlements and breaking many treaties with *mexicanos*.⁵⁰

Navajos also committed many depredations against New Mexicans in 1822, especially in the region of the Sandia

Mountains. Colonel Antonio Vizcarra, a proven military leader, defeated them early in February and forced them into accepting a peace treaty. This was an important victory. The Navajo returned many *cautivos* to the Spanish. Members of the tribe also claimed they were dying from hunger during the harsh winters. Vizcarra gave them four months to accept conversion and settlement, which they only accepted temporarily.⁵¹ A year later, he was engaged in another major battle with them.⁵²

This perplexing status of *mexicano*/Indian relations plagued the New Mexico frontier throughout the Mexican Period. Treaties were broken, and New Mexicans continued to repel Indian attacks as best they could. In addition, the poor economic situation prevented New Mexican officials from continuing their effective policy of providing peaceful tribes with gifts and other gratuities. This deteriorating influence prompted the Comanches to carry out raids against the states of Chihuahua and Durango where pillaging afforded greater rewards.⁵³

Notwithstanding their attacks on Chihuahua and Sonora, Comanches were still on peaceable terms with the *nuevo-mexicano*. In 1828, Comandante General Don Juan José Arocha and Don José Francisco Ortiz met with the Comanches on the Gallinas River, seeking a peace which would end Comanche hostilities in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. The Cuchuntica Comanche chiefs, Cordero and Paranquita, had

invited the New Mexicans to ratify the peace negotiations they had celebrated in Chihuahua. The tribe of six hundred warriors promised they would not carry out any more attacks against San Elizario and northern Chihuahua.⁵⁴

Commanding General Arocha decorated the *capitancillo* (Comanche chief) with a medallion emblazoned with the arms of the Mexican Republic on the front side and the emblem of liberty on the backside. The Comanche leader also received a cane which officially named him to carry out the peace treaty negotiations.⁵⁵

On other occasions, *nuevomexicanos* served as arbitrators between opposing warring tribes. In December of 1827, fourteen Comanches arrived at Antón Chico seeking a location where they could arbitrate their differences with their Apache enemies. Santiago Sandoval wrote to Governor Manuel Armijo stating that he was willing serve as the mediator between both groups of Indians, but he must first have the canes which were customarily exchanged in peace treaty negotiations.⁵⁶

Residents of Antón Chico once again reported Indian activity in that locality in 1830. This time, the "*nueva población de Antón Chico*," (new settlement of Antón Chico) as it was still being called, was the victim of Indian aggression. In October, some Indians—possibly Pawnees or Kiowas—raided the community, killing one resident and injuring another. A force of forty-two soldiers and

volunteers pursued the Indians to the Río Colorado (now Canadian River), where it became extremely difficult to follow their tracks.⁵⁷ Four days later Cavo, (Corporal) Manuel Antonio Baca wrote to Governor José Antonio Chávez from La Cuesta—midway between Antón Chico and San Miguel—denying that he had been driven out of Antón Chico by the enemy. He did admit however, that the Indians had committed much damage there.⁵⁸

The band of Indians continued to roam the area of Antón Chico committing other depredations for a few more days. At a location called *pinos altos* (tall pines), they attacked a sheep camp and took two young herders captive. One was the son of Antón Chico resident José Sais, and the other was a boy from the Río Abajo. Soldiers and volunteers followed the tracks again—this time further into the eastern plains where they concluded that the Indians were returning to their own domain.⁵⁹ This raid and damage inflicted on Antón Chico establishes 1830 as the most plausible date for the temporary abandonment of the settlement.

Living amidst this ever-present Indian threat was only one of many daily preoccupations facing the people at San Miguel. They toiled on their plots of land, depending on irrigation waters from *acequias* for the sustenance of their crops. On the tablelands near San Miguel, San José, and La Cuesta, young herders kept vigil over small flocks of sheep and goats. Others worked for *ricos* caring for larger flocks

and herds of cattle. Some residents engaged in other colorful endeavors, but all participated in the daily struggle of eking out a living in the isolated and harsh environment of northeastern New Mexico.

One interesting group of individuals from San Miguel was the buffalo hunters known as *ciboleros*. For many generations these intrepid hunters had joined other *nuevomexicanos* and traveled the plains seeking meat to supplement the food supply of the growing population of New Mexico. The hunts which involved scores of people for weeks were conducted in June and October. The buffalo kill, conversion of the meat to *tasajos* or strips of dry "jerked" meat, and the drying of hides for buffalo robes all occurred on the same plains where the hunt took place—many times under threat of Indian attack.⁶⁰ One of the favorite trails used by San Miguel *ciboleros* took them to *El Puertecito de las Gallinas* (Turkey Gap) near *El Tecolotito* (Tecolote) to the *Vereda de Anima* (Trail of the Soul) and along the tablelands until it crossed the Gallinas River and headed towards the far eastern plains.⁶¹

The peace established with the Comanches in the late 1700s had also allowed for the simultaneous emergence of *comancheros*, or *nuevomexicanos*, who traveled to the Comanche villages to trade their wares. Like the *mexicano* traders, Comanches also traveled and visited freely among the residents of San Miguel and the surrounding settlements.

Intermarriage occurred among both groups with some New Mexicans voluntarily abandoning their homeland to live among the Indians. In like fashion, a few Comanches chose New Mexican wives and lived in the Spanish settlements.⁶²

According to Josiah Gregg, *comancheros* supplied the Comanches with rifles and gunpowder, but New Mexico's limited arsenal, as revealed in official reports and records would argue to the contrary. Gunpowder was also hard to acquire in the territory, and it was very expensive. Trinkets, hard bread, flour, and other provisions were traded by the *comancheros* in exchange for mules, horses, buffalo robes, and jerked meat. Gregg also noted that "...for many years the Comanches have cultivated peace with the New Mexicans—not only because the poverty of the country offers fewer inducements for their inroads, but because it is desirable, as with the interior Mexican tribes, to retain some friendly point with which to keep an amicable intercourse and traffic."⁶³

One of the most celebrated travelers among the plains Indians was Manuel Rivera, or "*Manuel el Comanche*," as he was called by Josiah Gregg and others who chronicled their travels across the prairies.⁶⁴ He was too poor to trade among the Indians himself, but his popularity among *comancheros*, trappers, and Santa Fe Trail traders surely makes him the most popular visitor among the Comanches. Rivera was actually from San Juan, and by his own admission,

a *mestizo*. He settled at San Miguel where he married four different times between 1809 and 1816.⁶⁵

On one occasion in 1819, Rivera was interrogated by authorities at Santa Fe after spending two months with the Comanches. He had traveled there as a peon of Manuel Sánchez who traded with the Indians. After guiding and interpreting for his *amo*, "El Comanche" fell from his horse and was injured. He was separated from the party, horseless and without food. Rivera then worked for the Comanches breaking horses until they paid him with seven horses, allowing him transportation back to New Mexico. During the inquiry at Santa Fe, he related reports by the Comanche Vicente who said Americans were coming from three different directions to invade New Mexico.⁶⁶ The Americans might have been traders among the Plains Indians as the purported invasion never occurred.

By the end of the decade, San Miguel del Bado's role as a strategic military outpost was well established and the community continued to assume a larger role in territorial affairs. In addition to protecting the northeastern frontier against Indian attacks, soldiers stationed at San Miguel were now escorting and protecting Santa Fe-bound caravans from the eastern plains to the capital. Indian hostility against the caravans gradually increased and with it, the demand for additional garrison troops at San Miguel. By 1827, San Miguel attempted to keep between ten and thirty

soldiers assigned to duty to patrol the area for signs of Indian threats and to prevent the smuggling of contraband into New Mexico as traders made their way to Santa Fe.⁶⁷

Merchants who arrived in New Mexico during the early 1820s also discovered the wealth New Mexico contained in beaver and other fur-bearing animals. French and American trappers entered the Rockies to take advantage of this enterprise as pelts and furs were in great demand in European markets.⁶⁸ Although Mexico did not have a trapping industry, the government allowed for some foreigners to acquire licenses and participate in the trade. *Nuevo-mexicanos* involved in trapping were usually employed as *peones* and guides for the foreigners.⁶⁹ Many of these trappers converging on the New Mexico mountains stopped at San Miguel before continuing to the capital.

This increased activity with foreigners at San Miguel del Bado kept the *alcaldes* busy communicating with the Governor and military officials at Santa Fe. Since *alcaldes* were usually the first affected by Indians and foreigners, they provided a critical communications link between the settlements and the Governor. On March 24, 1825, *Alcalde* Tomás Sena wrote to officials in Santa Fe reporting the activities of three Americans and two Frenchmen who were staying at San Miguel. Two of the Americans were going beaver trapping and the third was planning to go to Santa Fe with the two Frenchmen. Their trip had been delayed because

they were poorly equipped and had lost some of their mules.⁷⁰

Occasionally, *alcaldes* and military officials at the frontier outposts were kept occupied by providing Indians with gifts to keep them on peaceful terms with New Mexico. Gratuities usually consisted of cloth, knives, vermillion, buttons, mirrors, shirts, and other manufactured items desired by the Indians.⁷¹ Availability of these gifts to Apaches, Comanches, Navajos, and Utes depended on how the economic situation and limited wealth of New Mexico stood at different given times. Early in September 1825, the Comanche Captains Vicente, Ganisavia, and Chimal Colorado arrived at San Miguel with various warriors. The Indians were requesting food for hungry members of their tribe as well as other gifts.⁷² A few days later *Alcalde* Sena wrote to Governor Cosme Baca informing him that he had given the Comanche chief the customary cane and a gratification of *punche* (tobacco).⁷³

Almost four months later, on December 30, the same group of Indians again arrived at San Miguel. Through their interpreter, they requested three *fanegas* (*fanega*=150 lb. measure) of wheat. Chimal Colorado, Vicente and Ganisavia were given a cow. The rest of the Comanches demanded 100 *fardos* (bundles) of *punche* and 100 serapes. The *alcalde* reported that he complied because they were threatening to linger at San Miguel much longer if their demands were not

met.⁷⁴

A week before the Comanches received food and gifts from the *alcalde*, a large group of Santa Ana Pueblo Indians entered San Miguel reporting that an attack on their party by "the enemy" at *Puertecito de los Pinabetitos* (Pine Gap) had cut their buffalo hunt short. Thirteen members of their Pueblo were taken captive, but five had managed to escape.⁷⁵ They also reported the loss of sixty-seven horses and other *bestias* (beasts) to their attackers whom they wanted found and punished.⁷⁶ It is possible that the same Indians who attacked the Santa Ana *ciboleros* were the Comanches who had lingered near the San Miguel district through December.

Although reported sightings and complaints about marauding Indians were many, the following letter, sent to Comandante Juan José Arocha by Juan de Dios Maese in 1828 is exemplary of many similar occurrences around San Miguel:

On the 12th of this month [June] a considerable number of gentiles passed close to San José at night. They went up to the Pecos Mesa looking for horses, and they could be punished because they are covering their tracks among the rocks and trees. In addition, two local men are lost, and one of their horses has come into San Miguel, wounded and bleeding from the neck, still carrying

his saddle. Across the river, close to San Miguel, they have killed two cows, and those who committed the crime leave about fifteen sets of tracks, more or less. We inform your excellency so that you might dictate providence as military commander.⁷⁷

By the end of the 1820s, the Indian problem in New Mexico was far from being resolved. Marauding tribes were well aware that the presidio at Santa Fe and smaller frontier garrisons were undermanned, but they kept their raids on the villages scattered and small-scale. This tactic would almost ensure that New Mexico would never undertake a massive campaign—laden with volunteers—against them.

In 1829, Juan Estéban Pino spoke before the Territorial Deputation, espousing a plan to eliminate the Indian problem. He proposed the establishment of three presidios for New Mexico and argued that eight hundred to one thousand soldiers could be stationed on the Río Colorado to deter any incursions from the eastern plains. Pino was convinced that New Mexico would perish, especially if the plains Indians ever decided to organize *en masse* and wage war against the settlements.⁷⁸

Pino's proposal went unheeded by Governor Manuel Armijo and other territorial officials, and the "hit-and-run"

tactics of the Indians continued. The dismembered military still functioned with its sparse, erratic numbers, and the despairing condition in the area persisted. In May 1829, one of the soldiers, José Cavallero, wrote to Principal Commander Don Juan Arocha from *Begas de las Gallinas* (Las Vegas) reporting on the soldiers under his command. One detachment of troops, twelve in number, under the charge of Eugenio Lovato was some distance away, patrolling at *El Parage de la Llegua* (Mare's Stopping Place). Cavallero reported that the soldiers were complaining about their miserable wages and that they needed some money. "At least *beinte reales* (two bits=25¢)," he said, making a special plea to get his men paid.⁷⁹

A month later, the same detachment of soldiers returned to San Miguel complaining they were ill-equipped and undermanned to patrol and adequately defend the area against the Indians. When they returned, Alcalde Santiago Ulibarrí became infuriated and accused them of cowardice, complaining that they only displayed their valor while they were stationed in the plazas. Two of the soldiers defended their position and complained to the governor that Ulibarrí not only called *them* cowards, "but all soldiers who protect this orphan frontier." The soldiers, Eugenio Lovato and Francisco Campos, sought vindication from the insults by stating that soldiers continually had to endure many hardships, the worst being hunger. They had to share meager

provisions for their sustenance while they were being asked to protect and lend their services to their "nation."⁸⁰

The soldiers stated that even if they were to have money to purchase food, the wealthy who owned livestock had no compassion for humanity. "With or without money," they said they were unable to obtain "a little milk, or a sheep or ewe to help meet but one of the many needs which surround us." The poor residents of the area who herded livestock under military protection at "las gallinas" were relegated to the same status of want according to them.⁸¹

Even as the permanent settlement of Las Vegas was developing, the poor conditions the soldiers from San Miguel endured had not changed. Early in March 1834, a small detachment of soldiers was stationed in Las Vegas patrolling the area against Indian encroachments and protecting individuals who were herding livestock. One of them, Juan Arias, deserted because he was apparently dissatisfied with his position as a soldier, its poor benefits, and his inability to provide for his family. José Larrañaga from San Miguel complained to the military commander, Blas de Hinojos, that the military detachment at Las Vegas did not have the means to support themselves or their families at Bado. Consequently, they were making a special request for money to enable them to carry out their familial obligations.⁸²

The settlement of San Miguel del Bado was one of the

most challenging human undertakings of the late Spanish Colonial Period. Although some of the colonists were likely optimistic that the new Comanche truce would provide a secure environment, generations of conflict with hostile Indians surely caused great fear and hesitance for others. Situated on the fringe of the eastern plains, fully exposed and vulnerable to Indian attacks, these determined people prevailed.

Depredations, poverty, and strife endured by the citizens of San Miguel through the 1820s enabled New Mexico to secure the northeastern frontier and embark on a new period of permanence. And though early efforts to extend the settlements deeper into hostile environments failed, the settlers' tenacious determination laid the groundwork for the continual expansion of this frontier region during the Mexican Period. Foremost of these settlement excursions which loomed on the horizon was the colonization of *Las Vegas Grandes*.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), p. 98.

2. Charles L. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. 50-52.

3. "Estado que manifiesta el de las Misiones existentes en la Provincia de Nuevo México en 1793," *Revista Católica*, I(1875), p. 334. This New Mexico census table for 1793, along with a report, "Estado de las Misiones del Nuevo México en el año de 1793," pp. 324-326, was prepared by the Viceroy of México, Conde de Revilla-Gigedo, for the Spanish Crown. A copy was sent to the Jesuit publishers of *Revista Católica* at Las Vegas, New Mexico from Madrid much later in 1875.

4. Ibid.

5. David J. Weber, ed., *Foreigners in their Native Land* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), p. 30. Weber quotes Spanish land grant document; 50th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Executive Document No. 122, p. 2. Hereafter Senate Executive Documents will be referred to as SED.

6. Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land*, p. 32. Vado was also spelled Bado, with Bado being the most popular form during the 1700s and 1800s. Vado denotes river crossing in Spanish.

7. Lansing Bloom, "Albuquerque and Galisteo, Certificate of Their Founding, 1706," *New Mexico Historical Review*, X(1935), pp. 48-49; Michael C. Meyer, *Water in the Hispanic Southwest: A Social and Legal History, 1550-1850* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1884), pp. 37-38.

8. SED No. 122, p. 4. The 1798 settlement date is probably accurate, as the first recorded marriage at San Miguel del Bado is 1798. See Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Reel 27, Frame 228. Hereafter will be referred to as AASF.

9. Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land*, p. 32. To impose such a requirement on the colonists would appear ludicrous, since only the wealthy could afford firearms of any kind during this troubled and impoverished period.

10. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indians Relations*, p. 64.

11. Lynn I. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas, 1835-1935," Bound Manuscript (Donnelly Library: New Mexico Highlands University), p. 17.

12. Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Reel 5, Frame 244. Hereafter referred to as SANM; Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, 2 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1914), I, p. 266.

13. Lynn I. Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1982), p. 4; Anselmo F. Arellano, "Unstable Settlement Marked Early Grants," *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, Special Centennial Edition, 27 July 1979, Sec. 3, p. 12.

14. Joe and Diana Stein Collection, Document 5, Frame 15, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe. Hereafter will be referred to as NMSRCAA. The name Cabesa de Baca appears as it was first spelled by Luis María. Other times the family spelled it Cabeza. Some signed only Baca, and eventually, C. de Baca was adopted by most of the family. These spellings and name changes will appear interchangeably.

15. 36th Cong., 1 Sess., House Executive Document No. 14, pp. 3-6. Hereafter referred to as HED; Surveyor General Records, Reel 15, Report 20, Frames 31-32 (Hereafter referred to as SGR). When Hernán Cortés first referred to the turkey as "*gallina de la tierra*" ("*chicken of the earth*"), the name was adopted by much of the Spanish speaking world. Later, the word *pavo*, first used by Columbus, was officially adopted. In isolated regions like New Mexico, the word used by Cortés remained. Thus, the term when used in northern New Mexico connotes turkey. See Anselmo F. Arellano, ed. *La Tierra Amarilla: The People of the Chama Valley* (Tierra Amarilla: Chama Valley Schools, 1978), p. 48.

16. HED No. 14, p. 6.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 7.

19. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

20. Sir Nicolas Cheetham, *A Short History of Mexico* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970), p. 136.

21. Lansing Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration, 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe*, I(1913), p. 141.
22. Francisco de Thoma, *Historia Popular de Nuevo México* (New York: American Book Company, 1896), p. 154.
23. HED No. 14, pp. 12, 44-45; SGR, Reel 15, Report 2, Files 6 and 12, Frames 40-48.
24. *History of the Las Vegas Grant* (Las Vegas, N.M.: J. A. Carruth, 1890), p. 13. This brief history of the Las Vegas Grant can be found in the E. V. Long Papers, NMSRCAA.
25. HED No. 14, pp. 10-11.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 37-38.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Mexican Archives of New Mexico, Reel 3, Frame 769. Hereafter referred to as MANM. The first mention of Luis María, son of Juan Antonio Baca and María Romero appears in 1776. He was a native of Cieneguilla and twenty-two years at the time. See SANM Reel 21, Frame 803.
29. HED No. 14, p. 37; SGR Reel 15, Report 2, File 6 and 12, Frame 70; David Joseph Weber, "The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade From New Mexico, 1540-1846," Ph.D. Diss., University of New Mexico, 1967, p. 161.
30. HED No. 14, p. 38.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
32. MANM Reel 5, Frames 481-482.
33. Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, Max L. Moorhead, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), p. 76.
34. *Ibid.* pp. 76-77.
35. Michael J. Rock, "Antón Chico and Its Patent," *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in New Mexico and Colorado*, John R. and Christine M. Van Ness, eds. (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1980), p. 87; SGR, Reel 16, Report 29, File 63, Frames 2-5. Petitioners of 1822 and the resettlement group of 1834 are listed herein.
36. 35th Cong., 1st Sess., House of Representatives Committee Report No. 457, New Mexico Private Land Claims, Claim 8, Tecolote Land Grant, pp. 100-101.

37. SGR, Reel 12, Report 7, File 8, Frames 37, 64.
38. MANM Reel 5, Frame 560.
39. David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), p. 13.
40. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, p. 97.
41. SANM Reel 20, Frame 766.
42. Daniel Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820s: The First Administration of Manuel Armijo," Ph.D. Diss., University of New Mexico, 1970, p. 168.
43. Lansing Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration, 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe*, II(1914), pp. 237-238.
44. Ibid.
45. Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820's," pp. 177-181.
46. Barriero, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo-México*, p. 30.
47. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, p. 92.
48. Noel M. Loomis and Abraham p. Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), p. 101.
49. Antonio Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo-México*, (Puebla: Imprenta de José Maria Campos, 1832), Appendix, p. 2.
50. De Thoma, *Historia de Nuevo México*, p. 163.
51. Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration," I(1913), p. 159.
52. Ibid., p. 166.
53. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indians Relations*, p. 71.
54. MANM Reel 7, Frames 1155-1157.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., Reel 6, Frames 1155-1157.

57. Ibid., Reel 10, Frames 676-677.
58. Ibid., Frame 706.
59. Ibid., Frames 710-711.
60. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indians Relations*, pp. 98-99; Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo-México*, pp. 18-19.
61. SGR, Reel 12, Report 7, File 8, Frame 33.
62. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indians Relations*, p. 78. f.n. 1; Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 437.
63. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 436-437.
64. Ibid, p. 316.
65. AASF, Reel 27, Frames 244, 249, 254, 264. One marriage entry has Rivera listed as a genízaro from San Juan.
66. SANM, Reel 19, Frames 989-990.
67. MANM, Reel 7, Frames 331-364; Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820's," p. 178; See also Julián Josué Vigil, *A Short Index to New Mexican Soldiers' Service Records and Enlistment Papers, 1821-1846* (Springer, N.M.: Editorial Telaraña, 1984).
68. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, p. 130.
69. Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, p. 203.
70. MANM, Reel 4, Frame 757.
71. Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820's," p. 154.
72. MANM, Reel 4, Frame 730.
73. Ibid., Frame 734.
74. Ibid., Frames 771-772.
75. Ibid., Frame 768.
76. Ibid., Frame 770.
77. Ibid., Reel 8, Frame 62.

78. Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820's," p. 37; MANM, Reel 9, Frame 1124.

79. MANM, Reel 9, Frame 641.

80. Ibid., Frames 851-853.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., Reel 18, Frame 377.

CHAPTER II
EARLY SETTLEMENTS AND THE FRONTIER OF THE 1820'S

AND THE CONQUEST OF THE 1840'S

Don Esteban Miraflores proposed the establishment of a
post on the Rio Colorado to the Territorial Deputation
and the proposed carried other recommendations to
the permanent settlement of the northeastern fron-
tier. With his proposed military fort, he felt the
post would be a ideal place to establish an advance
post for driving Santa Fe trade caravans and
hundreds of horses." All combined, these efforts
for an permanent and a new defense against the
Spanish troops.¹

...of the "nuevomexicanos" who
...
...and whose bodies
...the immense prairies they
...they are
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CHAPTER II

EARLY SETTLEMENT HISTORY OF LAS VEGAS

AND ITS COLONISTS THROUGH 1846

When Juan Esteban Pino proposed the establishment of a *presidio* on the Río Colorado to the Territorial Deputation in 1829, his proposal carried other recommendations to promote the permanent settlement of the northeastern frontier. Along with his proposed military fort, he felt the Río Colorado would be a logical place to establish an *aduana* (customs house) for arriving Santa Fe trade caravans and other "*Americanos del norte*." All combined, these efforts would establish permanence and a new defense against the pillaging, menacing tribes.¹

Pino spoke of the numerous loyal "*nuevomexicanos*" who had fallen victim to the

...tribes of gentiles and whose bodies lie buried in the immense prairies they [the Indians] possess; they are irrefutable witnesses who provide evidence that it is no fictitious idea that the barbaric Indians are to be feared, and much more today, due to the large number of firearms they have

acquired, and their training and
adeptness in using them.²

The westwardly advancement and acquisition of new lands by the American Republic was pushing the plains Indians much closer to New Mexico. Pino was concerned that all these tribes would eventually be forced into New Mexico, bringing fatal consequences that would affect all the Mexican Republic. He criticized the Mexican government, seeking its support in helping the citizens of New Mexico emerge from the slavery and neglect they had been subjected to under the apathetic tyranny of the Spanish government.³

Pino himself had acquired a vast land grant out in the plains, east of Antón Chico. He was aware of the incursions committed by the Indians on this new settlement, and a large military fort near his lands would surely promote his own self-interests. Notwithstanding personal motives he might possess, Pino's pronouncement at Santa Fe was well intended, and it conveyed strong sentiments for the development and advancement of the territory and its residents. He stated that his main concern was that

...those fertile lands, if occupied by
the *mexicanos* with ample security and
protection, are capable of enriching
this territory and providing much
support to all the Republic. Numerous
settlements can be established, and

these landed paradises offer many fruits which can be gleaned through the people's labor. The lands for farming are immense, and with little effort, they can be irrigated by the Ocaté, Mora, Sapeyote [Sapelló], Gallinas, and Tecolote rivers. There is much lumber in the immediate areas, including fruit trees...The new settlers who will settle there can reap the benefits from a land which is very good to raise cattle and sheep, and even if one did not dedicate themselves to raising livestock, the lands are already occupied by many buffalo and wild horses.⁴

It was probably no surprise to adherents of Pino's proposal that it never materialized. And two years later the priest and residents of San Miguel echoed similar concerns while promoting the settlement of the northeastern sector of New Mexico. In 1831, the community of San Miguel del Bado was bulging at the seams with a population of over 1,000 people. The two neighboring settlements of San José and La Cuesta also grew in numbers. Available lands for grazing and farming had long been absorbed by the more fortunate citizens, and many more remained idle without any occupation. In due time, the local parish priest at San

Miguel, José Francisco Leyba, recognized the social and economic problems which began to surface in the area. He consequently launched a campaign of protest and concern to the Governor and Territorial Deputation in Santa Fe.

In a lengthy manifesto dated June 17, 1831, Father Leyba complained about the growing population and the various problems and burdens that vagrants and other unemployed people in the area posed to the rest of the population. To alleviate the pressing conditions in the district, Father Leyba recommended the settlement of the lands lying northeast of El Bado. He felt that both industrious men and vagrants would benefit from the settlement of those areas. Since the majority of the families in the area were poor, the priest requested that the government supply the oxen, hoes, axes, and other tools that the people would need to build their homes and cultivate their lands. In his plea to the officials of New Mexico, Leyba stressed that the settlement of new lands would also close the northern frontier and gradually eliminate the Indian problem.⁵

Father Leyba had been in New Mexico fourteen years, and he was disappointed with the lack of progress in the territory and its poor state of affairs. He favored promoting progress and growth in New Mexico, with support from those who showed new vigor and sought new justice. In the past, he said, *nuevomexicanos* had been Spanish subjects, and the "*mandarín*" Spanish officials had not been concerned with

anything which benefitted the territory. Instead, their avarice had them preoccupied with their salaries and the other benefits they had gained in their service to the crown.⁶

Leyba felt that since the new Mexican Republic had become self governing, Mexican citizens could have no better motive and opportunity to procure those things which escaped them during the Spanish Colonial Period. Separated from Spain, Mexico now owned her territory and had government officials from among her own people, and in New Mexico, local natives served as officials as well. Past governments and public officials could have been more useful and less prejudicial in promoting the welfare and development of New Mexico. Leyba stated that New Mexico could have rivaled Mexico in commerce and production, if the effort of men of position been extended to the province.⁷

"Although I was not born in her womb [New Mexico's]," wrote Father Leyba, "I have the greatest interest to see her transformed from what she is today into a flourishing position with a better place among the integral parts of the Mexican Republic." He was convinced that there were others in the territory who were just as interested as he in pursuing a better situation for the citizenry.⁸

The priest's main concerns were the miserable situation New Mexico found herself in and the scarcity of resources and land occupied by the people. Yet, there were immense,

unoccupied lands which could be converted into productive farm and grazing properties. According to his sources of information, the Río del Norte, the Río Puerco, and other streams and springs did not contain sufficient water for the lands on the occidental side of New Mexico. Rather, the richest water resources in New Mexico were found in the Río Pecos as it extended in a southerly direction. Those who raised livestock knew this very well, but most of them had withdrawn their herds and flocks because of continuous attacks and raids by the northern Indian tribes.⁹

The Pecos River, with its never-failing water and grasslands, could sustain vast flocks of sheep and other livestock that abounded in New Mexico. Father Leyba further argued that if these lands along the Río Pecos were secured, the many losses people had suffered in livestock could be recovered in a few years, both by wealthy owners of large flocks and herds, as well as the less fortunate who attached themselves to the rich through the "*partido*" or contract sharing system.¹⁰

The *partido* system was well established in New Mexico by this time. Most of the vast flocks of sheep raised in the territory were owned or controlled by the *ricos*, or wealthy class of people. Through this custom, which was based on old Spanish tradition, a *rico* would help a poor individual begin his own flock through a contract, making the individual a *partidario*. He would receive a flock, or

partida, of sheep ranging from a few hundred to two or three thousand head of sheep, primarily ewes and a few breeding rams. Each year, the *partidario* was obligated to return between ten and twenty per cent of the increment or growth of the flock and the same amount of the yearly wool clipping.

The intent of the *partidario* contract was to enable the poor individual to begin his own independent flock. However, many shepherders were kept in perpetual indebtedness to the *rico* due to emergent circumstances beyond their control, including raids on the flocks by nomadic Indians, attacks by predatory animals, droughts, and deadly winter snows and blizzards on the plains. In addition, the *ricos* kept the *partidario* indebted to him through loans of money. This system consequently enabled a handful of *ricos* to maintain large flocks of sheep and control the industry in New Mexico.¹¹

This *partido* system, Father Leyba complained, had reduced many individuals to a state of near slavery or debt peonage to the rich. Nevertheless, looking ahead to his proposed settlement of the region, the priest's main concern was to find a way to register and settle the unoccupied lands through proper application of the "*Ley de Vagos*" (Vagrant Law), ratified by the Mexican Congress in 1828. The law simply gave vagrants and other idle people three choices: 1. be drafted into the military to fight cam-

paigns against the Indians; 2. go to prison; or 3. participate in settling new lands in the frontier. Leyba said that the law was being ignored while at the same time there was "plenty of land within shouting distance which they [the people] could not occupy, much like the man who carried water and could not drink it."¹²

Father Leyba referred to Article 14 in the Vagrant Law and stated that through its proper enforcement, the eastern frontier could be populated, something which was of utmost urgency to the territory. Settling this region of the New Mexico territory was exactly what the people from San Miguel del Bado offered. Once accomplished, this would assure tranquility for the interior settlements and serve to provide a blockade on Indians raiding settled farming and ranching lands. Naming specific lands he felt could be settled, Father Leyba was of the opinion that the ...grazing lands called Las Vegas, Sapelló and Ocaté, occupied with enough settlers can secure the frontier against the gentiles, although in the event they do enter, or can come in through other areas to destroy our homes, they will fear the elements of surprise as they retreat. Or, if they fail when they first come in, they will be more respectful in future campaigns against

our colonial strength, and they will eventually give up their custom of pillaging our settlements.¹³

On August 4, 1831, a commission of Mexican officials at Santa Fe, headed by Ramón Abreú, provided some initial comments and recommendations on the request Father Leyba had made two months earlier. They reported that his request to have people settle Las Vegas was certainly a patriotic effort, made with the sanest of intentions, and it would benefit the territory in many ways.

The commission also addressed some obvious inconveniences which could prevent this colonization effort from being carried out. To comply with the law, it would be necessary to recruit an armed military force to provide protection for the new settlers who were destined to populate it. The commission members also felt that it would be necessary to request monetary support from the governor to purchase proper tools and other implements to be used by the colonists to build homes and cultivate their lands. However, they were convinced that the more useful a project would be, the more difficult it would be to carry it out due to the territory's poor financial state. They felt the governor had a true interest in the territory and were confident that his desire to enforce the law would help support Father Leyba's request and help it reach fruition. They recommended the following to the governor:

1. That the political chief should remit to the Supreme Government a copy of Father Leyba's proposed project, so that the necessary monies would be made available to carry it out.
2. That the political chief use his utmost energy in acquiring the support of the *alcaldes* in the territory to establish a tribunal for vagrants as prescribed by law.¹⁴

No further action was taken on Father Leyba's request, and six months later, on February 8, 1832, José Ulibarrí and other members of the governing municipal body at San Miguel drafted their own public proclamation and sent it to Governor Santiago Abreú in Santa Fe. They complained about the inaction of the Mexican officials with regard to Father Leyba's manifesto and a petition which had been submitted the year before. The new proclamation, drafted on behalf of the citizens of San Miguel, repeated many of the concerns and demands the priest had made to no avail. Although the document was quite lengthy, their feelings were fairly well conveyed in one section where they stated:

...it is very sad that our land does not prosper, because any time a normal

routine is pursued with our government, we do not receive any kind of answer, even in those things which will be of major benefit to this territory, which without the protection under which it has wanted to remain, makes no progress; and finally, everything stops and remains in its antiquated state as it is now, reduced to almost total neglect, battered by the multitude of enemies which surround us, and miserable in every aspect, although it has potential to surpass the richness of many areas of the Mexican Republic which already admires, nevertheless, the abundance of our commercial productions, although they are not of the best artistic quality.¹⁵

José Ulibarrí and the other representatives from San Miguel continued by expounding on the premise that the new community they wanted to settle would be extremely beneficial to everyone concerned. They said:

...the proposed settlement, according to the understanding of the members of this corporation, and many other persons who do not belong to it, will close entry of

the northern nations to the lands which are indicated, and then not having to fear anyone, except the Comanches who are supposed to be at peace, if not always, at least most of the time. With what ease, and with what usefulness justly will our fortunes be reproduced and multiplied much more to our advantage than what we see now. We shall see our shepherders with a new sense of security, for now they have us terrified with the harmful risks they are exposed to, and many in their ranks have experienced terrible losses which can only be replaced through our hard work and labor of many years.¹⁶

In September 1832, while the residents of San Miguel continued to complain about their misfortune to the government officials at Santa Fe, an American, Albert Pike, was making his way to their community from Taos. He was accompanied by a party of trappers who hoped to secure the services of Manuel, "*El Comanche*," to guide them across the prairies. The group descended the mountains from Picurís into the Mora Valley where they found the new settlement of San Antonio de lo de Mora abandoned by the colonists. All they found in the location were empty "mud houses and

rattlesnakes" to shoot at. Pike noted that the need for agricultural land had brought the Mora settlers across the mountains, while risking themselves to the perpetual hazards of Indian attacks:

These New Mexicans, with a pertinacity worthy of the Yankee nation, have pushed out into every little valley which would raise half a bushel of red pepper—some of them like this—on the eastern side of the mountains, thus exposing themselves to the Pawnees and Comanches, who, of course, use them roughly. The former tribe broke up the settlement in this valley about fifteen years ago, and the experiment has never been repeated, though this valley, and that of the Gallinas [Las Vegas], are great temptations to the Spaniards.¹⁷

During the early 1830s, when Father Leyba and residents at San Miguel were proposing to settle Las Vegas and the northeastern sector of New Mexico, the population of the San Miguel district continued to grow, leaving many newly married couples and others without lands to make homes for themselves and their families. These were people who desperately wanted to settle on those identified and well-known lands. In 1830, twenty-six new couples were married at the

San Miguel church; twenty-one in 1831; twenty-seven in 1833; and sixteen in 1834. It can therefore safely be judged that one hundred and fourteen couples who were married at San Miguel del Bado from 1830 through 1834 were surely having a large impact on the local district's population and creating pressures on local public officials to help them secure new lands for settlement.¹⁸ These couples and others who married through the early 1840s provided the nucleus of population for the eventual settlement thrust which was forged at Las Vegas in 1835.

In 1833, Miguel Romero y Baca, a Santa Fe-area merchant who traded with the frontier states of Chihuahua and Sonora, came to *Las Vegas Grandes*, probably aware that the sons of Luis María C. de Baca had abandoned their lands. He was familiar with the area as he had served as a volunteer member of the army in New Mexico headed by the popular Colonel Vizcarra. Romero had participated in the memorable campaign against the Navajo Indians in 1823. When he arrived at Las Vegas, Romero built a flat adobe structure between present Upper and Lower Las Vegas exactly one mile and a half from the soon-to-be-established settlement. He planted a crop of beans which gave him a good harvest that year, but due to hostile incursions by the Indians in the area, he returned to Santa Fe in the fall. Thereafter, he returned every year in the spring with his brothers, and together they planted wheat and beans, returning to their

families after each harvest. In 1851, Romero brought his family to Las Vegas and remained permanently.¹⁹

Residents of San Miguel who pastured their livestock at Las Vegas admired the courage and determination of the Romero y Baca brothers, who doggedly planted their crops every year. This observation, and their own needs for lands and a place to settle, compelled the people from San Miguel to make a formal request for the lands for themselves and others who had similar needs. On March 28, 1835, Juan de Dios Maese, Manuel Archuleta, Manuel Durán, and José Antonio Casados, all from San Miguel del Bado, petitioned the local *ayuntamiento* (municipal council), for themselves and twenty-five other men, for the "vacant and uncultivated piece of land, commonly known by the name of *Las Vegas Grandes en el Río de las Gallinas*, about five leagues distant from this settlement, land which we solicit for the purpose of planting a moderate crop, and to acquire the necessary land for pasture and watering places."²⁰ The boundaries they described were precisely the same as those presented by Luis María Cabeza de Baca in his land petition of 1821.

The *ayuntamiento* forwarded the application to the Territorial Deputation in Santa Fe, recommending that it be approved. Ramón Abreú, Secretary of the Deputation, wrote back on March 23 with the governor's response to the people. He said that possession of the land had been granted to them

for colonization. They were reminded that the land concession would not be limited to the petitioners and other *vecinos* from El Bado but included all parties who had no land for cultivation. The award was made on the condition that the pasture and watering places would be held in common and free to all who occupied the enormous tract of land which contained close to 500,000 acres. It was also suggested to the petitioners that they were to establish a townsite for the settlers, and additionally, residential lots had to be provided for everyone.²¹

The procedure and settlement requirements establishing Las Vegas and other New Mexico grants as community settlement grants originated directly from the Spanish laws that outlined the method of establishing a community. The predecessor of Spanish law had been Roman law. When the Las Vegas concession was made, the colonists conformed with traditional procedures and the colonization law, which basically required the following:

Each settler on community grants received an allotment of land for a house (*solar*) and one or more outlots for cultivation (*suertes*), as well as the right to use the unallotted land in common with the other settlers for pastures, watering places, wood, hunting, and gathering. Each settler

owned his allotments outright after a specific period (usually four years) of occupancy and could sell them, but the unallotted land owned by the community could not be sold.²²

On April 6, 1835, the Constitutional Justice of San Miguel del Bado reported that he, José de Jesús Ulibarrí y Durán, on that day had proceeded to *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Las Vegas* to appropriate land to the twenty-five individuals who were mentioned in the land grant petition of March of 1835. Each individual received a gratuitous piece of land in accordance with the colonization law applying to grants of public lands. It was understood that the persons who received parcels of land were to engage in cultivation. A list of all the settlers was prepared by Constitutional Justice Ulibarrí, whereby he enumerated the exact number of varas (a measure of 33 inches) of land each one received.²³

Justice Ulibarrí measured off agricultural plots which ranged from 100 to 250 varas for each individual. The amount of land was based on family size and need, but no doubt, influence or relation through consanguinity played a factor in the site selection and amount of land one received. One hundred and twenty-five additional varas were designated for public gardens on the north side of the proposed community and an additional 75 varas on the south side. Twenty-five varas were measured and set aside for a

public road which would lead to the community well. Farming allotments in community grants usually extended from the river to the foothills or rough terrain where agriculture was impracticable, but other times, *varas* for farm plots were laid out between the river and the contour where the *acequia madre* would be constructed.²⁴

The land grant documents for Las Vegas do not mention the assignments of *solares*, or building lots, which were traditionally laid out around the town plaza. However, the new settlers and their newly-designated *alcalde*, Juan de Dios Maese, carried out that responsibility, along the road which would front the eventual plaza in a square pattern.²⁵

Ulibarrí again reminded the settlers that the water and pasture would remain open to all to be shared communally. Community projects were to involve the joint efforts of everyone without any disputes. A protective barrier or wall surrounding the town was to be constructed in a collective effort. The people were admonished to be well equipped with arms for protection against the Indians. A Lieutenant of Police was to be entrusted with a supervisory role of maintaining care over the arms and munitions kept by the people. His duties would include inspection of the arms every eight days. Should any infraction occur in the maintenance of arms, the "lieutenant" was to take the necessary action to correct the situation. Once in possession of their *solares* and farm plots, the people were required to

live on them and improve them for a period of four years before selling them or transferring them to someone else.²⁶

The thirty-one individuals who first received land on the Las Vegas Grant in 1835 would, after four years of continuous occupation and cultivation, acquire title to the strip of land and the house lot allotted to them. By virtue of the grant document and his individual allotment, each grantee could also use the unoccupied lands (*tierras baldías*) to pasture his livestock until those lands were gradually allotted to other individuals who might settle on the grant. The right to water and pasture would subjectively be reduced as other newcomers to the land grant acquired new strips of land for occupation and agriculture. All remaining unoccupied lands remained free to the occupants of the grant for pasturage and watering.²⁷

Another important Spanish tradition required by law was the construction of *acequias* for irrigation. The Mexican Republic continued to enforce this law during its sovereignty. The foundation for the irrigation practices of New Mexico was laid out by the Romans during their occupation and political dominance of the Iberian Peninsula. Afterwards, during the Moorish reign of power which lasted for seven centuries, additional irrigation practices and terminology were incorporated into the irrigation customs of the Spaniards.²⁸ The irrigation practices brought to New Mexico by the early colonists were, therefore, based on

Roman tradition with consequent Islamic influence.

In 1773, the Villa de Pitic (Hermosillo, Sonora) was founded in northern Mexico, and along with it, a new law called the *Plan de Pitic* was formulated to provide definitive statements on how water would be distributed when new towns were founded. This new formula applied to all the *provincias internas* (interior provinces), including New Mexico and the present Southwest. Article 19 of the "plan" lauded the importance of irrigation and how it would create fertile fields and foster the future development of a new settlement. Each inhabitant was to have access to the *acequia madre* (mother ditch) through smaller ditches and outlets which would flow into the plots of land.²⁹

The original allotments at Las Vegas extended west from the Gallinas River to a designated contour line where the people planned to dig their *acequia madre*. The ditch would be dug immediately after the people were placed in possession of their lands, allowing them to irrigate the crops they planned for that summer. Actually, two main ditches were dug, and both ran parallel to the river. They meandered with the contour of the land throughout their course and reentry into the Gallinas River. The original ditch, called the "*Acequia Madre*," originated north of the plaza and came to within one-half block east of the plaza, between the settlement and the river. It ran southwardly along a roadway, which was originally called "*Calle de la Acequia*"

(Acequia Street). The second main ditch was named "*Acequia de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*" and originated about a mile north of the community. It ran west of the plaza and passed where the present church stands. From there it continued along present day Chávez Street.³⁰

A second major group of settlers were placed in legal occupation of their lands on June 11, 1841. One hundred eighteen additional allotments were given to other families who had trekked into Las Vegas since 1835. Most of these people were situated on lands near the town which by now was officially known as *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Las Vegas*, but others were located along a new acequia opened for the construction of the new settlement of *Plaza de Arriba* (Upper Town),³¹ later officially named San Antonio.

At the hot springs, further north, near present Montezuma, two naturalized citizens, William and Anthony Donaldson were also granted allotments. They were apparently the only foreigners to receive land and settle at Las Vegas before the American Occupation of 1846. Another distribution of lands to 29 families was made in November 29, 1846.³² This came at the outset of the American Occupation, three months after Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny arrived at Las Vegas. It is possible that these families were encouraged to seek lands once the presence of American soldiers offered a stronger sense of security and protection against the Indians. By 1845, the total population of Las

Vegas consisted of 541 people. Eighty-five families resided at Las Vegas proper, and an additional forty-nine lived at Upper Town. After 1846, additional allotments were made in smaller outlying areas creating new settlements such at Sapelló, Agua Zarca, Valles de San Agustín, and Valles de Tecolote now called San Gerónimo.³³ By 1850, the population of Las Vegas had increased to over 1,500 people.³⁴

No home construction occurred at Las Vegas in the first year of 1835. The people were content to receive their land parcels and begin planning the layout of their homes, their community well, and other buildings while they toiled on their *acequia*. They planted some beans sometime after their possession in April, but a strong hail storm destroyed the crop. Dejectedly, the people returned to San Miguel del Bado for the winter.³⁵

Evidence reveals that the grantees of *Las Vegas Grandes* expressed strong reluctance to return to their lands. One of the principal grantees and future *Alcalde* Juan de Dios Maese, Judge of the Primary Court at San Miguel, wrote to the governor of New Mexico on March 14, 1836. His letter complained that he had ordered

...the new settlers of *Nuestra Señora de Las Vegas*, that they might go to take possession of their lands and that title thereto might be adjudicated to them which the colonization laws provide for

them; [I] having designated the 5th instant for them to meet at the aforesaid new settlement, [but I have] not observed any of the possessors complying with my order.³⁶

Some of the people had previously approached Maese with many complaints and declarations regarding their lands and their intent to return to Las Vegas to occupy them. He said that others demonstrated reservations of "coolness and disregard" for the land which had been granted to them. The unpleasant observation and conclusions he had made forced him to seek the intervention of the governor so that the people might be compelled to cultivate their lands. Maese offered his opinions on why some of the people were unwilling to return to Las Vegas, but he gave reassurance of his own intent:

Your excellence will not fail to recognize that the petitioner also is interested in his share of a tract of land; while others with greater need do not settle it and do without it, just for personal reasons, or because they are truly afraid of being assaulted by the enemy who have heretofore attacked us; while others do not [take possession of their land] simply because

of laziness.³⁷

Maese also stated that some of the Las Vegas grantees were hoping that lands at Tecolote could be partitioned to them instead. Since Tecolote was half the distance between Las Vegas and San Miguel, they would feel safer there. Maese felt that the land at Tecolote was insufficient for even one farm because irrigation water was scarce at that location. According to Maese, that land was only suitable for grazing livestock from San Miguel, and possibly herds from Las Vegas when Indian hostilities forced their removal.³⁸

Maese requested the governor send him enforceable orders and regulations to compel the grantees to return to their lands, especially those who needed farm lands. It appears that his complaint and request was somehow heeded, for soon after, the people returned to Las Vegas for a new start. They began by building a few *jacales* on the land laid out for the plaza. They sowed new seed, and this time the crops of corn, beans, and wheat had good yields.³⁹

Despite the new optimism and farming success, new annoyances and incursions by the Navajo compelled them to return to San Miguel for the winter of 1836. On one of the Indian attacks that year, Navajos stole sheep belonging to Santiago Montoya. They also captured two of his nephews. Miguel Romero y Baca was in Las Vegas from Santa Fe that summer, apparently, for the farming season. At Montoya's

invitation, he joined the party and went in pursuit of the raiding Navajo and their two *cautivos*.⁴⁰

Adamant settlers returned to their colony the following year, determined to make their settlement succeed. They built more *jacales* and toiled throughout the year to bring their personal belongings and other material goods on their backs from San Miguel. The people engaged in farming again in 1837.⁴¹ The social and political order of New Mexico was interrupted that year by the Chimayó Rebellion. Angry *mexicanos* and Indians from the Río Arriba region rose in rebellion against Governor Albino Pérez who had come to the northern territory from Mexico determined to impose the constitution and tax laws on the isolated and neglected sons of New Mexico. Amidst rumors and concerns that they would be over-taxed beyond their already submerged poverty, the rebels murdered the governor and other high-ranking territorial officials; then they temporarily installed their own governor.⁴²

Former Governor Manuel Armijo organized a militia with many volunteers from the area south of Albuquerque called the Río Abajo. He crushed the new government, retook the capital of Santa Fe, and declared a new government and patriotism for New Mexico.⁴³ Oral tradition in Las Vegas once declared that the early settlers had left the community in 1837 to join Armijo's volunteer army against the rebels.⁴⁴ Whether this actually occurred is unknown because

most northern New Mexicans had stood firmly against Governor Pérez and his administration.

The early adversity the people encountered in making Las Vegas a permanent settlement implies that the government officials at Santa Fe made no provisions to loan or provide farming implements or beasts of burden to facilitate the colonists' efforts. It was still difficult to provide adequate military protection for new settlements. In 1838, however, Las Vegas finally became a permanent settlement. By then, thirty families were settled on their land, and adobe and stone houses were built. A heavy frost hit their corn crop before it was harvested that fall, and the people again feared that their new community was doomed to failure. However, once they dried their corn and used it for cooking, the *atole* they prepared was much better tasting, and lesser amounts made a bigger pot than that portion of the harvest which had not suffered from the frost.⁴⁵ Their corn crop had apparently undergone a natural process of dehydration.

Before Las Vegas had a church, the first burials were recorded at San Miguel del Bado. The first Las Vegan to die in the community was María de la Cruz Ulibarrí, daughter of Tomás Ulibarrí and María Teodoro Archuleta. She died during the winter of 1838 and was buried on February 21.⁴⁶ From this church record, it appears that the winter of 1837-1838 was the first year the *pobladores* of Las Vegas remained on the Gallinas throughout the winter. This evidence also

corroborates oral history provided in the late 1940s by *ancianos* that their grandparents finally made Las Vegas a permanent settlement in 1838.⁴⁷

After Las Vegas became a permanent settlement in 1838, the people were finally able to establish their traditional economic and social institutions. These included a self-sufficient, pastoral-agrarian economy, their religion, customs, and lifestyles. During the early years that followed their settlement, the people addressed other spiritual and material needs that were typically essential to the survival and development of a young community in New Mexico's remote frontier.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER II

1. MANM, Reel 9, Frames 1119-1121.
2. Ibid., Frame 1120.
3. Ibid., Frame 1122.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., Reel 13, Frames 613-614. Father Leyba was a colorful, controversial priest in New Mexico through the early Territorial Period.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Alvar Ward Carlson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry, 1850-1900: Its Role in the History of the Territory," NMHR, XLIV(1964), pp. 29-30. For a complete review of the sheep industry in New Mexico through 1860 see John O. Baxter, *Las Carneradas, Sheep Trade in New Mexico 1700-1860* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).
12. MANM, Reel 13, Frames 017, 900.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., Reel 13, Frames 589-590.
15. *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 26, 1910. This original Spanish document was held in possession by a Las Vegas, and it appeared in its entirety in this issue of the newspaper.
16. Ibid.
17. Albert Pike, *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country*, David J. Weber, ed. (Albuquerque: Calvin Horn Publisher, Inc., 1967), pp. 35-36.

18. AASF, Reel 27, Frames 214-371. These marriage records are contained in the *Libro de Ynformaciones*, San Miguel del Vado, 1829-1834.

19. H. T. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas New Mexico*, (Chicago: Hotel World Publishing Co., 1880), pp. 7-8; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 5, 1883, April 28, 1892; *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, April 27, 1880. Community elders interviewed in Las Vegas during the early 1880s, and again in 1892, contended that Romero was the "founder of the town," although he lived there on a seasonal basis until 1851, when he moved his family there permanently. Miguel Romero's family does not appear at Las Vegas in the 1845 Mexican Census, nor in the 1850 American Census. He finally appears in the 1860 census as a merchant, at the age of 61. His total property valuation is listed at \$10,000.00, a large sum for the period.

20. HED No. 14, pp. 17-18; *History of the Las Vegas Grant*, pp. 25-26.

21. Ibid.

22. Victor Westphall, *Mercedes Reales: Hispanic Land Grants of the Upper Río Grande Region* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), pp. 9-10.

23. HED No. 14, pp. 19-22; *History of the Las Vegas Grant*, pp. 28-30.

24. HED No. 14, p. 31.

25. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas," p. 31.

26. HED, No. 14, p. 13.

27. "In the Matter of the Las Vegas Grant, Private Land Claim Number 20, Territory of New Mexico, 1894," p. 3. This legal brief prepared by attorney E. V. Long can be found in the E. V. Long Papers, NMSRCAA.

28. Marc Simmons, "Spanish Irrigation Practices in New Mexico," NMHR, LII(1952), p. 136. Simmons cites the Ordinances which appear in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Poseciones Españolas de América y Oceanía*, 42 vols. (Madrid: 1864-1884; Thomas F. Glick, *Irrigation and Society in Medieval Valencia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 30-34.

29. Meyer, *Water in the Hispanic Southwest*, pp. 30-36.

30. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas," p. 32.
31. HED No. 14, pp. 34-36; *History of the Las Vegas Grant*, pp. 32-33.
32. HED No. 14, p. 35. *History of the Las Vegas Grant*, pp. 33-34.
33. Julián Josué Vigil, *1845 Census of Las Vegas, New Mexico* (Springer, N.M.: Editorial Telaraña, 1985), pp. 1-6. This new transcription is provided by Vigil from the original source: MANM No. 40, Frames 461-468; HED No. 14, pp. 34-36. Mistakes which appear in the transcription by the New Mexico Genealogical Society are corrected in Vigil's work.
34. *1850 American Census*, Vol III, Taos and San Miguel Counties, Genealogical Society of New Mexico, pp. 110-127.
35. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 9.
36. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, I, p. 389.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 9.
40. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, 5 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1912), IV, p. 579.
41. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 9.
42. Janet Lecompte, *Rebellion in Río Arriba, 1837* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), pp. 7-8.
43. Ibid. pp. 53-54.
44. F. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story* (Denver: World Press, Inc., 1951), pp. 24, 33.
45. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 9.
46. AASF, Reel No. 38, Frame 263.
47. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 67.

Chapter III

THE ECONOMY AND EARLY SOCIAL LIFE OF LAS VEGAS

During the early settlement period of Las Vegas, the people lived in a closely knit, communal-type society—surviving on the amenities their labor produced from the small tracts of irrigated land and the small flocks and herds they raised. Traditional, collective working and sharing experiences they developed at San Miguel and other parts of the territory were continued at Las Vegas. The majority of the early settlers were economically poor, but the common need for survival brought everyone closer together in the harsh environment of northeastern New Mexico.

The lifestyle of the first settlers of Las Vegas and the land grant was highly typical of other New Mexico settlements during the late Spanish colonial period. It changed very little during Mexican sovereignty. *Vegueños* toiled daily, much like their *vecinos* in the other *alcaldías* of New Mexico. They left a poor written record about themselves because most were illiterate and public schooling was nonexistent. Even the fortunate who had acquired the basic rudiments of learning and literacy at San Miguel were too preoccupied with their daily struggles to record much

beyond their strife with the Indians in letters and others correspondence to officials at Santa Fe. Consequently, what sketches we possess about Las Vegas and the New Mexico Territory during the Mexican Period were recorded by curious American and foreign travelers, and a few by Mexican officials and clergy.

Foremost of the institutions established at the Las Vegas colony was the agrarian pastoral economy. Colonists had received their *suertes* (agricultural plots), but the lifeblood of the land was the irrigation water needed to nourish crops and develop fertile lands as prescribed by the "*Plan de Pitic*." Water in new Spanish settlements would have to be shared equally between Indians and non-Indians, "its pastures, woodlands, waters, hunting grounds, fishing areas, quarries, fruit trees, and other things it produces shall be for the common benefit of Spaniards and Indians."¹

This requirement in the law almost ensured that frontier settlements would survive if people worked collectively for everyone's benefit. Early American travelers in Las Vegas developed different conclusions about the people, and many times, they were appalled by what they considered to be a backward and primitive Mexican society. New Mexicans lived in a simple social structure, having received little support and economic infusions from the central government in Mexico. The internal turmoil and political upheavals of *Nueva España* and later of the young Mexican Republic had

left New Mexico to fend for itself—scant of resources and material gifts creating the underdeveloped, self-sufficient society encountered by the Americans.

Josiah Gregg, who first came through the Las Vegas and Gallinas area in 1831 and continued crossing the Great Plains in the 1840s, provides an excellent, first-hand account of New Mexico in his epic narrative on the Santa Fe Trail. He found agriculture to be in a primitive state and was surprised to see most of the "peasantry" cultivating only with hoes. Few people in New Mexico possessed ploughs, and those who did had crude ones hand hewn out of tree trunks.² Most New Mexicans farmed in this manner until the railroad began transporting iron implements after its arrival in 1879.

The farmlands Gregg saw were unfenced, and people who owned cattle many times had to keep herdsmen to watch the livestock while they grazed near the fields. An occasional farm was fenced with poles, a hedge of brush, or walls of large adobes or stone. Gregg was quick to note that the need for irrigation confined people to living in the valleys with their constantly-flowing streams of water. However, in some places, streams would dry up and cut the crops short of maturity, so summer rainfall was many times critical to the survival of fall harvests. Other areas had abundant water, and Gregg emphasized that New Mexicans had developed an "art" in watering their farms—the art of irrigation:

One *acequia madre* (mother ditch) suffices generally to convey water for the irrigation of an entire valley, or at least for all the fields of one town or settlement. This is made and kept in repair by the public, under the supervision of the *alcaldes*; laborers being allotted to work upon it as with us upon our county roads...From this, each proprietor of a farm runs a minor ditch, in like manner, over the most elevated part of his field. Where there is not a superabundance of water, which is often the case on the smaller streams, each farmer has his day, or portion of a day allotted to him for irrigation; and at no other time is he permitted to extract water from the *acequia madre*...Though the operation would seem tedious, an expert irrigator will water in one day his five or six acre field, if level, and everything well arranged; yet on uneven ground he will hardly be able to get over half of that amount.³

Juan de Dios Maese, who participated in the promotion

of the settlement of Las Vegas, also became its first *alcalde*. He still retained the position when Kearny arrived in 1846. As titular head of the community, administration of the local government rested almost solely on Alcalde Maese. There is no recorded documentation of an *ayuntamiento* (town council) ever being established for Las Vegas. By the time the town grew large enough to warrant one, the people were already under American rule. In performing his duties, Maese made new allotments for people moving to the land grant. He also supervised the distribution of *acequia* waters to *parciantes* (*acequia* members). Like other *alcaldes* in New Mexico, he retained this role in *acequia* matters and government responsibilities until Mexican laws were superseded by the United States government in 1850.⁴

In the early spring, *acequia* members would meet under the direction of the *alcalde* to carry out the annual cleaning of the *acequia madre*. Axes, wooden shovels, sharp sticks, and other hand-made tools were used to remove rocks, trees, and debris from the main irrigation channel. Religion also played a major role in the maintenance and preservation of the *acequias* of Las Vegas and other New Mexico settlements. The people maintained religious prayer and ceremony to ensure that the *acequias* would continue providing life-giving water to their small plots of land. The people would carry the local patron saint and San Isidro, patron of the farm laborer, in procession after the annual

spring cleaning of the main irrigation canal was complete. The *acequia madre* and smaller *sangrías* were now ready to release the water which would nurture the crops.

Each settler took his allotted irrigation water on a designated day. The grains and vegetables grown in Las Vegas were similar to those grown by other *nuevo-mexicanos*. The primary staples were wheat, corn, and beans.⁵ Other crops consisted of chile, onions, squash, lentils, garbanzo, oats, and barley. A few people kept peach, apricot, pear, and apple trees, but the principal fruit growers in New Mexico were still the Pueblo Indians. Some families also grew domestic strawberries.

Wild fruits which supplemented the Las Vegas diet were various *moras* (berries), *ciruela cimarrona* (wild plum), and *capulín* (choke cherries). Excellent melons and grapes were grown in the northern climate, but they did not fare as well as the ones from El Paso.⁶ The leaves of the *nopal* (cactus) and the *tuna* (prickly pear) were present at many meals.⁷ Other popular edible plants were *quelites* (lamb's quarters) and *verdolagas* (purslane).⁸ A native tobacco, still called *punche mexicano* (Mexican tobacco), was grown by many residents in the territory, including some in Las Vegas. In addition to being popular among local consumers, *punche* was an important trade item among Plains Indians, Americans, and the northern Mexican states.

After Kearny arrived in 1846, other vegetables besides

those known to New Mexicans were being raised in Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and other communities. By 1847, cabbages, turnips, and beets were becoming popular, and the *fonda*, or lodging house, named Santa Fe House, offered them in its "bill of fare." Transplanted to New Mexico, some of these vegetables grew larger and were soon considered superior to those grown in the United States.⁹

Wild potatoes existed in New Mexico long before the American arrival, but they had never been cultivated. Gregg reported that they were seldom larger than filbert nuts.¹⁰ Other wild potatoes found in the mountains were as large as hen's eggs. These had been eaten by *nuevomexicanos* at times, but they were especially popular as a winter food supplement among the Indians. However, during 1847, the American potato became an experimental phenomenon among the agricultural pursuits of the local *mexicanos*. Native to the Western Hemisphere, the potato was taken to Europe from Perú, returned to the United States, and now had worked its way into New Mexico. Farmers in Las Vegas reaped a good harvest of a large, superior American potato in 1847, but they decided to retain their crop and use it as seed the following year.¹¹

An observer reported in 1847 that the people of New Mexico continued to work in agricultural pursuits very much in the same way their antecedents had for one hundred and fifty years, without much advancement. He felt that the

lands could produce enough agricultural products to maintain a much larger population, but New Mexico's farmers needed to adopt improved farming techniques. Also, lands had to be fenced to protect crops from livestock which grazed and ran loosely in the countryside causing damage to crops and farmland.¹²

Earlier, at the turn of the century, Governor Fernando de Chacón had made a similar observation about New Mexico's agriculture, livestock raising, and its general economic state. He was dedicated to improving the poor economy of New Mexico, but he was helpless in getting assistance to affect any change. Governor Chacón reported that agriculture was in a poor condition due to the lack of know-how by the people. There was no surplus production of New Mexico's grains such as wheat, corn, barley and other vegetables mostly because there was no practical way to export them to other provinces. Great distances and expensive transportation costs kept any kind of surplus agricultural products from stimulating the New Mexico economy through the Mexican Period.¹³

As a result of his observations, Chacón stated that the Spaniards and *castas* were content to planting and cultivating only the amounts of crops needed for their sustenance. During drought and lean years, the people of New Mexico depended on wild plants, roots, milk, beef, mutton, and wild game to escape famine. Pueblo Indians cultivated larger

fields than their Spanish and *casta* neighbors. They used their extra production to help feed less fortunate individuals such as widows, orphans, and the sick. Pueblo Indians were also accustomed to storing surplus agricultural products for droughts and times of want, and they consequently seldom felt the effects of hunger.¹⁴

Governor Chacón maintained that with minimal investment the authorities in Mexico could send to the New Mexico province

...books on agriculture illustrating for the residents everything pertaining to planting; methods of controlling insects which greatly reduce the harvests; the method of planting trees and grafting; the treatment of different illnesses affecting cattle, sheep and horses; knowledge of the use of herbs; or other innumerable things, etc., all of which they have here only the remotest idea.¹⁵

New Mexico had sufficient oxen for use in all phases of farming and as draw animals. The largest abundance of livestock, however, were the large flocks of sheep. Much of the mutton was consumed locally, but since early 1800, close to twenty-six thousand sheep were exported annually to Mexico and the frontier military *presidios*.¹⁶ By 1846 some *ricos*

along the Río Grande owned as many as 40,000 sheep. At the time, wool was not considered very valuable, and it could be purchased for as little as four cents a fleece.¹⁷ Antonio Barreiro reported in 1832 that sheep multiplied at an incredible rate in New Mexico and, if the people could maintain a lasting peace with the "*naciones bárbaras*" (barbaric nations) and prevent them from raiding and stealing so much of their livestock, sheep raising alone could prove to be the economic mainstay of New Mexico, much like mining had been for Chihuahua.¹⁸

Goats, cattle, and burros were also raised by New Mexicans. Few horses and mules were kept because the Indians usually took them in raids.¹⁹ Many goats and sheep were grazed on the meadows and hills near Las Vegas. Goats were kept primarily for their milk. The herds were watched all day by the *pastores* (herders) and at night were driven into the plaza and *corrales*.²⁰ Wild horses, which roamed the plains in scores, were sometimes rounded up, broken, and used by the wealthier class. Buffalo meat was plentiful, and the rendered fat was excellent and used extensively by New Mexicans. Few hogs were raised because people were more accustomed to using fat from buffalo and beef.²¹ Barreiro stated in 1832 that the docile buffalo could easily be domesticated, and having twice the strength of oxen, he recommended their use as plow animals in agriculture.²² This visionary recommendation apparently never occurred, as

buffalo were never seen grazing or plowing cornfields in Las Vegas or other New Mexico settlements.

According to Barreiro, hog raising was completely abandoned in 1832, although some had been raised before. Hogs apparently required more care and grain feeding than the other animals raised by *mexicanos*, and since the people consumed most of the cereals and grains themselves, hog raising was probably considered just too burdensome. In addition to domestic livestock, people kept plenty of chickens. Deer, elk, mountain sheep and goats, antelope, bear, and rabbits provided much meat for the early settlers of Las Vegas. Fish were caught in the mountain streams. Finally, ducks, turkey, quail and other wild fowl were also plentiful.²³

All together, the vegetables, grains, fruits, and animals raised by the colonists provided a well-rounded, healthy diet. It was regularly supplemented by the excellent varieties of wild game, fruit, plants and roots. Corn which had been acquired from the Mexican and Pueblo Indians became the primary mainstay of all *mexicanos*. It was boiled and soaked in water with limestone, ground on the stone *metate* with the *mano* to form the pasty dough called *nixtamal*. It was then patted into thin cakes and cooked over the fire on a small sheet of iron, copper, or stone plate called a *comal*.²⁴ The tasty blue corn tortilla was especially popular in *nuevomexicano* kitchens at this time.²⁵

Parched corn called *chicos* (*chicales* in Mexico) were mixed with beans and stewed meats to prepare savory, palatable meals.

From ground, toasted yellow corn, the people also made *chaquehue*, a thin gruel which could be eaten from a plate or drunk from a cup. When made from blue corn it was called *atole*. To New Mexicans, it was known as "el café de los mexicanos" (the coffee of the Mexicans) because many preferred to drink it. For many, especially the poorer classes, it was in fact their morning coffee.²⁶ Tortillas, *frijoles* (beans), and chile consisted of the principal food for New Mexicans. These were consistently served with the other meats and food the land produced. After the fall harvest, the colorful chile pods were dried and hung in *ristras* ("festoons"/strings) to adorn adobe dwellings.²⁷ As a condiment, Gregg said that the

...extravagant use of red pepper among the Mexicans has become truly proverbial. It enters into nearly every dish at every meal, and often so predominates as entirely to conceal the character of the viands. It is likewise ground into a sauce, and thus used even more abundantly than butter. *Chile verde* (green pepper,) not as a mere condiment, but as a salad, served up in

different ways, is reckoned by them one of the greatest luxuries.²⁸

Wheat ranked second as a popular grain. During the fall harvest, it was cut with a *hoz* (hand sickle), tied in bundles, and carried in a wooden *carreta* to the *era* (thrashing floor) where goats were driven over it to separate the grain from the *espiga* (spike). It was then winnowed by tossing it into the air. The wind would carry the chaff away, leaving a clean pile of grain. Before grist mills were built, most of the wheat was ground in hand *metates*.²⁹ Much of the flour in New Mexico was coarse and unbolted because proper sifting cloth was unavailable. Most clean flour was arduously sifted by hand.

After it was ground into flour, wheat was used to make tortillas, *bizcochos* (a sweet hard biscuit), and bread. The *bizcochos* and bread were prepared in *ornos* or beehive type ovens made of adobe, stone and mud mortar. An early traveler to New Mexico stated that the *ornos* "baked the whitest bread it has ever been my fortune to taste."³⁰ Instead of yeast, women at Las Vegas used a starter dough (sourdough type) from a previous day's mixing to prepare a new batch. Whenever Santa Fe Trail caravans arrived at Las Vegas, extra bread was baked and sold to the weary travelers at the plaza. *Bizcochos* and another hard bread, which kept for many days, were carried in *maletas* (leather bags or wallets) by *ciboleros*, *comancheros*, and other travelers.³¹

Piñón nuts were gathered whenever nature's cycle provided such a harvest. This popular item was eaten alone, used in small cakes, or as garnish for other dishes. On other occasions, the nuts were mixed with a little wheat flour and added to the corn meal to make a superb and better tasting *atole*.³² Miel (molasses), eaten with tortilla, bread, or other desserts, was manufactured from corn. The stalks were first stripped of the leaves and pounded with heavy wooden mallets until they were reduced to a pulp. The laborious process involved long hours of smashing, followed by a steaming of the pulp. The pulp was next passed through a crude wooden press. The juice was finally evaporated into the desired consistency, and the *miel* was then stored in *ollas* (earthen jugs) for future use.³³

Whenever traveling to San Miguel, Santa Fe, or other settlements, people mounted their mules, horses, or *carretas* while the less fortunate walked.³⁴ Burros carried their masters at times, but they were normally used to haul juniper, cedar, piñón, aspen, and other types of wood used in cooking and heating homes. These pack animals were usually over-loaded to the extent that only their heads and tails were visible.³⁵ *Carretas* were also used for various hauling purposes. They were crudely constructed and consequently appeared very primitive and clumsy. No nails or iron of any kind were used in their construction, and grease was unavailable to lubricate the axles. The result

was a loud eerie noise heard throughout the countryside as the *carreta* trudged about. Depending on the load, one or two teams of oxen were required to draw the cart.³⁶

Dwellings of the Las Vegas inhabitants surrounded the town plaza. All were uniformly one story high and built of adobe, or mud and straw brick, which was moulded and dried in the sun. The customary size was 12x24x4 inches thick.³⁷ The *azoteas* (flat roofs) had just enough inclination to allow proper drainage of rain and snow melt. Walls were built one foot higher than the roof and were pierced with loopholes inserted with wood channels to allow for proper drainage.³⁸ Roofs were supported with *vigas* (pine beams), overlapped with *latillas* or wood planks, and then covered with up to two feet of soil. Grass and other verdure were allowed to grow on rooftops to prevent a washout of the layered surface.³⁹ The top surface and thick walls were efficient insulators against the elements. Homes were consequently cool in the summer and warm during the cold winter months.

The uniformity of the architecture surrounding the town met the environmental and defensive needs of the people. Windows were very small and used as defensive positions to thwart Indian attacks. Through the 1840s, the Las Vegas plaza only had two entrances, one on the eastern side and another on the western. If an Indian attack was imminent, livestock herders would hurriedly drive the livestock into

the plaza and assist with preparations for the attack.⁴⁰

In their daily labors, men were occupied with raising livestock, farming, hunting, *acequia* maintenance, home building, wood hauling, and a few other endeavors. Women were occupied with all household duties, preparation of foodstuffs for future use, and making clothes. They also participated in the fall harvest and assisted with the tedious job of thrashing wheat, shucking corn, and grinding the grains into flour and meal. Their duties were somewhat in contrast with Pueblo Indian women who plowed the fields, hoed the furrows, watched the crops, and carried out other duties normally reserved for men.⁴¹

Other women in Las Vegas had specialized roles such as *parteras* (midwives) and delivered the newborn. Some known as *curanderas* or *médicas* (folk-healers) were familiar with the medicinal properties of different plants and roots and helped cure the sick. Women also carried most of the domestic water to their homes from the community well or the Gallinas River. Water was conducted in large *ollas* balanced on their heads. Some exhibited great balance with the clay jugs as they walked about in an erect, dignified manner. This custom brought high praise to the women of the New Mexico settlements.⁴²

Another duty all women participated in was the laundering of family clothing. This activity would occur at the Gallinas, a spring, or along the ditch banks. Clothes were

soaked in suds and pounded with sticks or stones, rinsed and then placed on bushes to dry.⁴³ People in New Mexico manufactured very little soap since the hog fat, preferred in soap making, was hardly available. As stated above, fat used in cooking usually came from beef or buffalo.⁴⁴ Notwithstanding, *nuevomexicanos* had long found that *amole* (soapweed/yucca root) was much better than lye soap. It produced excellent results in washing woolen goods, extracting all the grease and restoring the lustre of woolen clothing, blankets, and other articles. The lather made the best shampoo available, and additionally, *amole* worked as an antidote for certain poisons.⁴⁵

Like other New Mexicans, Las Vegans were very poor and possessed few material goods during the Mexican Period. The lack of industry and commercial enterprises in the province also made the acquisition of simple household goods extremely difficult and expensive.⁴⁶ Some commercial undertakings with Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and other parts of Mexico were established during the Spanish Colonial Period and continued under Mexican sovereignty. This commerce and trade was dominated by a few *nuevomexicanos* who acquired small fortunes and joined the *rico* class. The goods that these merchants exported to the interior of Mexico consisted mainly of oxen, sheep, woolen textiles, raw cotton, hides, buffalo robes, and piñón nuts—all highly esteemed for their excellent quality. Superior wine from El Paso also made its

way into Mexico.⁴⁷

Merchants for the Chihuahua trail met at Santa Fe where they purchased goods and livestock from other New Mexicans. In November a military escort accompanied the mule train and close to 500 men—the wealthy traders and their peones. They returned from Mexico with badly needed goods such as "horses, mules, linen goods, cotton textiles of all kinds, without excluding first and second grade cloths and [those from] Querétaro, baize, serge, scarlet, chalonas, silk cloths with both twisted and loose [threads], chocolate, sugar loaves, soap, rice, iron in merchant bars and plate, general hardware, spices, hats, leather goods of all sorts, pelts, tanned leather, paper, drugs, and some money, all of which assortment not only is sufficient to meet the expectations of the Province, but many of the aforementioned products are left over from one year to the next."⁴⁸

Many of the goods and commercial products which arrived in New Mexico from Sonora were contraband. They were purchased by Sonorans duty free from English merchants who smuggled them into Mexico along the Gulf of California. Goods brought in from Chihuahua many times originated in Vera Cruz before they reached New Mexico. Exorbitant prices compounded with the economic woes of New Mexico made it difficult for many to purchase the goods they needed.⁴⁹

New Mexico's internal commerce was monopolized by less than twenty merchants just prior to Mexican Independence.

They usually traded for other goods or gave credit to the poor at high rates. Credit, the barter system, and the lack of money in circulation made the sale of goods difficult for both merchants and poor *nuevomexicanos* who badly needed the goods. Merchants found other markets among the Pueblo Indians and the nomadic tribes when they engaged in the Comanchero trade.⁵⁰

Different minerals were available in New Mexico for exploitation, but people did not possess the know-how or the proper tools to extract, smelt, and work the metals. Available metals included silver, lead, tin, copper, and some gold. Coal, which could be used in smelting, was plentiful. Mica of good, transparent quality was found in New Mexico and used in place of glass panes. Cement was unknown, and consequently mud mortar was used to bond the sun-baked adobe.⁵¹

Arts and crafts were far from state-of-the-art due to the absence of apprenticeships and organized guilds found in developed countries. But, through their native ingenuity, some people developed skilled trades as weavers, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, and masons.⁵² Their adeptness at the different trades established the foundation for the popular folk-art tradition which yet thrives in New Mexico.

In 1803, Governor Chacón praised the healthful climate and the high mountains of northern New Mexico. He also

reviewed the demographic, social, and economic woes of the vast territory. Despite the area's underdeveloped state, Chacón was fairly optimistic when he expressed his opinion:

...the Province is not really so poor as is [generally] supposed, and that its [seemingly] natural decadence and backwardness is traceable to the lack of development and want of formal knowledge in agriculture, commerce, and the manual arts...One sees [here] no nakedness or begging. But in spite of the opulence, [the Province] will continue to decay by necessity, if you overload it with taxes before extending assistance to those [aforementioned] areas where it is deficient, including the discovery and processing of its metals.⁵³

The eventful arrival of the Santa Fe Trail in 1821 was pivotal in alleviating New Mexico's need for affordable commercial goods. It also helped stimulate the economy somewhat by providing local people with a few jobs as drivers and workers along the trail and in helping merchants sell their merchandise in the plazas. Missouri caravans brought goods in larger quantities and at much better prices than the costly merchandise from Mexico.

Nuevomexicanos engaged in a new adventure of purchasing

goods from the prairie travelers and merchants who set up shops in Santa Fe, San Miguel del Bado, Taos, and later Las Vegas. The new commerce helped these communities grow and prosper. With time, wealthy native residents also joined the commerce as traders. They went on trade expeditions to "los estados," as the United States was called.⁵⁴ After Las Vegas was settled, it superseded San Miguel del Bado as the first stopping point for caravans making their way to Santa Fe.

American merchants introduced merchandise and goods that they felt were essential to establishing the foundation of a European community. Among the articles introduced were textiles, carpenter and other working tools—of European or American make—which were either absent or extremely scarce in New Mexico. Among the most useful items men needed were "axes, hatchets, hoes, sickles, door hinges and bolts, nails, candle molds, metal screws, tin products, carpenters' wood planes, saws, files, locks, scissors, assorted knives, metal shovels, hammers, and chisels."⁵⁵

Items women needed for themselves and their households included "thimbles, needles, straight pins, coffee pots, bowls and plates, drinking glasses, table and parlor clocks, mirrors, combs, and brushes. Other goods were candleholders, flint stones, writing pens, smoking pipes, perfumes, window glass, and many more goods wanted by the hungry consumers in New Mexico."⁵⁶

One might assume that everyone owned the goods brought from the States to New Mexico, but the territory's isolation and capital scarcity during its first two hundred years of occupation had deprived New Mexicans of many items essential to survival and a comfortable, daily existence. The Missouri merchants brought all these essentials in larger quantities and at better prices. Since the new trade showed great promise, government officials and *ricos* in New Mexico quickly formed alliances and economic partnerships with the *americanos*, and by 1840 many *ricos* participated as merchants on the Santa Fe Trail.⁵⁷

Besides the Missouri merchants and *ricos* who opened stores in the population centers, other poorer *mexicanos* took advantage of the opportunity to sell their products and improve their income. A trade scene at Santa Fe in 1846 was typical of those found in communities such as Taos, San Miguel, Las Vegas, and Albuquerque. People from the smaller settlements, in this particular case, congregated at the capital to sell their own produce, wood, and other wares among the wealthier merchants:

Trains of 'burros' are continually entering the city [Santa Fe], laden with kegs of Taos whiskey or immense packs of fodder, melons, wood, or grapes...The markets have in addition to the articles already mentioned great quantities of

'chile colorado,' and 'verde,' 'cebollas' or onions, 'sandías' or water melons, 'huevos' or eggs, 'queso' or cheese, and 'hojas' or corn husks, neatly tied up in bundles for making cigarritos, 'punche' or tobacco, 'uvas' or grapes, and 'pinoñes,' nuts of the pine tree,..Besides these things, there are many varieties of bread, and several kinds of meat. The Pueblo Indians bring in great quantities of peaches which are called 'duraznos.'⁵⁸

Nuevomexicanos retained much of their native dress during the Mexican period, but the advent of the Santa Fe Trail brought European and American clothing which gradually worked its way into a taste for fashion. Josiah Gregg wrote that the *rico* class in New Mexico was fast adopting and conforming to European fashion during the 1830s. One exception, he expressed, was the riding costume of the wealthy *caballero*.⁵⁹

Rico land owners still wore their popular sombrero, a low-crowned hat with a wide brim. It was covered with oil cloth and a band of tinsel cord an inch in diameter. This attire included a *chaqueta* or cloth jacket embroidered with braid and fancy barrel-buttons. They also wore a type of pantaloon called *calzones*. The outer part of the leg on the

calzón was open with a slit from hip to ankle—the borders set and fastened together with tinkling filigree buttons, and the whole was trimmed and adorned with tinsel lace and cords of the same materials. A colorful sash drawn tightly around the body substituted for a belt or suspenders. *Botas* (boots) embossed with fancy silk and tinsel thread were bound around the knee with garter straps. This wearing apparel was finally complemented with the popular *serape Saltillero*—so called because it fashioned after a similar *serape* from Saltillo, Mexico. The beautiful woven *serape* had a slit in the center for the head. Many times, it doubled as a blanket at night or poncho during inclement weather.⁶⁰

Initially, men found it easier to adopt American clothing than women. Those who could afford them wore *botas* or manufactured shoes. The poor wore a type of wooden shoe, moccasins, or crude shoes made of rawhide tied to the sole of the foot. *Pobres* also wore conical-crowned sombreros made from the Mexican palm leaf. Most men quickly adopted American calico shirts. They also wore white cotton trousers covered at times with leather breeches like the *rico*. The legging-type pants were usually made of rawhide or goatskin. All wore the universal *serape* whose quality determined the economic status of the wearer. Their value ranged from one dollar to as much as two hundred.⁶¹

Women of all classes wore the popular *rebozo* or shawl.

Bonnets were unknown to them and stimulated little interest when introduced by American traders. *Rebozos* were as much as eight feet in length and almost a yard wide. As in the men's fashion, quality and manufacture of the *rebozo* determined class status. They were made of silk, linen, or cotton; the finest varied in price from fifty to one hundred dollars. Ordinary cotton *rebozos* cost between one and five dollars and were worn by the poorer class. Fancier, more expensive *rebozos* were interchangeably called *mantillas*, although there was no difference in their manufacture.⁶²

Women, both poor and rich, wore the *enagua* or petticoat made of cotton or home-made flannel. The most popular were those sewn of coarse blue or scarlet cloth. *Enaguas* were bound at the waist with another wide section of cloth, contrasting in color with the skirt. Finally, women wore loose white blouses called *camisas*. These normally had short sleeves and were low cut around the neck, exposing full arms and shoulders—a phenomenon new to Americans and much commented upon. Women in New Mexico were extremely fond of jewelry and favored rings, bracelets, and necklaces made by native artisans. They continued to prefer this type of jewelry after cheaper foreign articles were introduced to them.⁶³

In their households, *nuevomexicanos* seldom used a table to eat their meals. Chairs, plates, forks and spoons were almost totally absent. People usually ate out of stoneware,

clay bowls made by the Pueblo Indians. A person received a single eating dish from the kitchen and ate without knives and forks. Meals were usually hashed or boiled in larger *ollas* before they were served. A tortilla doubled between the fingers substituted for a spoon. Most people usually refrained from drinking any kind of beverage while they ate, a habit Gregg and other Americans found to be peculiar. Water or other beverages were served at the conclusion of the meal.⁶⁴ Sometimes a little wine made in El Paso accompanied a meal. Other times, wine made by the people themselves from the scarce northern variety of grape, *capulín*, and other wild berries was served.

Furnishings throughout the household were sparse. Any kind of furniture was almost totally absent. The sides of the rooms were lined with thin mattresses made of huge rolls of *serapes* and other coarse blankets woven locally by the women. Others, who could afford them, kept beautiful Navajo blankets valued from \$50 to \$100 each. These Navajo and *mexicano* weavings served as beds at night and were rolled up in the morning to serve as lounges. For many people, one apartment or large room served as kitchen, parlor, and bedroom.⁶⁵

The wealthier class had larger homes with various rooms such as a *cocina* (kitchen), *dispensa* (provision-store), and a *granero* (granary). *Ricos* could also afford more luxuries, and consequently, they possessed some furniture. Most of it

consisted of rough-hewn tables, benches and chairs made from native woods. They prided themselves in possessing good silver cutlery and plates. Ricos could also afford to purchase rare goods such as sugar, coffee, chocolate from Mexico, and eventually, canned goods brought across the Santa Fe Trail. Despite the better comfort enjoyed by the wealthier class, an American noted in 1846 that "with all this air of wealth, true comfort is wanting; and very few of our blessed land would consent to live like the wealthiest rico in New Mexico."⁶⁶

Floors in all homes, churches, and other public buildings were hard-packed earth. Some of these were covered with a cheaper, coarse carpet called a *jerga*. Prior to the American Conquest, wooden, plank floors were unknown in New Mexico. Interior walls were plastered with a clay mortar containing lime. The plastering, exterior and interior, was a duty carried out by women. After it dried, the walls were white washed with *yeso*, or gypsum, which gave the rooms a clean, tidy appearance. Many times, walls were covered half-way up with calico, to prevent the white-wash from rubbing off on a person's clothing.⁶⁷

Spiritually, Las Vegans retained the same religious fervor they had maintained in New Mexico through two centuries of hardship. A weak, poor church and the dearth of priests had not weakened their faith, and it prevailed in the isolated and harsh environment of the territory. By the

time the community was finally permanently settled in 1838, the settlers finished construction of an adobe church on the west side of the plaza. Reportedly, construction had begun in 1836 and was completed in 1838 when the first recorded baptism appears for the parish.⁶⁸ The building was about twenty-five feet wide and seventy-five feet long. Facing east, the church had a small window on each side and a cupola in front. Sometime during the 1850s, a square, wooden facade was added to the structure, but it detracted from its appearance.⁶⁹ During the winter of 1853-1854, W. W. H. Davis traveled through Las Vegas on his way to Santa Fe. He met the parish priest who took him on a visit of the

...antiquated mud church, which looked as though it had stood the wear and tear of more years than was likely to be meted out to it in the future. It stands upon the Plaza, and over the entrance hangs an old cracked bell, the tones of which fell in doleful sounds upon the ear. The form is that of a cross, with a damp earthen floor, and void of seats, or other accommodations for worshippers. In the nave is the altar, with a few rude and primitive decorations, and in the rear of it are three daubs of paintings, one of which

is intended to represent Christ nailed to the cross; while a rough image of the Virgin Mary stood in the north transept. The old man in attendance showed us the sacred vestments of the priests; and as he laid article after article before us, and explained their respective use, a smile of proud satisfaction appeared to light up his countenance.⁷⁰

In addition to their devotional trips to church to attend mass and other religious services, many families—rich and poor—kept a small nook or altar in their homes. On these small altars they kept rosaries, *santos* (carved images of saints), crucifixes, and other religious articles. At home, families maintained daily devotional prayer.⁷¹

Another religious practice maintained by New Mexicans consisted of erecting crude wooden crosses in areas where hostile Indians or *ladrones* (thieves) had murdered an unfortunate wayfarer. People who later traveled along the same road would come to the cross, place a stone on a pile surrounding the crucifix, and offer a prayer for the repose of the dead person. The sites were appropriately called *descansos* (resting places).⁷²

Whenever an individual died among the poorer class of *mexicanos*, the corpse was rarely placed in a coffin. The

remains were wrapped in a blanket or other covering and lowered into the grave. As the earth was filled into the grave, it was simultaneously pounded with a large maul or rock to compress it.⁷³

In 1846, Lt. J. W. Abert of the American army reported the following account of a funeral procession he observed in Santa Fe:

I was much surprised with the manners of the Mexicans at a funeral. They marched with great rapidity through the streets near the church, with a band of music. The instruments were principally violins, and these were played furiously, sending forth wild raging music. The corpse, that of a child, was exposed to view, decked with rosettes and flaunting ribbons of various brilliant hues, and the mourners talked and laughed gaily, which seemed to me most strange. I was told too, that the tunes played were the same as those which sounded at the *fandangos*.⁷⁴

Fandangos, of course! These popular dances of the New Mexican occasionally helped him forget about the hard toil he spent in the fields, the ever-present threat of Indian attack, or his other daily preoccupations. *Fandangos* were

held at weddings, church fiestas, to honor and welcome *americano* visitors, and at other times, just for the sake of celebrating. Sometimes a group playing stringed instruments and a triangle would march through the streets of Las Vegas announcing the *fandango* which would be held later in the evening.⁷⁵

Everyone attended the dance, men, women, and children from "10 to 80 years," the rich and poor. Their clothing for the dance ranged from "rich dresses to plain calico and long cotton shawls to even rags."⁷⁶ These dances, or *bailes*, as others called them, were held in large rooms kept for that purpose. Ladies sat on benches and chairs along one side of the room, smoking the ever-popular *cigarito*, while men stood with hats on or off, some smoking, others not.⁷⁷

Music was usually provided by violins and guitars, with accompaniment and tempo provided by metals or pieces of wood. The dance floor was the same trampled earth found at home.⁷⁸ Ladies usually had their *rebozos* wrapped around their heads or dropped on their shoulders while they observed others dance. Only when they stood to dance would they take them off, fold them, and place them on a chair or bench. They would then set out to dance one of the popular *valeses* (waltzes), a *cuadrilla* (cuadrille) like the *cuna* (cradle dance), or some other popular dance like the *italiano*. The excitement and merriment of the *fandango*

usually lasted until midnight, at which time satisfied celebrants returned to their homes.⁷⁹ The popular *fandango*, now only referred to as *baile*, has certainly prevailed in New Mexico. One *mexicano*, however, quipped early in 1848 that the native might have a difficult time adjusting to American music. His jocular verse went:

La música de los yankees,
No me gusta dice Inés,
Porque nada les entiendo,
*Como tocan en inglés.*⁸⁰

Another social, but costly pleasure some *vegueños* enjoyed was gambling—especially the game of monte played with cards. *Mexicanos* who could afford it and *americanos* arriving in Las Vegas and other towns found it difficult to break away from the habit-forming game.⁸¹ Suits in the game of monte consisted of clubs, swords, suns and cups. All were delineated in their own colors and figures. Like American cards, each suit numbered ten cards "from ace to seven, and then knave, horse standing in the place of queen and king." Of course, wrote Sergeant F. S. Edwards in 1849, "The mysteries of the game can only be learnt by losing at it."⁸² An account of a monte game written a few years after 1846 went thus:

"Here, caballero, are three thousand dollars, will you top the bank?" The stranger nodded acquiescence, and the

propietress, mounting the table and seating herself crosslegged upon it, took a new pack of cards in her hand and shuffled and dealt them so rapidly that they scarcely appeared to move. The first 'layout' from the bottom of the pack, was the *caballo* and *tres*, the second, from the top, the *siete* and *dos*. Passing by the first 'layout' the stranger took up the *siete* and threw it on the table face downward in token that he bet the amount of money in the bank that in running the cards the *siete* would appear before the *dos*. The proprietress turned the pack face upwards showing the *caballo* 'in the door,' or the first card that appeared. Had the stranger bet on the *caballo* he would have won but two thirds of the money in the bank, and had he bet against it would have lost the full amount. The 'door' is the only advantage the bank has in an 'honest' game of *monte*, and is considered to be worth thirty-three and a third per centum; but our stranger had, by

betting on the *siete*, rendered unavailable the advantage of the door, so the decision of the bet as it stood involved the fate of the bank and the fortune of Doña Marcelina.⁸³

Religious and social activities all people could afford and enjoy were the celebration of saints' days. During these observances, which were both festive and solemn, towns were illuminated by *luminaries* (small fires), pine faggots, and burning candles. Walls and plazas were cast aglow by these as people marched in religious procession displaying a carved image of their *santo patrón*.⁸⁴

One of the most popular fiestas celebrated in New Mexico was *El Día de San Juan*, celebrated June 24th. On this day in 1847, Richard L. Wilson, a newspaperman from Chicago, participated in the festivities held at the young, emerging community of Las Vegas. In preparing for the big day, *vegueros* washed socks, linen, and clothing. Moccasins were mended, men received haircuts, and antelope and other meats were cooked. All types of bartering for animals and other goods took place during the celebration. Highlights for the day were different games, a dinner, and the finale—a *fandango*. The most exciting game held that day was the favorite *corrida de gallo* (chicken run). Wilson humorously reflected that

Ten innocent chickens were buried, all

save the heads, which were left above ground as if to superintend operations; ...These chickens were planted at some distance from each other and their locality indicated by a small flag that fluttered near. This proceeding was Greek to us and to the chickens also, for they evidently felt that they were made game of...Meanwhile twenty-five horsemen had ranged themselves near our venerable observatory, and at a preconcerted signal, put spurs to their horses and set off pell-mell for the flag. The advance rider reached from his saddle and catching the head of the first chicken, decapitated it in an instant, his horse the while not lessening his speed. On crowded his companions, one after another, making a pass at a head, then riding on, they wheeled passing and repassing, until all the chickens were decapitated, then the game was up. It was altogether a strange scene, and was near like weeding a garden on horseback of a hard gallop, as anything to which we can compare

it.⁸⁵

Once the *corrida de gallo* and other games concluded, the community partook of a sumptuous feast held in a large building neatly carpeted with *jergas*. *Ollas* and other serving dishes were arranged on tables next to the white-washed walls. People sat on benches as they prepared to eat. The dinner of "tortillas, atole, butter, cheese, onions, mutton, trout, eggs—never forgetting the chickens [killed in the *corrida*], which brought up the rear of this bill of fare." For dessert everyone had cake and piñones.⁸⁶

Such was life in early Las Vegas through the American Occupation and Conquest of 1846-1847. During these first ten years, the settlement consisted mostly of the poor settlers who lived from the land granted to them for cultivation and pasturing livestock in 1835. They struggled through difficult times; however, by 1840, the founding of an additional community, the Plaza de Arriba, showed promise and potential prosperity for the Las Vegas area.⁸⁷

In 1847, eighty-five families lived in Las Vegas and forty-nine at Plaza de Arriba. Nine families in Las Vegas had servants—mostly Indians—indicators that some *ricos* were already gaining wealth and status.⁸⁸ Foremost of these was Juan de Dios Maese, the *alcalde* who led the early settlement thrust. Philip St. George Cooke was in Las Vegas during the occupation, and on one occasion was invited to drink a toast of whiskey from a clay cup and eat dinner with

the *alcalde*. Mease's home best reveals the residence and lifestyle of the wealthier and more fortunate residents of Las Vegas at the outset of the American Period. While Cooke's horses were being fed, he

...sat down to a dinner; it was composed of a plate, for each, of poached eggs, and wheaten tortillas; seeing some cheese on a small pine table, I asked for a knife to cut it;—the old man [forty-seven at the time] went to a hair trunk, and produced a very common pocket knife. The room had a smooth earthen floor; it was partly covered by a kind of carpeting of primitive manufacture, in white and black—or natural coloring of the wool;—it is called *Jerga*; around the room, mattresses, doubled pillows, and coverlids, composed a kind of divan; the walls were white-washed, with gypsum, which—rubbing off easily, a breadth of calico was attached to the walls above the divan; there was a doll-like image of the Virgin, and two very rude paintings on boards and some small mirrors; the low room was ceiled

with puncheons, supporting earth;—there were several rough board chairs. The *alcalde's* dress was a calico shirt, —very loose white cotton drawers or trousers, and over them another pair—also very loose,—of leather, open far up at the outer seams. There appeared to be servants [Dolores and Juana], wild Indians of full blood.⁸⁹

The Missouri commerce did much to bolster the new settlement of Las Vegas and other communities in Mexico's northern territory. The commerce made a major contribution by bringing large quantities of affordable, essential goods to the residents. Money began to circulate, and the citizens were introduced to small but meaningful commercial endeavors. The quality of life gradually improved, and as people adjusted to a new order, a tremendous change in the psychology and social ambience of Las Vegas and the region occurred.⁹⁰

Communication and trade with the Americans had brought all these changes and improvements to the people's material culture. However, while all these contacts were occurring, American traders, trappers, and other visitors made interpretive observations about the province, its citizens, and the many underdeveloped resources it contained. And consequently, it did not take very long for the United

States and Texas to include New Mexico in their dreams to expand their borders and landed acquisitions.

... p. 35.

... p. 107.

... was first published ... of the plains, New Mexico,

... p. 44. Various ... through 1847

... p. 23; Gregg,

... p. 22.

... p. 113.

... and berries retain their ... especially in the rural ... appeared in northern New ... pests, and prohibition. ... area of grapevines produced ... or 905,000 barrels per ... of Albuquerque

... October 21, 1847. This ... newspaper published in New ... English, Manuel Alvarez, a ... American Counsel at Santa Fe, ... editorialship.

... p. 111.

... November 13, 1847.

... 21, 1847

... "The Oregon Economic Report," NMHR, ... of this report and inserts

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER III

1. Meyer, *Water in the Hispanic Southwest*, p. 35.
2. Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 107.
This book has been recognized, since it was first published in 1844, as a classic description of the plains, New Mexico, and the Santa Fe Trail trade.
3. Ibid., pp. 197-108.
4. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas," p. 44. Various American travelers who stopped at Las Vegas through 1847 mention *Alcalde Maese* in their writings.
5. Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México*, p. 23; Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 108.
6. Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México*, p. 22.
7. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 112.
8. All of these wild plants and berries retain their popularity among New Mexicans, especially in the rural areas. Grape cultures almost disappeared in northern New Mexico because of the harsh winters, pests, and prohibition. By 1880, New Mexico's 3,150 acres of grapevines produced one-fifth of the country's wine, or 905,000 barrels per year. See *Business Outlook*, supplement of *Albuquerque Journal*, June 1, 1987.
9. *Santa Fe Republican*, October 23, 1847. This newspaper was the first American newspaper published in New Mexico. Written in Spanish and English, Manuel Alvarez, a Spanish immigrant and the American Counsel at Santa Fe, provided much of the Spanish editorship.
10. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 111.
11. *Santa Fe Republican*, November 13, 1847.
12. Ibid., October 23, 1847.
13. Marc Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," *NMHR*, LX(1985), p. 85. Translations of this report and inserts thereof are Simmons'.
14. Ibid., p. 84.

15. Ibid., p. 84-85.
16. Ibid., p. 85.
17. 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Executive Document No. 23, p. 36. This document contains Lieutenant J. W. Aberts' "Examination of New Mexico, in the Years 1846-1847."
18. Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México*, pp. 20-21.
19. Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," p 85.
20. SED No. 23, p. 29.
21. Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," p. 85.
22. Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México*, p. 19.
23. Ibid. pp. 21-22.
24. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 108-109.
25. John P. Bloom, "New Mexico Viewed by Anglo-Americans, 1846-1849," *NMHR*, XXXIV(1959), p. 179.
26. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 109-110.
27. SED No. 23, p. 43.
28. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 109-110.
29. H. T. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 21.
30. Lewis H. Garrard, *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), p. 175.
31. SED No. 23, p. 31.
32. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 278.
33. SED No. 23, pp. 29, 43.
34. Ibid., p. 30.
35. G. Douglas Brewerton, "Incidents of Travel in New Mexico," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XLVII(1854), p. 583.
36. William R. Goulding, "Travels of William R. Goulding, 1848-1849: A Diary," p. G-1. Microfilm copy

available at Coronado Room, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico.

37. James A. Bennett, *Forts and Forays, A Dragoon in New Mexico, 1850-1856*, Clinton E. Brooks, Frank Reeve, eds. (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1948), p. 14; Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 53.

38. SED No. 23, p. 28.

39. Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 14.

40. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 275. Stanley quotes Wilson's 1847 views about Las Vegas, but the newspaper source does not appear in the book.

41. Lieutenant E. H. Rufner, *New Mexico and the New Mexicans* (No publisher: 1876), p. 5. This small book can be found at the Newberry Library, Chicago.

42. SED No. 23, p. 29.

43. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 21.

44. Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," p. 85.

45. Elias Brevoort, *New Mexico: Her Natural Resources and Attractions* (Santa Fe: 1874), p. 53.

46. Wayne Moquin, Charles Van Doren, eds., *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 271. Moquin reprints: "An Anonymous Description of New Mexico, 1818," written by an anonymous Frenchman who visited New Mexico during that period. This brief also appears in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, July, 1929.

47. Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," p. 87.

48. Ibid.

49. Moquin, *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*, p. 127.

50. Simmons, "The Chacón Economic Report," p. 87.

51. Ibid., p. 85.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., pp. 84, 87-88.

54. Verna Laumbach, "Las Vegas Before 1850," *NMHR*, VIII (1933), pp. 248-249.

55. Albert William Bork, "Nuevos aspectos del comercio entre Nuevo México y Misuri: 1822-1846," Ph.D. Diss. *Universidad Autónoma de México*, 1944, pp. 82-86.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (San Francisco: History Co., 1889), p. 333.

58. SED No. 23, p. 23.

59. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 149.

60. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 149-150; John P. Bloom, "New Mexico as Viewed by Anglo-Americans," p. 193; W. W. H. Davis, *El Gringo, New Mexico and Her People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 190. This important work on New Mexico was first published by Harper and Brothers in 1857.

61. 29th Cong., 1st Sess., SED No. 438, p. 46. This document contains Lt. J. J. Abert's report on his expedition to Comanche Indian country in 1845; John P. Bloom, "New Mexico Viewed by Anglo Americans," p. 173; Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 14.

62. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 152; John P. Bloom, "New Mexico Viewed by Anglo-Americans," p. 192.

63. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 152-153; Laumbach, "Las Vegas Before 1850," p. 252; Susan Shelby Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico*, Stella M. Drumm, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 326.

64. Groulding, "Travels of William R. Groulding," p. G-1; *Estado de las Misiones del Nuevo México*, p. 326.

65. Brewerton, "Incidents of Travel in New Mexico," p. 578; SED No. 23, p. 36.

66. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 145; SED No. 23, p. 36.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, pp. 274-275.

69. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas," p. 60.
70. Brewerton, "Incidents of Travel in New Mexico," p. 578.
71. Ibid., "Incidents of Travel," p. 578.
72. Ibid., p. 579.
73. John P. Bloom, "New Mexico Viewed by Anglo-Americans," p. 185; Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, p. 185.
74. SED No. 23, p. 31.
75. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 53; Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 15.
76. Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 15.
77. James F. Meline, *Two Thousand Miles on Horseback, Santa Fe and Back: A Summer Tour Through Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico, in the Year 1866* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), p. 106.
78. Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 16.
79. SED No. 23, p. 32; Meline, *Two Thousand Miles on Horseback*, p. 106; Bennett, *Forts and Forays*, p. 16.
80. *El Republicano*, July 24, 1848. Translated, the verse reads: The music played by Yankees...I do not like, says Inés [Inez]...Because I understand nothing...As they play in English.
81. SED No. 23, p. 39.
82. Frank S. Edwards, *A Campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan* (Philadelphia, 1847), p. 41; Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 168-169.
83. This account of a *monte* game was written by an American who came to Santa Fe in 1849. It is a fictitious account written in a short story, *La Cambiada (The Changed One)*. The story has a Spanish Colonial setting in New Mexico. The author was highly familiar with New Mexicans, their language and culture by his own account and admission. It is also highly evident in his writing. The character mentioned in this quote, Doña Marcelina, is obviously created after Gertrudes Barceló, "La Tules," who was probably an acquaintance of the author. Many have written

about her through the present. One of the first to mention La Tules was Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 168-169.

84. John P. Bloom, "New Mexico Viewed by Anglo-Americans," p. 185; W. H. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, Including Parts of the Arkansas, Del Norte, and Gila Rivers* (Washington: Wendell and VanVentusen, 1848), pp. 24-35; Emory's report originally appeared as a government publication. See 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Executive Document No. 7.

85. Richard L. Wilson, as quoted in *The Las Vegas Story* by Father Stanley, pp. 276-277.

86. Ibid.

87. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas*, p. 10.

88. Vigil, *1845 Census of Las Vegas New Mexico*; MANM No. 40, Frames 461-468.

89. Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1878), p. 20; Vigil, *1845 Census of Las Vegas New Mexico*. This census lists the names of Maese's two female servants and their children.

90. Bork, "Nuevos aspectos del comercio entre Nuevo México y Missouri," p. 91.

CHAPTER IV

HEIGHTENING AMERICANO AND TEJANO INTEREST IN THE NEW MEXICO PROVINCE DURING THE EARLY 1840s

During President James K. Polk's administration, the growing United States expanded her borders vastly. When Polk was elected in 1844, American voters knew little about him except that he stood for the "manifest destiny" of the United States—a divine mission to Americanize the Western half of the Continent. This expansionist mood of the American public had existed for some time, and by the time Polk left office, the tide of American destiny had engulfed the northern half of Mexico. This picturesque and appealing Mexican frontier had tempted Americans for a quarter of a century and included the New Mexico territory.¹

Much of the expansionist fervor originated with Thomas Jefferson during the early years of the Republic, as the nation's population continued to grow. As early as 1803, Jefferson projected that the country's rapid growth would cause the United States to extend its boundaries beyond its present limits and "cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar form by similar laws."²

The prospect of American expansion into New Mexico

increased after the inception of the profitable Santa Fe Trade. It continued to grow as a result of the growth and profits of this trade, as well as America's growing knowledge about the underdeveloped resources of the northern Mexican territory. Many consequently felt that New Mexico and her resources offered unlimited potential, especially under the exploitative care of Yankee industry and enterprise.

Augustus Storrs' congressional exposé in 1825 did much to inform Americans about the weak government in New Mexico, the territory's underdeveloped resources, and the people's want of life's many necessities and conveniences. Storrs exclaimed that he saw only one newspaper in New Mexico and that the people possessed no books except for a few religious works. New Mexicans were ignorant of world affairs, and even the fame of individuals such as General Andrew Jackson was unknown to but a handful of individuals in Santa Fe. One of the biggest obstacles for Storrs was the priests and their "ecclesiastical influence [which] removed from the people every means of information, and prevented their improvement, in every art and every science."³

Many other Americans and foreign travelers to the Mexican territory likewise emphasized New Mexico's lack of progress, its natural resources, and Mexico's neglect of its frontier citizens. These were realities which had drawn the ire of *nuevomexicanos* themselves, long before 1821. Ameri-

cans particularly noted the territory's underdeveloped mineral and lumbering resources. They were quick to see that iron and its byproducts were very scarce and expensive, yet abundant iron ore reserves were known to exist in various locations. Another ironic observation was that although New Mexico's enormous flocks produced twice the raw wool needed to clothe all its inhabitants, woolen goods were scarce and badly needed.⁴

Other minerals such as silver, gold, and copper reserves were known to exist in New Mexico, but they remained virtually untapped and unproductive. Prior to the Occupation of 1846, copper had been extracted from localities such as Las Tijeras, Jemex, Abiquiu, and Guadalupita, but only one gold mining operation appeared productive. In the area southwest of Santa Fe, gold deposits had been discovered and developed at "Los Placeres" since 1827.⁵ A few years later in 1839, richer deposits were discovered close by at a new locality called "Placeres Nuevos." Scarcity of water, low quality ore, and lack of mining equipment impeded the exploitation of the mine; however, its promoters were not deterred by these inconvenient setbacks. The mine was developed and the community of San Francisco del Tuerto was established at the site; by 1845, the settlement boasted an annual yield of \$250,000.00 in gold.⁶

The crude, labor-intensive manner in which gold was extracted from these mines gave only a few families from the

rico class the advantage and opportunity to amass any kind of wealth. The actual mining of the ore was done by the lower class of *pobres* who were given access to the diggings; their scanty yield later ended up in the hands of the *ricos*.

Gold diggers used mountain goat horns and hard gourds to scrape sand and earth from deep wells. The ore-bearing material was then carried to the surface where men, women, and children laboriously sifted with wooden platters, using water to separate the glittering grains of gold. The small results of their labor were then traded to the *ricos* in exchange for food and other necessities. In such an unfair exchange, only the already wealthy class could benefit substantially. When he visited these mines in 1846, Lieutenant J. W. Abert saw the miserable way these poor miners lived. He commented on the difficulty of extracting gold—virtually without tools or equipment—and lamented that even the life of the poor shepherd who daily risked his life among the Indians was preferred to that of the gold diggers.⁷

The gold extracted from the Old and New Placers mines near Santa Fe reportedly averaged \$19.00 per ounce at the onset of the American Conquest.⁸ Gold, as well as the small amounts of silver mined in New Mexico, was often purchased by American merchants and taken back to the States. Some members of the wealthy *mexicano* class used their fortunes in gold to enter the Santa Fe trade. On March 26, 1846, Ambrosio Armijo and Santiago Flores headed a *nuevomexicano*

trade caravan which arrived at Independence, Missouri. The group had 350 pounds of gold dust in their possession worth about \$110,000.00. The *Missouri Republican* reported that the New Mexicans were engaged in heavy purchasing and planned to return to New Mexico with their goods later that spring.⁹

The Santa Fe trade had flourished tremendously since the trading party accompanied by Augustus Storrs in 1824 realized a profit of \$180,000.00 on an investment of \$18,000.00. Out of ten *mexicano* merchants purchasing goods in St. Louis during the early months of 1846, seven represented the wealthy and powerful Armijo family, which included investments by Governor Manuel Armijo, his brother, and nephews. Through the month of July, 1846, 351 wagons conveyed 9,588 bales of trade goods to New Mexico and Chihuahua. The Independence editors predicted that the \$1,000,000.00 in wholesale merchandise would reap the best profits ever in the history of the Santa Fe Trade.¹⁰

American Santa Fe trail merchants, adventurers, and the U.S. Government also fostered a growing interest in New Mexico's lush grazing lands and the many fertile valleys in the mountains and along the lower river bottoms. The prospects for developing large livestock herds and stimulating commercial farming for profits were reported in American newspaper accounts and other sources throughout the Mexican Period. American acquisition of this Mexican terri-

tory was discussed for many years. To no one's surprise, the Indian threat was readily acknowledged as the major obstacle to occupying these lands for raising livestock and agriculture.

Enough was known about New Mexicans through the characterizations which appeared in various written accounts to convince most Americans—those who had been to New Mexico and those who had not—that they were superior to the Mexicans, not only racially, but in knowledge and material and cultural attainments. Even agriculture, which had sustained the people in New Mexico for two and one-half centuries, was criticized and judged inferior to American farming practices.

In 1841, Kendall provided a prospectus on the agricultural potential of the Río Grande Valley near present Las Cruces. He theorized that under "Anglo-Saxon" cultivation the region would support five times the population the area then contained. In anticipation of Americans coming to New Mexico in the future, he stated that scarcity of timber and the tremendous distance to markets would present obstacles to American emigrants into the lower Río Grande area.¹¹ When the Americans finally did arrive in 1847, the *Santa Fe Republican* echoed Kendall's thoughts on agriculture by reporting that New Mexico's fertile lands were capable of supporting a much larger population. To do so, however, modern farming techniques had to be adopted by the people.¹²

Like their former patriots from the eastern United States, citizens of the newly-established Texas Republic were also interested in the economic promise New Mexico held for them. This interest and knowledge about New Mexico led the *tejanos* to declare that their southwestern and western boundary was the Río Grande—the same year they declared their independence in 1836. The Texas Congress established this notion as a result of its treaty with Mexico which designated the southern bend of the Río Grande as the boundary between Texas and Mexico. To the Texans, this interpretation meant all the land on the east side of the river extending north to its origins and source in present Colorado.¹³

The Mexican Republic and her citizens living in the New Mexico Territory had also recognized the importance of the Santa Fe Trail since its origins in the early 1820s. As early as 1825, officials in the State of Chihuahua sent Simón Escudero to Washington to discuss construction of a road between the United States and the northern Mexican frontier.¹⁴ Two years later in 1827, Augustus Storrs served as guide to an American survey team which planned and mapped the proposed road to New Mexico. A black servant, Abraham, accompanied the crew, possibly becoming the first black to enter New Mexico from the eastern states.¹⁵

Despite Texas' claim to Santa Fe and the other New Mexico settlements, *nuevomexicanos* consistently rejected

such claims and maintained their patriotic loyalty to Mexico. In 1839, Governor Manuel Armijo was concerned that Texas might launch an expedition against New Mexico to claim the territory. As the rumor grew, Armijo complained to the Minister of War in Mexico that the military force in New Mexico was so small that the smallest foreign army could easily occupy the territory and wrest her from the mother country. The Minister of War promised to send troops if such a need should develop, but they never arrived.¹⁶

Again, in February of 1840, Armijo repeated his request for troops, stating that his department had only 50 or 60 soldiers. Later in May, Armijo gave reasons for his growing hostility towards American traders and visitors to New Mexico. One reason he gave was that a naturalized American by the name of Nait had gone from Taos to Texas, doubtless to inform the *tejanos* of the conditions in New Mexico, which did not have the military force to protect itself from foreign invasion.¹⁷

Such was the *tejano* claim to New Mexico, and their determined desire to occupy the territory, that throughout 1840 public officials and the clergy in New Mexico continued to complain that the Texas Republic was planning an invasion to claim the territory. On July 22, 1840, Vicar Juan F. Ortiz went so far as to warn the population about an invasion which was purportedly fomenting in Texas.¹⁸

Governor Armijo continued his remonstrations to offi-

ciala in Mexico. His apprehensiveness and complaints also addressed the various forts which North Americans had placed near the New Mexican border. The nearest one was that built by Charles Bent on the Napeste (Arkansas) River. According to Armijo, the forts protected individuals who conveyed contraband trade into New Mexico, with the first point of contact being San Fernando de Taos. These traders, he said, were the ones who supplied arms and ammunition to the Indians and robbers, who could be either foreigners or Mexicans. He was convinced that the traders at these American frontier forts disposed "all the barbarian nations to rob and kill the Mexicans, either in this Department or other Departments of the interior in order that they may profit the spoils...."¹⁹

Armijo was further concerned that the people of New Mexico could not be counted on, should an invasion occur, because many of them wanted to join the *tejanos* to secure better conditions for themselves. It was especially true of the people in Taos, and a plan for revolt among the lower classes there had been investigated.²⁰

The Texas Republic's interest in New Mexico was primarily based on economic considerations. During the early years of its existence, the Republic's economic woes were critical and the treasury's coffers drained. And as the rumors of a *tejano* invasion continued to grow in 1840, William G. Dryden, a naturalized Mexican citizen from Santa

Fe, had visited President Lamar in Texas. He informed Lamar about the territory and its people, stating that many *mexicanos* held positive attitudes towards Texas. He returned to New Mexico with a message to the people from Lamar, hoping to convince *nuevomexicanos* to accept a change of government. The message assured the people that their rights and privileges would be protected and be equal to those guaranteed to Texans themselves. They were also promised security against all foreign invasions.

Dryden reported to Lamar about his consequent discussions with the *nuevomexicano* the following March of 1841.²¹ He stated that all the Americans and Pueblo Indians, as well as two-thirds of the Mexicans, were behind the Texans "heart and soul." He further commented that upon visiting with Armijo several times, the governor, too, would be glad to welcome the arrival of the *tejano* in New Mexico. Armijo assured him, he reported, that no military aid could be expected from lower Mexico, and no resistance would be forthcoming from Armijo and his people.²² Such was the tone reported in Santa Fe, and the stage was set for President Lamar and his people to launch a campaign to occupy the Mexican territory they claimed.

In organizing an expedition to New Mexico, Lamar acted without consent or approval from the Texas Congress. He sought volunteers and merchants for an alleged trade venture and told them they would be provided with sufficient mili-

tary protection. Recruits who had a love for adventure and a curious regard for an area that had drawn much interest during preceding years were quickly organized to form the famous Texas-Santa Fe Expedition.²³

All records and documents of the expedition reveal a profound assurance and conviction on the part of the Texans that *nuevomexicanos* would welcome the privilege and opportunity to pledge their loyalty and patriotic allegiance to the Texas Republic. Most seemed assured that the political and commercial intent of the expedition drew all the attention and not that it was a military invasion and conquest.

George W. Kendall, editor of the *New Orleans Picayune*, accompanied the expedition as its chronicler. He stated that their attempt to conquer the New Mexico province, which had close to one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, "was a shade too Quixotical to find favor in the eyes of the three hundred and twenty odd pioneers who left Texas, encumbered with wagons, merchandise and the implements of their different trades and callings."²⁴ Members of the expedition were told that they were traveling for the purpose of opening communications with that part of Texas which was called Santa Fe so that it too could be united with the rest of the Republic. President Lamar was now going to bring all of the people under the Texas system of government, and a spirit of liberty and independence would spread among all of its inhabitants. However, since a major difference existed

between the nature and culture of the Texans and *nuevo-mexicanos* in language, religion, laws, manners, and customs, some opposition was expected. As a consequence, appointed commissioners in the expedition were cautioned to be patient and gentle towards the new people they were coming to incorporate into the Republic.²⁵

The *Missouri Republican* had warned through its columns that no citizen of the New Mexico district would ever acknowledge Texas authority unless they were ordered by higher authorities. The editors recommended that Texas should send a bodyguard to conduct its commissioners home safely and actually hinted that it was even wiser if the Texans drop the expedition altogether.²⁶

Nevertheless, Texas government officials were apparently so thoroughly convinced that they would meet no military opposition from New Mexico, and most of the discussions centered on the commercial intent of the expedition. Military conquest was probably not contemplated as being necessary by the greater number of *tejanos* who formed the caravan and expedition.²⁷

The commissioners who represented President Lamar on the expedition carried with them a message from him to the residents of Santa Fe and other portions of New Mexico which lay east of the Río Grande. It referred to the previous message brought by Dryden, stating that the President was now fulfilling his promise to send such an expedition to New

Mexico. He also drew a contrast between what he felt were the conditions they faced under Mexican rule and the better conditions they could expect under Texas.²⁸

While the Texans prepared the invasion of New Mexico, Governor Manuel Armijo likewise initiated preparations to protect the province against such an assault. The Texans never arrived in 1840, but in April of 1841, Armijo reported that he was still taking measures to protect New Mexico against an invasion. In May, he finally learned from the Comanche Indians that an expedition was in fact being organized in Texas and that the Navajo nation had sent representatives to Texas to establish an alliance with the young republic. Officials in Mexico, who also learned about the planned expedition, informed Armijo that although they had heard that the purpose of the expedition was commercial, New Mexicans would not be allowed to establish any relations with the Texans. Being that some *nuevomexicanos* looked favorably upon the foreigners, it was deemed important that the Texans should be intercepted before they penetrated too deeply into New Mexico to intrigue the sentiments of the people.²⁹

Governor Armijo wasted no time in making preparations for New Mexico's defense. He quickly organized some of his most trusted subordinates. Antonio Sandoval was told to watch for any scheming among the pueblo Indians, and he would make sure that no one left New Mexico until new in-

structions were issued. Father Juan F. Ortiz was delegated the responsibility of arousing the sentiments of the people in a spirit of opposition against the *tejanos*. Mariano Chaves was to be ready to assume command of part of the troops and two scouting parties which were to be sent out to the eastern plains. One of these parties was to be headed by Santiago Ulibarrí, the *alcalde* at San Miguel del Bado. He was to watch the northern section of the plains to persuade the Indians to harass the expedition whenever possible. The other party was to be led by Damasio Salazar, and it was to guard and protect the approaches into New Mexico by way of the Pecos River. Salazar was also to seek any information about other points the expedition might use to enter the territory.³⁰

Ulibarrí wrote to Armijo in Santa Fe that he needed an adequate number of militia at San Miguel to defend the area against the invasion. At Tecolote, commander Manuel Herrera had only twenty poorly equipped soldiers to protect that settlement and the community of Las Vegas.³¹ Miguel Mascareñas wrote from Mora that they, too, had received the circular and mandate to organize themselves against the invasion by the Texan parties. In that community, they were "all ready with arms in hand, to go to the defense of our country, until we spill the last drop of blood in our veins to Mary or defeat the existent religion." Mascareñas did lament, however, that due to the lack of firearms and muni-

tions which many of them did not have, both he and Captain Juan Antonio García were asking for twenty extra firearms and gunpowder. These they could keep in the event of war.³²

The Texas military contingent comprised 204 mounted infantry, an artillery company of 50 men, and a general staff of eleven members. There were three commissioners in a civilian group, along with a secretary, an interpreter, and nine merchants who were exempted from military duty. There were also three tourists, seventeen drivers, and four Mexican servants, for a total expeditionary force of 303 members. The value of the merchandise carried by the merchants was placed at \$200,000.00.³³

On September 17, 1841, the advance party of *tejanos* finally arrived at Antón Chico. They were met by a detachment of New Mexican soldiers under the command of Damacio Salazar.³⁴ There, Salazar tricked the Texans into submission. They were disarmed and placed under arrest, and once they were declared prisoners of war, they were taken to Santa Fe and subsequently marched to Mexico City. When Kendall saw the Mexican army, he described them as roughly dressed but well-mounted soldiers, "armed with lances, swords, bows and arrows, and miserable *escopetas*, or old fashioned carbines." He could hardly believe that such a "motley, collection of Indians and badly-armed, half-naked, wretched Mexicans" constituted Armijo's army.³⁵

The role the young community of Las Vegas played in the

Texas-Santa Fe Expedition and capture of the Texans is not fully documented, but they did participate. After the capture of the advance force, Las Vegas was used as the temporary headquarters for the New Mexico soldiers. Armijo marched his triumphant troops into the old town plaza where a big public demonstration was held. Throughout the celebration, speeches and emotional outcries and denouncements were directed against the *tejanos*.

Hilario Gonzales, Proprietary Justice of the Peace of the Jurisdiction of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de las Vegas*, Department of New Mexico—under orders of General-in-Chief Don Manuel Armijo—prepared a written testimonial and declaration to the festivities that transpired in his community on September 23. A huge bonfire was set in the plaza, and while it was burning, Armijo, his honor guard, and troops arrived, marching to the sound of a trumpet. The constitution and laws of the Texas Republic, along with other "proclamations, invitations, and other subversive papers which were brought from Texas to this department by the so-called commissioners of that Government of adventurers, assassins, and thieves" were cast into the fire, Gonzales wrote.³⁶

As Armijo's veteran troop discharged their firearms in unison, followed by a reveille of drums, trumpets, and flutes, the excited townspeople applauded and exchanged "vivas." To conclude the ceremony honoring Armijo and the

Mexican troops, the Justice of the Peace ordered the erection of a monument on the plaza which would read, "Here the Laws of the Ungrateful Colonists of Texas Were Condemned to the Fire in 1841."³⁷ No evidence remains that the monument was erected.

The main expedition led by General McLeod arrived in New Mexico about two weeks later, advancing very slowly, exhausted and nearly starving, and completely unprepared for fighting. They were met by Governor and General Manuel Armijo and his troops at Laguna Colorada, where McLeod surrendered to him. Thus, without firing a shot, the expedition had fallen into the hands of Armijo, the man whose rule they had been authorized to supersede. The second group was taken to Santa Fe and started to Mexico behind the advance party.³⁸

Captain Damasio Salazar, who marched the Texans to El Paso, received much notoriety for the role he played in mistreating and killing some of the Texan prisoners. At El Paso, Salazar was relieved of his duty and placed on trial for the murder of prisoners under his care. He was acquitted and eventually sent back to New Mexico.

After his two great victories over the advancing Texas invaders, Armijo dispatched a message to the central government in Mexico City where the information was received with great applause and recognition. The government announced the victory to the rest of the Mexican people, and like

Kendall, they likened the expedition "the most Quixotic ever undertaken." The valiant Armijo and patriotic New Mexicans were duly recognized as being triumphant and responsible for re-animating a public spirit throughout Mexico. The Republic was now fully resolved and determined to recover the territory Texas had wrested from her and to re-establish its former boundaries and limits.³⁹

New Mexico's rise to challenge and capture the members of the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition provides a clear demonstration of the collective patriotism *nuevomexicanos* felt for Mexico and their true determination to disclaim any affinity with the Texas Republic. While some citizens were clearly unhappy with the neglect and poverty they endured on the northern Mexican frontier, it was no different from the situation they had experienced under the Spanish Crown. Poorly equipped and undermanned as they were, their loyalty to Mexico in times of political crisis and threatening war was never questioned.

After 1841, attitudes and relations between Texas and Mexico continued to be strained. The Texas Republic sought reprisals against Mexico, and New Mexico felt many of the effects directly. Gangs of Texas bandits were organized to come to New Mexico to rob the settlements and trade caravans along the Santa Fe Trail. One was commanded by Captain John McDaniel, who professed he was acting under official orders from the Texas Republic. In February of 1843, McDaniel's

band of fifteen Texans attacked Don Antonio José Chávez' trade caravan which was travelling to Independence, Missouri.⁴⁰ At the Cow Creek crossing near present Lyons, Kansas, Chávez, who had been Governor of New Mexico from 1828 to 1831, and his group were attacked and killed. The bandits also took \$10,000.00 in silver the group carried to buy merchandise. After much protesting by Mexican officials, the group was later captured in western Missouri by American soldiers and prosecuted. McDaniel was hanged in August of the same year.⁴¹

That same year during the month of April, another Texas bandit, Charles A. Warfield, left Texas and headed towards New Mexico with twenty-four men. They reached Mora without being noticed and attacked the defenseless community at midnight. Five *moreños* were killed, others were wounded, and much of their livestock was taken. The following day, Mora residents took pursuit and captured five of the bandits. Warfield and the rest succeeded in escaping. The five prisoners were taken to Santa Fe where they were sentenced with imprisonment.⁴²

In 1843, Warfield himself soon joined another group of Texas adventurers led by Snively. This group marched along the Arkansas seeking a trade caravan of *nuevomexicanos* merchants. They did not find the caravan, but they ran into a patrol of Mexican troops sent by Manuel Armijo to secure crossing places for the same caravan. As the Mexicans were

armed with mostly bows and arrows and a few rifles, the Texans attacked them and quickly killed about thirty or forty without suffering a single loss. One of the Mexicans who managed to survive carried the news to Santa Fe.⁴³ These unfortunate events did much to engender the bad feelings between Americans, Texans, and New Mexicans. Relations among these groups worsened until President Santa Ana closed the northern ports to foreign commerce. He also imposed restrictions on all trade by decree on August 7, 1843.⁴⁴

On January 25, 1844, Mexican Minister Juan Almonte reported to the Mexican Government that there was much discontent in Santa Fe because the ports had been closed. He also expressed a fear that New Mexico might want to annex itself to Texas. Almonte recommended that trade could be regulated instead of prohibited altogether. The opposition to the forced termination of the trade traffic was so great that the decree was soon after repealed on March 31, 1844, almost as soon as it had gone into effect. However, the selling price of goods decreased, and the profits along the Santa Fe Trail were substantially much lower during 1844 and 1845.⁴⁵

During this period, the inhabitants of Las Vegas and the other settlements were also preoccupied with the proverbial Indian problems they had faced since early colonization. In 1844, a large group of Indians attacked

the herd ranches at Los Alamos near Las Vegas. Some sheep herders were killed and others were taken captive. When news of the tragedy arrived at Las Vegas, Miguel Romero organized a small group of men and took pursuit after the Indians. The enemy was overtaken at Los Ojitos de Santa Clara (Santa Clara Springs, now Wagon Mound) where a battle ensued. Five members of Romero's group were killed, and all the others were wounded. Due to the lack of ammunition and the overwhelming number of Indians, Romero and his men finally gave up their fight and retreated to Las Vegas.⁴⁶

In 1844, another band of Indians attacked a group of San Miguel del Bado *ciboleros* headed by Don José Ulibarrí in the plains east of La Cuesta (Villanueva). The Indians took over fifty oxen. In another escapade that year, two young captives were able to escape from the Comanches at the Río Colorado and make their way back to San Miguel del Bado.⁴⁷

The following year in 1845, a group of marauding Navajos entered the "Placita de los Bayes" (Valles de San Agustín), close to Las Vegas, stealing the settlements' horses and taking three young boys captive. A group of men pursued the Indians to no avail, but the captive boys eventually managed to escape in the mountains and make their way back to the settlement.⁴⁸

The Ute Indians were also committing much damage and depredations among northern New Mexican communities. Reportedly, one hundred citizens were killed by Indians in

the northern Mexican territory in 1845. North of Taos at the settlement of Río Colorado (Questa), people were afraid to cultivate their crops due to Indian raids. That year, rumors reached Missouri that people who lived along the Mora Valley were being asked to resettle along the Río Abajo where their farm lands and herds would be safer from the pillaging and forays of the Indians.⁴⁹ A closer review of Mexican records of the period is needed to determine the accuracy of some of the rumors on Indian attacks.

Amidst these reports making their way to the States, rumblings were renewed alleging that *nuevomexicanos* favored annexation to the United States. Reportedly, the people wanted "to be under a government which will protect their lives and property, and not subject them to forced loans, or to have their property seized by the soldiers of the country, as has been the case."⁵⁰

Manuel Armijo's popularity and his apparent favor towards Americans was also periodically reported in the American press. Americans hoped that he would remain as governor in 1845 because, according to reports, he had told them that there would be no fighting by the people of New Mexico if war were declared between Mexico and the United States.⁵¹ When Armijo did assume the duties of Governor on November 6, 1845, he invited Americans to his inaugural ball and rescinded an order which had previously been issued requiring all Americans to remove themselves from the fron-

tier areas in New Mexico to the capital in Santa Fe. One American claimed late in 1845, that Armijo showed him a letter from Mexico which outlined the American purchase of New Mexico, the northern part of Chihuahua, and all of California for the sum of \$15 million.⁵²

The constant media coverage about New Mexico and its inhabitants—in Missouri and the eastern states—only served to revive a new interest in the acquisition of New Mexico. And no sooner was Texas annexed into the Union in 1845, that American expansionist fervor reached new heights. Mexico, who had never recognized Texas' independence, broke relations with the United States; and Washington soon became preoccupied with the practicability of occupying and securing New Mexico. In doing so, the United States would acquire the highly profitable Santa Fe trade and explore the often-mentioned resources New Mexico offered for further development by that so-called "Yankee enterprise." The campaigns of the approaching Mexican War would consequently affect New Mexico and its citizens in a series of military episodes through early 1848 when a permanent military occupation was finally established.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER IV

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CHAPTER V
LAS VEGAS AND NEW MEXICO DURING THE AMERICAN
OCCUPATION AND CONQUEST

When President James K. Polk declared war against Mexico on May 13, 1846, he admonished the people of New Mexico, Chihuahua, and other northern Mexican states to remain peaceful and quiet towards the United States. In return, he promised to treat all *nuevomexicanos* as friends and to protect their rights. In his pronouncement, Polk also emphasized that the United States would continue open trade with New Mexico along the Santa Fe Trail. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny was subsequently assigned the duty of organizing the "Army of the West" whose mission, in part, was to march on New Mexico, establish peace with the native population, and secure the Santa Fe trade.¹

The discussion of war in the American press conveyed a general assumption by the U.S. Government and many of its citizens that New Mexico had already become an American possession after 1845 when Texas was annexed into the Union. All the United States needed now was a military force to make the acquisition formal. One declaration strongly stressed that New Mexico was "American soil, exhibiting the singular anomaly of being governed by Mexicans; the laws

administered by Mexicans, a Mexican soldier occupying and defending the territory and the duties paid at the custom house by Americans, going into the Mexican treasury...But so it is—we claim the territory and town of Santa Fe,..."²

Others optimistically stated that within time they would "get a proper foothold on [New Mexico's] plains, and an entrance into [her] mines; yet it will come and that at no distant day."³

While optimism on the projected easy conquest of New Mexico rode high with many, other reports making their way to the American public forecast a gloomy picture as Kearny and the Army of the West marched towards New Mexico. Among these speculations was the topic discussing the role Governor Manuel Armijo would play in the clash between both countries. One early account stated that Armijo and a growing army of 4,000 men was at Mora, ready to engage the American force.⁴ Kearny himself indicated that he would meet little or no resistance because it was known that Governor Armijo supported American claims to all of New Mexico east of the Río Grande.⁵

Another rumor maintained that the *alcalde* and priests at Taos were stirring up the people to resist the impending American invasion. A feeling of confidence was expressed by the *Missouri Republican*, however, as it was generally felt by many that *nuevomexicanos* were well disposed towards Americans. This attitude was combined with verifiable

reports that New Mexico's enlisted militia stood at less than 200 men—poorly trained and equipped and miserably clad and fed.⁶

As it would turn out, 1846 was a bad year for the people of New Mexico and the approaching Army of the West. The territory was experiencing a bad drought. Food supplies were extremely scarce, and vegetation was nearly exhausted. Samuel Rallston, a Santa Fe trader who returned to Missouri in early August, reported that the army arriving in New Mexico about that same time would have a difficult time securing feed and adequate forage for their animals to last for one month. Wheat and corn crops were faring very poorly, and no type of surplus harvest was projected. Provisions to sustain the American troops would consequently be hard to acquire, and the Army could expect to face a most difficult winter.⁷

Rallston was optimistic and convinced, however, that *nuevomexicanos* would show no force or resistance to Kearny's troops. He asserted that Governor Armijo planned to abandon New Mexico and move himself south of the Río del Norte if an armed force descended on him. With its small and miserable military force, New Mexico posed no threat whatsoever. When Rallston left Santa Fe forty days earlier on July 10, New Mexicans were already aware of the impending invasion. Other Americans who were returning to the states commented on the mixed emotions and confusion *nuevomexicanos* were

experiencing as they prepared for the inevitable arrival of the invading *americanos*.⁸

Governor Armijo learned about the defeat of Santa Ana's army at Palo Alto, Mexico in late June; and while the news generated little excitement among his people in New Mexico, Armijo became alarmed because he was aware that American troops would soon be sent over the plains to occupy New Mexico.⁹ In early August, as Kearny and his men drew nearer, Armijo ordered Albino Chacón, Judge of the First Instance and Constitutional Mayor, to call out the militia, citizens, and the Pueblo Indians to defend the territory against the American troops.¹⁰

On August 2, Captain Cooke was sent under a flag of truce to Santa Fe in advance of the American forces. He carried a proclamation issued by Kearny. On the 9th, he reached Las Vegas where he met *Alcalde* Don Juan de Dios Maese. The *alcalde* immediately dispatched a swift messenger across the mountains to convey Kearny's proclamation to Armijo and to apprise the Governor of Cooke's arrival in Las Vegas. After a brief sojourn in Las Vegas, Cooke continued to Santa Fe where he and James Magoffin, a naturalized Mexican citizen who had been living in Chihuahua, met with Armijo as Kearny's emissaries. Armijo declared to them that he, himself, would lead a force of six thousand men to meet the Army of the West.¹¹

By August 13th, Kearny's main column reached the

Sapelló River where they were advised by an American returning from Santa Fe that Mexican forces were assembling at Apache Canyon. This American advised Kearny to go around the pass. On the following day, as he entered Las Vegas, Kearny received his first official message from Armijo. It read:

You have notified me that you intend to take possession of the country I govern. The people of the country have risen en masse in my defense. If you take the country, it will be because you prove the strongest in battle. I suggest to you to stop at the Sapelló, and I will march to the Vegas. We will meet and negotiate on the plains between them.¹²

Kearny ignored Armijo and marched his troops into Las Vegas on the 14th. They camped near the community's corn fields. *Alcalde* Maese again went out to greet the Americans. This time he spoke with Kearny and told him he had to obey his government but that he was pleased to see the general's proclamation was so favorable to his people.¹³

At 8:00 a.m. on August 15, Colonel Kearny called *Alcalde* Juan de Dios Maese and the citizens of Las Vegas to the public plaza. About two hundred men arrived on foot and horseback to hear pronouncements that sought to change the political destiny of New Mexico and ask for a new allegiance

to the United States. Kearny, Maese, and two Mexican officers climbed a rickety ladder to the top of one of the flat, one-story buildings on the plaza where the Colonel addressed the assemblage of men.¹⁴

Kearny stated that he came under orders of the American Government to take possession of New Mexico and extend the laws of the United States among its inhabitants. He said this action was taking place because the United States had considered for some time that New Mexico was part of the Union. Las Vegans were absolved from their allegiance to Mexico, and they no longer had to obey Governor Armijo. The Americans came as friends and protectors, Kearny reminded them. He promised protection from the Apaches and Navajos who came down from the mountains to carry off their sheep, women, and children. He reminded them that this protection had never been adequately provided by the Mexican government. Only a few days before Kearny's arrival, Indians had descended on the town and killed one individual as they made off with 120 sheep and other livestock.¹⁵

Kearny did not expect Las Vegans to take up arms and follow him against their own people. He promised, "those who remain peaceably at home, attending to their crops and their herds, shall be protected by me in their property, their persons, and their religion; and not a pepper, nor an onion, shall be disturbed or taken by my troops without pay, or by the consent of the owner." But he also sternly warned

them by saying, "Listen! He who promises to be quiet, and is found in arms against me, I will hang."¹⁶

Kearny also told the people at Las Vegas that he was aware some of the priests were informing them the Americans were coming to destroy their religion and to inflict punishment on them. He told them this was incorrect and that their religion and all their property would be protected.¹⁷

As he concluded his address, Kearny told *Alcalde* Maese and the two captains of the Mexican militia that in order for them to continue holding public office for the United States, they would have to take oaths of allegiance to the new country. This was a bitter pill for them to swallow. Maese and one of the captains consented while the other discontented officer evaded the question. He looked on with downcast eyes until Kearny loudly ordered him so that all could hear, "Captain, look me in the face while you repeat the oath of office." The captain finally responded, "yes," to accepting the oath, but he was clearly reluctant and appeared to be in bad grace in doing so.¹⁸

All three raised their hands and made the sign of the cross with the thumb and finger while the remaining men who were present uncovered their heads and witnessed the event. Kearny then administered the oath by stating, "you do swear to hold faithful allegiance to the United States, and to defend its government and laws against all its enemies, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."¹⁹

Once the oaths were completed, Maese and the two captains were allowed to continue in office. Some of the men who were present at this unprecedented event grinned and appeared satisfied with the proceedings while others appeared not to have the courage to express what they really felt. Kearny and his troops soon left Las Vegas without incident and headed towards the expected encounter with Armijo and his forces.²⁰ Kearny now carried the new rank and commission of Brigadier General which had been forwarded and granted to him while he was in Las Vegas.²¹

It was reported that the Mexican forces were waiting for the Americans two miles south of the community, but this resistance never materialized. At Tecolote, the same drama that had taken place at Las Vegas was reenacted with the *alcalde* and residents. This time the women of the town were also present to experience the historical encounter with the Army of the West. Then, after camping at *Ojitos de Bernal* (Bernal Springs), the army marched into San Miguel del Bado the following day. There, the residents were assembled in preparation for the same vows of allegiance that had occurred at Las Vegas and Tecolote.²²

The *alcalde* and Father José Francisco Leyba received Kearny politely although it was very clear that they did not want to cooperate and be interviewed. The General asked them to ascend a rooftop with him so that he could address the people and inform them of his mission. They evaded his

request, and instead, the priest commenced a speech from where he stood, saying that he "was a Mexican, but would obey the laws that were placed over him for the time, but if the General should point all his cannon at his breast, he could not consent to go up there and address the people."²³

It was evident to Kearny and his troops that Father Leyba was the ruling spirit of the citizens of San Miguel. Finally, through his interpreter, Robideau, the General convinced Leyba and the *alcalde* to join him on the roof. As the oaths were being administered, the *alcalde* refused to pledge his allegiance to the United States, but he too was forced to cooperate and go through a semblance of swearing allegiance.²⁴

After Kearny and his staff administered the oaths of allegiance and finished explaining their mission, the priest invited them into his house for refreshments. His demeanor towards the Americans changed somewhat, and he joked and hugged them while professing his friendship. Soon after, as the Americans prepared to leave San Miguel, the *alcalde* informed them that 400 men had left the community to join the Mexican army, but 200 had already returned. And consequently, amidst reports which reached Kearny that New Mexicans were rising under Armijo to meet the Americans at the canyon fifteen miles from Santa Fe, the soldiers continued their march towards the capital.²⁵

On August 14, Armijo had assembled close to ten

thousand troops at *Cañoncito de los Apaches* (Apache Canyon). This force was comprised of volunteer militia, Indians, and presidial soldiers from Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel del Bado, and a squadron from Vera Cruz. A few days later Armijo asked everyone to disband and return to their homes.²⁶ Armijo also eventually abandoned his poor artillery at Apache Canyon and returned to Santa Fe. One antiquated piece that he left behind was stamped "*Barcelona, 1778.*" In a matter of days, Armijo loaded his personal belongings, household goods, and wealth and withdrew to Chihuahua.²⁷

Much criticism developed against Armijo for making this decision, and he was charged with cowardice and treason. Within weeks after Kearny arrived in Santa Fe, a long letter signed by dozens of influential New Mexicans was sent to the President of Mexico. The letter strongly protested the invasion and accused Governor Manuel Armijo of treason against the Mexican Republic for not having resisted the invasion.²⁸ The protest clearly demonstrated that many *nuevomexicanos* did not want to join their political destinies with those of the United States.

Rafael Chacón, a thirteen-year-old military cadet at the time, had joined Armijo's troops at Apache Canyon. In later years he expressed his opinion about Armijo's decision not to fight the Americans. "What could Armijo do," he asked, "with an undisciplined army without any military training, without commissary resources, and without leaders

to direct the men? He was a dwarf against a giant. Armijo was the imaginary hero of that epoch. Had he rashly rushed to give battle, it would have been equivalent to offering his troops as victims to the invading army; the result would have been a useless effusion of blood, offering himself unnecessarily to death."²⁹

Following Armijo's flight to Mexico, Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, assumed the last Mexican governorship of New Mexico. He quickly issued a proclamation to the residents of Santa Fe, explaining the inevitable—that the American army would take possession of New Mexico. He told the people that they had no real reason to worry and that the Americans would protect them and their properties.³⁰

Kearny continued into Santa Fe, and on August 19, his conquest of New Mexico was completed at the capital. Once the American General finished addressing the residents, Vigil y Alarid spoke, again conveying positive reiterations about the wonderful future that awaited New Mexico and her people. After the cabinets of the United States and Mexico determined the boundaries of the two nations, Vigil y Alarid was convinced that New Mexicans would obey and respect the new authorities regardless of their private opinions.³¹

Vigil y Alarid told Kearny and his troops not to find the situation in New Mexico strange if there was no great demonstration and manifestation of joy expressed by the people as a result of the military occupation. From his

prepared statement he read, "To us the power of the Mexican Republic is dead. No matter what her condition, she was our mother. What child will not shed abundant tears at the tomb of his parents? I might indicate some of the causes for her misfortunes, but domestic troubles should not be made public."³²

On September 22, General Kearny claimed to have the authority to appoint territorial officials for New Mexico. He carried out his proclaimed duty by appointing the following: Charles Bent, Governor; Donaciano Vigil, Secretary; Richard Danna, Marshal; Francis P. Blair, Jr., United States Attorney; Charles Blummer, Treasurer; Eugene Leitensodorfer, Auditor; and Joab Houghton, Antonio José Otero and Charles Beaubien, Judges of the Superior Court.³³

Many of the *ricos* in New Mexico had demonstrated their good will towards the United States while they participated in the Santa Fe trade, and now when Kearny arrived. Some had even sent their children to become educated in the eastern states. However, Kearny clearly showed his bias and ill will towards New Mexicans with the two token appointments to the new political administration. That same day Kearny promulgated the laws which he prepared for New Mexico's government. The laws, which became the Kearny Code, contained part of Mexico's laws with other modifications that incorporated some American laws and segments of the U.S. Constitution.³⁴ Consequently, it was recorded that

the conquest and occupation of New Mexico was complete without the loss of life or the firing of guns.

Within days, Kearny set out to conquer Arizona and California, taking most of his troops with him. He left Colonel Sterling Price in command of the troops that remained in New Mexico. As soon as Kearny departed from New Mexico, rumblings of rebellion were reported among the wealthy *nuevomexicanos* and the clergy. Some openly expressed their contempt for Armijo and threatened his life should he return.³⁵

One American who did not trust the new American citizens stated early in 1846 that he could "hardly at present venture an opinion in regard to the sincerity of the people, or their fidelity to the United States. Notwithstanding, the *Alcaldes* and their functionaries, and many influential citizens, have taken the oath of allegiance, I still have my doubts. The fact is, I consider the acquisition of this country a very impolitic and unprofitable affair. It is not well adapted to an American population, and only those who now inhabit the country can make a living in it, and that a poor one."³⁶

By October of 1846, rumors of revolt surfaced again. One stated that the "Spaniards" were to kill the American officers to create confusion and a diversion. Others would then seize their artillery and arms. However, few paid little if any attention to the rumor, only saying that

Mexican women had disclosed the alleged plot. Other individuals wrote it off as a rumor initiated by wealthy *mexicano* merchants who were reaping high profits from the American soldiers. They allegedly wanted to ensure that a large military force would remain in Santa Fe.³⁷

During the early part of December, some of the more influential New Mexicans began to hold secret meetings to plot the overthrow of the existing military government in Santa Fe. These had been prominent government officials, civic leaders, and priests under Governor Armijo's administration. On December 15, Miguel Pino rallied a group of these men to meet in the house of Tomás Ortiz in Santa Fe. Others present were Diego Archuleta, Nicolás Pino, Miguel Pino, Santiago Armijo, Manuel Chávez, Domingo Baca, Pablo Domínguez, and Juan López. Everyone was soon advised that the purpose of the meeting was to organize a movement against the new American government. Don Diego then commenced a discourse and said, "I make the motion that there be an act to nominate a Governor and Commander General, and I would nominate Don Tomás Ortiz for the first office, and Don Diego Archuleta for the second." This motion carried unanimously, and the subsequent act was signed by everyone present.³⁸

On Saturday evening, the 19th of December, all the men were to gather at the parish church. They were to rally and seize the pieces of American artillery. Some would go to

the Colonel's quarters and the rest to the palace of the Governor. If he was not there, they were to send an order to Taos to have him seized since he was the one expected to give them the most trouble. The sound of the church bell was to be the signal for the assault. All Americans who might be found in New Mexico and their native supporters were to be killed. Other Mexican citizens living in Las Vegas, Mora, Taos and other northern communities were to be engaged in the uprising. While many of these were later regarded as traitors to the American government, none of them had pledged their loyalty to the United States but rather had remained loyal to Mexico, their mother country.³⁹

The planned assault was suspended and moved to Saturday, December 26th, to allow more time for planning and involvement of more people from the other communities. Tomás Ortiz was to go to San Miguel del Bado, Don Diego Archuleta to the valley of Taos, and Tomás Baca to the Río Abajo. Father Leyba, a man best calculated to incite the people in this resistance, was unable to attend the second meeting in Santa Fe. He sent a letter stating he was ill. To this, Diego Archuleta complained that the priest was all talk.⁴⁰

The plot, however, was revealed by some Mexican women to Colonel Price, and some of those principally involved were arrested while others fled. Governor Bent then issued a proclamation to the people asking them to remain peaceful.

One American who resided in New Mexico felt "the attempt at a revolution...might have been a serious matter to us here, but for the prompt and energetic action of Gov. Bent and Col. Price...the treacherous Mexicans, who at that time were disgustingly obsequious, began to assume an air of insolence, believing that our force was too insignificant to punish them."⁴¹

The end to resistance, however, was not to be. The crafty old leaders planned another outbreak for January 22, 1847. Secret orders were issued by some of the chief conspirators and officers—Jesús Tafolla, Antonio María Trujillo, Juan Antonio García and Pedro Vigil. Their orders stated, "We have declared war against the government of the United States; and it is now time to take up arms in defense of our abandoned country—to see if we can regain the liberty that we possessed in this unfortunate department. You will be responsible if you fail to obey the order."⁴²

Military leaders were ordered to make all their companies ready to attack and exterminate the Americans and those *mexicanos* who were friendly to them. People in the towns, and villages throughout northern New Mexico began to arm and prepare themselves.⁴³

Early on the evening of January 15th, the insurrectionists in Taos were led by Pablo Montoya and Tomasito, a Taos pueblo Indian. They entered Taos and began their attack, destroying the houses of Americans who resided

there. The Indians then went to Governor Bent's house where they killed him. Others killed at Taos were the sheriff, Stephen Lee; the circuit attorney, James W. Leal; and the prefect, Cornelio Vigil. They were citizens, officials of the United States, and Mexican supporters of American authority. That same night, seven other Americans were killed at Arroyo Hondo and two more at Río Colorado (Questa).⁴⁴

This first attack on Taos set off a series of organized campaigns against the American Army of the Occupation. On the eastern flank of the Sangre de Cristos, the insurrection was inaugurated in Mora on the 20th, a few days after the attack on Taos. The Mora assault was led by *moreño* Manuel Cortez, who had participated in the uprising at Taos. Eight American merchants were killed at Mora.⁴⁵

On January 23, Captain Hendley, who was commanding the troops in Las Vegas, heard about the killings in Mora and reported to Colonel Price at Santa Fe that every town and village except Las Vegas and Tecolote had declared in favor of the insurrection. He declared that his intervention had prevented Las Vegas from rising in rebellion. A different report stated that *Alcalde* Maese provided timely protection to Americans at Las Vegas, otherwise they would have been killed.⁴⁶

On following day, Hendley proceeded to Mora to suppress the rebels in that locality. When he arrived, he

found that the *moreños* had barricaded themselves in an old adobe fort they were accustomed to fighting Indians from. In the fighting that ensued, Hendley was killed, and finding themselves without artillery to make a better assault, his troops retreated to Las Vegas.⁴⁷

Later, Captain Morin, who replaced Hendley, proceeded to Mora with a howitzer that effectively demolished both towns of Santa Gertrudis and the upper community of San Antonio. One soldier reported that while Morin made sure the people felt the horrors of war, the American soldiers, too, would have to share in it. This was owing to the fact that the Americans destroyed all the wheat and corn reserves belonging to the Mora people.⁴⁸ The grain would have been very useful to the Americans, in view of the bad year and scant harvest that New Mexico had experienced due to extremely dry weather.

Casualties to the Mora citizens in the battles with Hendley and Morin were close to thirty. While several were captured, many more fled to the mountains and later joined ranks with their leader, Manuel Cortez, *mexicanos* from other New Mexico settlements, and various Indians, including pueblos, Comanches and Apaches.⁴⁹

As soon as he heard about the uprising at Taos, Colonel Sterling Price organized a force of over 400 troops at Santa Fe and marched toward Taos. He had heard that the insurgents were headed towards Santa Fe, so he consequently

decided to meet them head on. Price's forces included four mountain howitzers, which proved extremely decisive against the insurgents. Near the village of Cañada, his troops engaged in a two-hour battle with the Mexicans and Indians who waited for him. The bows, arrows and lances carried by the majority of the New Mexicans were no match for howitzers; the insurgents retreated.

However, on January 29, the Americans again engaged them in battle at Embudo, a narrow pass in the mountains. And again, the close to 700 *mexicanos* and Indians were dislodged from the hillsides by heavy cannon fire. Their retreat continued to Taos, and after two assaults on the Taos Pueblo, which climaxed on the morning of February 4, 1847, the rebellious Indians and *nuevomexicanos* were soundly defeated. About 210 Mexicans and Indians were killed in the three battles with Price, while the Americans suffered only 61 casualties.⁵⁰

Secretary Donaciano Vigil became interim governor of New Mexico following Governor Bent's death. On February 12th, after the insurrection at Taos and Mora had subsided, he issued a circular and proclamation to the people of New Mexico asking them to yield to the new American rule and to cease their resistance. He censured the instigators of the revolt and compared their alleged crimes and attacks to those committed by the insurrectionists of 1837, which ended in the assassination of Governor Albino Pérez and other

members of his administration.

Vigil accused Diego Archuleta of inciting the insurrection against the Americans, and informed them that two of the military leaders in the Taos revolt, Pablo Chávez and Jesús Chávèz had been executed. He said those leaders came from a rabble who were known to be assassins and thieves. The "assassin Cortez," he said, was now a fugitive in the mountains, but various other participants in the revolt were captives and would be facing the courts.⁵¹

The military garrison, which had been established in Las Vegas, initially saved the town from bloodshed in January of 1847. However, a number of camps which had been set up by the soldiers in the vicinity for grazing were later attacked by Manuel Cortez and his followers. Livestock and other supplies were also taken by the army of resistance. By June 27th, the insurrection activities reached the community of Las Vegas itself. Lieutenant L. T. Brown went with two other soldiers and a Mexican guide in pursuit of some horses which had been stolen at Las Vegas. They found the horses at Los Valles de San Agustín, a few miles south, but when they attempted to recover the horses, the residents resisted and killed the three American soldiers.⁵²

Major Edmonson soon determined to punish those responsible by marching to Las Vegas with a small force of cavalry. The soldiers reached the Gallinas River and split into

two parties. They charged the plaza and the homes on both sides. About twelve *veagueños* were killed and many of the homes were burned and reduced to ashes. Only a handful of houses were left to shelter the women and children. *Alcalde* Maese was suspected of being a conspirator, and two grist mills he owned a few miles from town were, therefore, burned and destroyed. Edmonson captured the town and took about fifty citizens as prisoners to Santa Fe.⁵³

The whole activity took only fifteen minutes. A house-to-house search was conducted and clothes, sabres, pistols, and bowie knives of the murdered American soldiers were found. The prisoners were ordered to Santa Fe by Colonel Price, where they were tried. Six were summarily sentenced to death and hanged on August 3rd, almost a year to the day since the American flag was first hoisted in Las Vegas.⁵⁴

Cortez and his followers were aware that some of their compatriots from Mora, Taos and Las Vegas, who had stood trial for rebelling against the American army, had been hanged and executed. However, they continued their guerilla type of attacks and depredations on military and civilian trains and along the Mora and Gallinas River, the Río Grande, and the New Mexico frontier. Reportedly, Governor Trías of Chihuahua had given Manuel Cortez a high commission of Captain to lead the New Mexico army of resistance. Other individuals under his command had received the rank of Lieutenant.⁵⁵

The solidarity and determination—demonstrated by Cortez and his followers through early 1848—lends credence to reports that they were in fact Mexican soldiers fighting under direct orders from Mexico. Some of his critics, both Anglo and *mexicano*, complained in 1847 that they did not understand how Cortez pretended to lead his followers under the pretext of Mexican patriotism, since they were causing much damage to New Mexico. New Mexico villagers knew about Cortez' continuous movements and his whereabouts—from Antón Chico to El Paso—but they gave him protection and refused to turn him in.⁵⁶

One humorous incident in the fruitless search for Cortez involved the highly respected and influential Miguel Sánchez from Las Vegas. He was the San Miguel County Representative to the first Legislature which had convened at Santa Fe in late December. After a long indulgence of "aguardiente" (whiskey) at one of the Santa Fe taverns, Sánchez overheard some Americans speaking about Cortez, to which he remarked, "me Cortez." He was immediately arrested and placed in jail; and only after his true identity was ascertained, was he set free.⁵⁷

On one expedition against Cortez' forces, Major Edmundson engaged in a big battle in a deep canyon of the Canadian River. Four hundred Indians and Mexicans covered the hills on both sides. Forty-one of the insurgents were killed, and about forty were taken captive.⁵⁸ Later in

November, 1847, a force of soldiers under the command of Captain Armstrong left Socorro and pursued Cortez for about eighteen days. Finally, on November 22, they fell upon the leader and his army in a surprise attack about forty miles south of Antón Chico. In haste and confusion, Cortez and his troops evacuated the camp leaving behind equipage, bridles, saddles, a few horses, and supplies.⁵⁹

The American troops also found military papers that Cortez had left behind, including the documents which bore his commission and various military orders. Reportedly, one of the documents provided instructions for the Supreme Government's negotiations with the American emissary, Nicolas Trist, bearing on the annexation of New Mexico. The *Santa Fe Republican* reported that the latter document placed Cortez and his followers as the "only true patriots, alluding evidently to the Taos affair...."⁶⁰

By March 1848, the *Santa Fe* newspaper reported that Cortez and his last remaining followers had disbanded and fled to Chihuahua and other parts. With a sigh of relief, the American army and those *nuevomexicanos* who had opposed Cortez shifted their attention to marauding Indians who had renewed their attacks on the New Mexico settlements with a new vengeance. The new military commander in New Mexico, Colonel Newby, ordered that all arms taken from *nuevomexicanos* during the "revolution" of 1847 be restored to their rightful owners. He subsequently authorized all New

Mexicans to organize themselves, as they saw fit, to defend themselves against the Indians.⁶¹

The American Occupation and Conquest of New Mexico was officially concluded when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2, 1848. Las Vegans, *nuevomexicanos*, and other *mexicanos* living within the American acquisition which constituted the Southwest were declared Americans. The treaty guaranteed New Mexicans all the rights of citizenship as stated in the United States Constitution. Their property and religion would also be protected under the terms of the treaty.⁶²

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo also took into account the fact that some citizens in the ceded lands might wish to be repatriated to Mexico to begin new lives. The treaty allowed those Mexicans wishing to make the move one full year to decide. On June 14, 1848, Mexico passed a law which made allowances for the transfer of those families to Mexico. In New Mexico, registration for repatriation was delegated to Father Ramón Ortiz; and he consequently began to register a large number of families who indicated their desire to move to the interior of Mexico.⁶³

At San Miguel del Bado Ortiz registered 900 of the 1,000 families who lived there, and those people were quoted as saying that they "were ready to lose everything before having to live in a country whose government offered less guarantees than their own, and one where they were treated

worse than the African race." Donaciano Vigil, then Secretary of New Mexico, worried about the desire of so many families wishing to return to Mexico and stated that if such a situation continued the territory would become vacant. He consequently issued an order prohibiting Ortiz from carrying out the repatriation of families until New Mexico would have a permanent governor.⁶⁴

It is uncertain how many families actually migrated to the interior of Mexico, but a few did move south to the area of Las Cruces. Ironically, however, that area and a portion of southern Arizona would also be acquired by the United States in the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.⁶⁵ Ortiz' work at registering people wishing to repatriate to Mexico is significant, nonetheless, because it reveals that an overwhelming majority apparently favored maintaining their patriotic and historical ties with the motherland. Rumors and speculation which circulated prior to the Mexican War that most *nuevomexicanos* favored annexation to the United States were apparently not true.

The Mexican American War and subsequent Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, once and for all settled all Texas and American claims to Mexico's northern frontier. Left behind were thousands of former Mexican citizens who finally declared in favor of the American government. Under this new government, the people looked forward to better material benefits, economic gains, and better protection against the

Indians. Their ultimate hope was that they would not experience the same neglect and abandonment they had felt from the central government and country to which they had been loyal and patriotic for two and one-half centuries.

1846., June 15, 1846.

1847., September 3, 1846.

1847., June 21, 1846.

1847., August 5, 1846.

1847., August 1, 20, 1846.

1848., August 20, September 2, 1846.

1848., August 20, 1846.

1848., August 20, 1846.

1848., August 20, 1846.

1848., August 20, 1846. *Qualine Morgan Neketa, ed. Legacy of Honor: The Story of the 1846-47 New Mexican Campaign. University of New Mexico Press, 1986), p. 64.*

1848., August 20, 1846. *Swirell, The History of the Military Occupation of Mexico from 1846 to 1851 (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co., 1947).*

1848., August 20, 1846. *Swirell, The History of the Military Occupation of Mexico from 1846 to 1851 (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co., 1947), pp. 35-36. This work contains the "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," by Capt. John W. H. Swirell (Washington: Wendell and Wendell, 1847).*

1848., August 20, 1846. *Swirell, The History of the Military Occupation of Mexico from 1846 to 1851 (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co., 1947), pp. 35-36. This work contains the "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," by Capt. John W. H. Swirell (Washington: Wendell and Wendell, 1847).*

1848., August 20, 1846.

1848., August 20, 1846.

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1848., August 20, 1846. *Swirell, The History of the Military Occupation of Mexico from 1846 to 1851 (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co., 1947), pp. 35-36.*

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER V

1. *Missouri Republican*, May 22, 1846.
2. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1846.
3. *Ibid.*, September 3, 1846.
4. *Ibid.*, June 23, 1846.
5. *Ibid.*, August 6, 1846.
6. *Ibid.*, August 3, 20, 1846.
7. *Ibid.*, August 20, September 2, 1846.
8. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1846.
9. SED No. 26, p. 20.
10. Jacqueline Dorgan Meketa, ed. *Legacy of Honor: The Life of Rafael Chacón, a Nineteenth-Century New Mexican* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), p. 64.
11. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico from 1846 to 1851* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co., 1909), p. 42.
12. 30th Cong., 1 Sess., SED No. 41, pp. 25-56. This document contains the "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," by Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Emory (Washington: Wendell and Van Benthuysen, 1848).
13. Abraham R. Johnston, Marcellus Ball Edwards, Philip Gooch Ferguson, *Marching With the Army of the West, 1846-1848*, Ralph P. Bieber, ed. (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 99.
14. SED No. 41., pp. 26-27.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Missouri Republican*, September 24, 1846.
18. SED No. 41, p. 28; *Missouri Republican*, September 24, 1846.

19. *Missouri Republican*, September 24, 1846.
20. SED No. 41, p. 28.
21. *Missouri Republican*, September 24, 1846.
22. SED No. 41, p. 29.
23. *Missouri Republican*, September 24, 1846.
24. Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California* (Oakland, California: 1952), p. 20.
25. SED No. 41, p. 29.
26. Meketa Chacon, *Legacy of Honor*, pp. 65-65.
27. Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California*, pp. 22-23.
28. Angela Moyano Pahissa, *El comercio de Santa Fe y la guerra del '47* (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1976) p. 14.
29. Meketa, *Legacy of Honor*, p. 63; Chacón is also quoted in Benjamin F. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Printing Co., 1912), pp. 431-432.
30. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, p. 430. Also see pp. 431-432 for Vigil's title and proclamation.
31. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, p. 80? Check page number.
32. Ibid. pp. 74-75. Proclamation signed by Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, Governor, August 19, 1846, from Donaciano Vigil Papers, contained in Historical Society Collection at time.
33. Ibid., p. 84.
34. Ibid.
35. George R. Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier under Kearny and Doniphan, 1846-1847*, Ralph P. Bieber, ed. (Glendale, California: 1935), p. 210.
36. *Missouri Republican*, September 25, 1846.
37. Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier Under Kearny and Doniphan*, p. 259.

38. *Missouri Republican*, February 20, 1847.
39. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, p. 445.
40. *Missouri Republican*, March 9, 1847.
41. Horatio O. Ladd, *The Story of New Mexico* (Boston: D. Lothrop Co., 1891), p. 287; *Missouri Republican*, March 11, 1847.
42. *Missouri Republican*, April 28, 1847.
43. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, pp. 139-140; Ladd, *The Story of New Mexico*, p. 287.
44. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, p. 125; 50th Cong., 1 Sess., SED No. 442, "Insurrection Against the Military Government in New Mexico and California, 1847 and 1848," p. 2.
45. SED No. 442, p. 3. It has been speculated by some that Cortez was from Mora, while others have argued he was not. The *Missouri Republican*, March 11, 1846, reported on the Taos uprising and stated that one of the leaders, "Cortez, of Moro [sic] Valley, was prominent..."
46. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, p. 447.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
48. *Missouri Republican*, April 9, 1847.
49. *Ibid.*
50. SED No. 442, pp. 2,3.
51. LeBaron Bradford Prince Papers, Miscellaneous Spanish Document, NMSRCAA.
52. SED No. 442, pp. 2-5.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 4; R. E. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, pp. 145-146.
54. Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, pp. 145-146; SED No. 442, p. 4; Father Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 56.
55. *El Republicano*, December 11, 1847. *El Republicano* or *The Republican*, was a bilingual newspaper that had been established by the Americans at Santa Fe, soon after the

occupation. The primary Spanish correspondent for the newspaper was Manuel Alvarez, the Spaniard who was also the American counsel in New Mexico since before the occupation.

56. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1847.

57. *Ibid.*, December 25, 1847.

58. Ladd, *The Story of New Mexico*, p. 292; SED No. 442, pp. 21-25.

59. *Santa Fe Republican*, January 8, 1848.

60. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1848.

61. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1848.

62. Richard N. Ellis, ed., *New Mexico Historic Documents* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), pp. 10-20.

63. Martín González de la Vara, "La corta mexicanidad de Nuevo México, 1821-1848: Un caso de las relaciones entre el gobierno central y la frontera norte," Unpublished student thesis, (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986), pp. 188-189.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190; For some of the correspondence between Father Ortiz and Donaciano Vigil on this issue see Benjamin Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 456-459.

65. Jay A. Wagoner, *Early Arizona, Prehistory to Civil War* (Tucson: University Of Arizona Press), p.162.

CHAPTER VI
THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAS VEGAS
DURING EARLY AMERICAN RULE, 1850-1870

Following the successful American Occupation of the Southwest, New Mexico was gradually integrated into the society, economy and political structure of the United States. As large numbers of Anglo-Americans and foreign immigrants arrived in the new American Territory, the community of Las Vegas and San Miguel County continued to grow. During the subsequent decades of the 1850s and 1860s, *veagueños* quickly adopted the new American order, and the town grew and emerged as a leading ranching and trade center. By 1870, the *pobladores* were also finally free of the Indian threat which had so plagued them since they first ventured and settled at San Miguel del Bado.

Military outposts has been established throughout New Mexico, and better protection was gradually provided for the citizens. This military presence also allowed for the founding of new settlements and ranches that extended to the eastern fringes of the Las Vegas Land Grant and San Miguel County. The army had posted two companies of Illinois Volunteers in a military garrison at Las Vegas since 1848,

providing protection for ranchers who grazed their livestock in the area and neighboring villages as well as for travelers and merchants on the Santa Fe Trail.¹

The presence of the military did not eradicate the Indian problem overnight, however, as the marauders of the plains and mountains continued to be an unending source of annoyance to the garrison and the citizens. Several attacks were carried out upon livestock herders and their flocks near Las Vegas until 1851 when Fort Union was established. Fort Union's military patrols were able to keep Indian depredations on the San Miguel County relatively low during the 1850s.²

In 1850, the Las Vegas Plaza was surrounded with compact buildings which provided good protection and defense against Indian attacks. The population of the community was 1,000, and a post office was established. The first recorded Anglo resident of Las Vegas, Levi Keithly, became the first post master. Another American arrival, Samuel Streeter, started the first hotel that same year. Two other early American merchants were E. F. Mitchell and Henry Connelly who later became Territorial Governor of New Mexico³ Five American families had moved to Las Vegas by 1853 to become engaged in the Santa Fe trade and mercantile stores.⁴

The military garrison was officially disbanded and removed to Fort Union in 1854, much to the consternation of

the people. Their primary loss was the money the soldiers had been spending at gambling and having a good time. This new permanence and security materializing in Las Vegas, however, brought new immigration from all parts of New Mexico. In 1851, Miguel Romero y Baca, one of the original grantees on the Las Vegas grant, abandoned his mercantile store in the mining community of San Francisco near Santa Fe and returned to claim the land concession he had received in 1835. Prior to living at San Francisco, Romero had managed Governor Manuel Armijo's mercantile store at El Real de Dolores until 1843. He finally brought his family to settle in Las Vegas where he established the town's first general merchandise store.⁵

At Las Vegas, Romero and his sons engaged in freighting on the Santa Fe Trail, other business enterprises, and ranching. They became the wealthiest family in San Miguel County by the end of the century. Additionally, they wielded much political influence and held many elected positions in county and territorial politics for many decades. Another family who capitalized on large profits from freighting and ranching beginning in the early 1850s was the López family headed by Francisco and his son Lorenzo. These two families were representative of many *mexicanos* who rose to prominence and affluence during the 1850s.

On January 9, 1852, the first legislature of New

Mexico passed an act which divided the territory into the nine counties of Taos, Río Arriba, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Santa Ana, Bernalillo, Valencia, Socorro and Doña Ana.⁶ The following year, another legislative act increased the number of demarcations or voting precincts in San Miguel County to eight. These were: 1. Las Mulas, Gusano, and those homes which continued along the Pecos River up to the home of Ignacio Salazar; 2. Those homes which continued from Salazar's home along the river up to La Plaza del Cerrito; 3. All the habitations on both sides of the river from Cerrito to the cave, including the homes at the Tecolote arroyo; 4. The plazas and homes of Torreón, Plaza de Abajo, Plaza de Los Valles [de San Agustín], Lagunita, Bernal and Los Tres Hermanos; 5. The settlements of Ojos Calientes and the two plazas of Las Vegas [Plaza de Arriba also called San Antonio]; 6. Part of the homes at Los Valles continuing to El Chaperito, and thence to "la junta" [junction of Gallinas and Pecos Rivers]. Although Antón Chico is not mentioned in the demarcations, it must have been included in what was referred to as "la junta;" 7. All homes along the Sapelló River beginning at Barclay's Fort and all along the Mora River to Mora, including the Creek from Cerro del Tecolote [Hermit's Peak]; and 8. The settlements of Pajarito, the upper Pecos River, [Los] Trigos and Pecos, and the homes along the river to El Macho.⁷

By 1864, the new prosperity and influence of Las Vegas

was such that the county seat was wrested from San Miguel del Bado. San Miguel County was now the most populous in New Mexico, and it had two senators and four representatives serving in the Legislature. Miguel Romero y Baca, who was also the Probate Judge, and other influential business leaders pledged to build a suitable courthouse building if the legislature allowed the county seat to be moved. The Legislature thereupon passed an act authorizing the change of county seat above the protests of Celso Baca, a member of the House of Representatives from San Miguel, and Senator Vigil from Pecos.⁸ The transfer of the county seat to Las Vegas all but insured its continual rise to prosperity and prominence in the Territorial arena of New Mexico.

The same year that Las Vegas became the county seat, the residents of the county became involved in one final, major controversy involving their generations-old struggle with the Indians, particularly the Navajo tribe. Problems with the Navajo had festered since the Spanish Colonial Period and reached an apex when the tribe was moved to a reservation on the Bosque Redondo following the Civil War campaigns in New Mexico.

In 1864, the oldest residents of San Miguel County recounted the problems with the Navajo. They complained about the murders and theft of livestock and property by the Navajo which had totaled "millions annually." Only once, according to them, did they enjoy a period of entire peace

with the tribe. This was a stretch of twelve years from 1824 to 1836.

In the year 1822, the famous Indian fighter, Colonel Antonio Vizcarra, led a major campaign into Navajo country. He defeated them in many pitched battles and so totally subdued them that they sued for peace. The following peace endured for over a decade and was welcomed by many *nuevo-mexicanos* who stated that their "sheep then numbered millions, and the song of the happy shepherd could be heard in every valley and upon every hillside in the country."⁹ After that truce dissolved, however, the Navajo renewed their plundering and attacks on the Hispanic settlements and Pueblo Indians through the end of the Mexican Period.

By 1850, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported the ruinous condition of Indian relations in New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior. He complained about the Indian attacks within the territory and the adjoining provinces of northern Mexico. Inhabitants were being murdered, large quantities of livestock was being carried off, "besides numerous captives, whom they have subjected to slavery, and treated with great barbarity and cruelty."¹⁰

The four great tribes who raided the settlements were the Apaches, Comanches, Navajos, and the Utahs. In addition, on the east side of the Arkansas River were the Arapahos, Cheyennes, Kiowas and other roving bands. At times, these other bands would unite with the tribes found

in New Mexico and would carry out joint attacks against the people.¹¹ After the American Occupation, many *mexicanos* continued the old Spanish custom of enslaving Indian women and children. Church records at Las Vegas after 1852 reveal that at least forty-six Navajos were servants in different households.¹²

When the Civil War hostilities developed between the North and South, Las Vegas maintained its important position in the territory. For the first time since they became American citizens thirteen years prior, the patriotism of vegueños and New Mexicans was tested. About 6,000 native sons joined the field of honor to fight in New Mexico campaigns that would help preserve the American Union. Many of these served as officers and acquired great distinction during the war.¹³

At Las Vegas, county residents enlisted as regulars and volunteers while conducting their duty-related services from Fort Union. Most of these participated in the battle of Valverde and later the battle at Apache Canyon which finally drove the Confederates out of New Mexico by the middle of 1862. Before the Confederates reached Apache Canyon north of Santa Fe, Governor Henry Connelly—having no troops for a proper defense—moved the capital to Las Vegas for six weeks in March and April, 1862.¹⁴

Some of the soldiers who enlisted with the Union army served not only during the war but until late in 1865. They

were used in campaigns against the Indians and in guarding the commerce and government trains which continued to cross the plains to Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and other points in New Mexico.¹⁵ One of the negative effects of the Civil War campaigns in New Mexico, however, was that once the Indians saw the whites warring among themselves, they increased their attacks on many mines and smaller settlements, compelling people to abandon them in fear. Reportedly, many of the *mexicanos* from the Mesilla Valley fled to Mexico and eventually returned after the war ended.¹⁶

After the Confederates retreated from New Mexico, General James H. Carleton became the military commander of New Mexico. In an effort to bring an end to Apache and Navajo hostilities, he launched a major campaign, beginning with the Mescalero Apaches. Colonel Kit Carson, who was serving in the territorial militia, headed most of the attacks. Many Mescaleros were hunted down and killed, and the captured survivors were placed on a reservation established for them on the Pecos River in San Miguel County. The forty-mile-square tract of land had been called the Bosque Redondo by the *mexicanos* for many years, because it lay in a massive grove of cottonwoods. Fort Sumner was also built close by to control the Indians. By March 1863, over four hundred Apaches had been collected and placed at the Bosque, and the campaign was now diverted to subduing and relocating the Navajo.¹⁷

Carleton met with the Navajo leaders in April 1863, and sternly advised them to move to the Bosque Redondo if they wanted to remain on peaceable terms with the United States. They refused, and a massive campaign against them was launched by Kit Carson and his soldiers. Navajos were killed, soldiers took their livestock, and their crops and orchards were destroyed.¹⁸

In September 1863, while the Navajo were being rounded up in northwestern New Mexico, 800 of them reportedly raided the settlements and ranches in San Miguel and Mora counties, killing people and taking their livestock. Don Francisco López and Don Hilario Gonzales, who already had livestock interests in the area of the Río Colorado, organized a group of volunteers to pursue the Indians and retrieve their livestock. They found a group of them camped near Ft. Sumner where they engaged in battle with them. Many Indians were killed and the property and livestock belonging to the many area ranches consisting of 100,000 sheep and 25,000 cattle was recovered.¹⁹

The first large group of Navajos arrived at the Bosque Redondo Reservation during the Winter and Spring of 1863-1864. Part of the reservation experiment and intent was to convert the Apache and Navajo into full-time sedentary farmers and ranchers. The Indians opened an *acequia* about seven miles in length, and they planted about 1,500 acres in grain and vegetables.²⁰ Most of the people in northeastern

New Mexico viewed the transfer of the Navajo and Apache to the Bosque as highly distasteful and threatening. *The New Mexican* complained in January 1864 that many Indians were lurking about the mesas and mountains in San Miguel County, sallying out to kill sheep herders, take children captive and run off all the livestock they could take with them. The men of San Miguel, San José, El Pueblo, La Cuesta and Antón Chico were kept busy taking off after the Indians to recover captives and stolen livestock.²¹

A few months later, Probate Judge Miguel Romero y Baca sent a letter to *The New Mexican* on behalf of the residents of San Miguel County. He complained that during the spring, owners of flocks and herds could not find sufficient pasture for their livestock, and as a result, two-thirds of the brood had been lost because they did not have access to the suitable herding grounds and climate they had been used to on the Pecos River for the past twenty years. Placing the Navajo on the Pecos, with their "two hundred thousand head of sheep" and numerous mules and horses would now compel the people to remove their herds two hundred and fifty miles further northeast to graze.

Romero remonstrated that it was highly unjust that the Indian should be preferred over the peaceful citizens. The Navajo should not have been compelled to leave their former home. He recommended that they should be located on the *Colorado Chiquito*, or some suitable place in their own

country in the Arizona Territory where land and wood was abundant. No one would molest them in their own domain, he said. The people lived in daily fear of losing their lives and their livestock to the Indians. The people from San Miguel County reported that an attack on Chaperito the previous month was committed by forty Apaches who had left the reservation. Eleven residents were killed and seventy mules and horses were taken. All the sheep belonging to Don Tomás C. de Baca from Las Vegas had also been taken.²²

The *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, which strongly supported General Carleton's Indian policy in New Mexico, quickly responded to Miguel Romero's letter stating that the outrages committed at Chaperito were not the acts of Apaches who had left the Reservation. The newspaper blamed the attacks on a band of Apaches who had not yet been subdued or conquered by the military.²³ Another group of San Miguel County citizens, mostly Anglo merchants and ranchers, sent a letter to the *Gazette* in Santa Fe refuting Romero's letter and claims. They declared that there were immense amounts of grazing left in the territory, without having to compel New Mexicans to graze near Fort Sumner and the Bosque Redondo. They affirmed that Kit Carson had visited with them in Las Vegas declaring that there was no truth to Romero's letter that the Indians who committed the attack on Chaperito were Reservation Apaches. Carson convinced them that no Apaches or Navajos had escaped or left the

reservation since he had been there.²⁴

By late 1864, over nine thousand Navajos had been relocated to the Bosque Redondo, and it is clearly evident why the *nuevomexicanos* were beginning to worry. Their concerns went beyond the encroachment on grazing and farm lands that they needed for their expanding settlements on the eastern plains of New Mexico. Understandably, they feared for their lives and their property, but they had other profound concerns.

Requests for proposals were now being advertised in New Mexico newspapers to provide cattle, wheat, corn and other grains for Fort Union, Fort Sumner, and seven other military forts in New Mexico and Texas.²⁵ Meat, wheat, and grain was also needed to feed the Indians at the Bosque Redondo and other Indian agencies in the territory. New Mexico's erratic weather never allowed for consistent bountiful crops—a situation New Mexicans had been accustomed to for two and one-half centuries.

The year 1864 was no different. Three thousand acres under cultivation at the Bosque were completely ruined by a bud worm that had been engendered by too much moisture. At Chaperito, *mexicanos* were complaining that their grain crops and those in the surrounding area were also failures. *Ricos* there would be able to buy provisions for their families, but the higher prices were expected to have an adverse affect on the poor people. Taos and Mora, the two major

grain growing counties in the territory, did not produce enough grain for home consumption either. And the yields at Río Arriba County were also small.²⁶

An infestation of grasshoppers had ravaged the wheat crop in San Miguel County, and in many localities, the ground was "almost bare of vegetation, and literally covered with these pests."²⁷ Flour, corn, and beans were scarce and expensive that winter. High prices were also a result of the large consumption of those necessities by the reservation Indians. This brought to memory the suffering that people had to endure in Socorro County during the winter of 1860-1861 when the crops there also failed. Other imported articles and essentials such as clothing, sugar, coffee, tea, candles, calicos, domestics, and all other articles also rose proportionately as a result of the scarcity of agricultural products.²⁸

Supporters of the Bosque Redondo extolled the profits that unlimited markets for agricultural products would bring area residents by selling to the reservation. Individuals involved in freighting for the government would also reap great profits from supplying the military forts and reservations. Miguel Romero y Baca countered those statements by saying that their crops were worth much more to feed their own people than for the Indians. He agreed that some people had indeed found freighting a good business, but at times unfair prices paid by the government

had caused them great losses.²⁹

The twenty subscribers who challenged Romero and defended the Bosque Reservation were mostly government contractors and sutlers at Ft. Union and Fort Sumner. Others were residents of the Eastern States. Most were speculators seeking to make fortunes at the expense of New Mexicans, Romero maintained. The residents of San Miguel County were deeply grateful that Fort Sumner had been established to protect the white man. They could not, however, consent to the Indians being permanently established on the Bosque lands that *nuevomexicanos* needed for survival.³⁰

Residents from this sector of New Mexico also protested that Francisco Perea, New Mexico's Congressional Delegate, was not doing enough in Washington to ensure protection against the Indians. The *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette* defended Colonel Perea by stating that time and time again he went before the Committee on Indian Affairs requesting adequate protection for New Mexicans and seeking restitution for damages and losses caused by the Indians. It was reported that the United States had no treaties with the Indians who were robbing *mexicanos*, and consequently the government was not liable for those claims Perea made on behalf of New Mexicans.³¹

Another military officer who visited the Bosque Redondo Reservation was General M. M. Crocker. He stated, in a

lengthy deposition, that he had never witnessed happier people anywhere living and working together than the Navajo. They all had large herds of sheep, goats and horses, and they were all busy tending herds or working on their farms. Others were procuring wood or bringing corn.³² While military reports and articles which appeared in the *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, attested to the success of the Bosque Redondo experiment, Santa Fe's *The New Mexican* and residents of San Miguel County continued their pessimism and frankness in complaining about the reservation by predicting that it was doomed to failure.

One large stockholder from the Las Vegas area remarked, early in 1865, that the people now found themselves in a worse situation than before the reservation was established. Citizens were now caught "between two fires—Navajos to the east and Navajos to the west;..." And although denied by the military at Fort Sumner, *nuevomexicanos* were adamant in stating that although prisoners of war, the Navajos still retained their arms and roamed throughout San Miguel County. They were leaving the reservation undetected to rob and plunder whenever they wanted.³³

General Carleton, the unpopular military commander of New Mexico responsible for the Bosque Redondo reservation, was continuously the target of their condemnation. Their contempt for Carleton brought accusations of treating the Navajo superior to the native inhabitants of the county.

Critics cited one circumstance to lend credence to their allegation. A number of residents from Las Vegas and Tecolote had been employed in the Quartermaster's Department at Fort Sumner. After working six months without receiving pay, they decided to leave their employment at the fort and seek other means to support their destitute families. They were accosted and jailed in the fort's guard house before they were able to leave. This was only one of many instances that embittered the people towards Carleton, outside of his Indian policy, which they found odious and resentful. The only acceptable course of action for the people would be Carleton's removal from New Mexico and the transfer of the reservation to northwestern New Mexico—the Navajo's homeland.³⁴

In a major protest against Carleton and the Bosque Redondo, 1,974 San Miguel County residents petitioned the New Mexico Legislature to use its power in supporting them on the reservation issue. They wanted the Navajo and Apache Indians removed to another appropriate location which would be less threatening to county residents. In addition to many of their previous complaints, they warned that there was only enough heating wood on the reservation to last two years; the water supply was uncertain; and there was no adequate shelter for Indian livestock during the winter months. They requested that the Legislature submit a memorial to the Department of Indian Affairs in Washington

asking removal of Carleton's "utopian scheme" from their midst. They wanted the Navajo moved to another location where they could remain permanently, and where there would be enough wood and abundant water to keep them contented.³⁵

Another group who were upset with the Navajo placement on the Pecos River reservation were the Comanche Indians. For many years Comanches, and to a certain extent Kiowa Indians, committed many depredations on New Mexico's eastern frontier and Northern Texas. During the mid-1850s, their daring forays took them to the settlements as far west as the Río Grande close to Navajo country. Up until 1860, the Comanches continued to annoy the settlements in San Miguel County.

Most of the Comanche attacks in the eastern sector of the county were committed against Anglo ranchers who had ventured to establish ranches near the Río Colorado and the Pecos River in the Antón Chico Area. In most cases, Comanches still honored the traditional truce and commerce they entered with *nuevomexicanos* during the late 1700s. In an effort to provide some protection for these American ranchers and *mexicano* settlers, the army established a small fort at Alexander Hatch's ranch thirteen miles northeast of Antón Chico. The small fort simply became known as Hatch's Ranch.³⁶

In 1858, Comanches attacked Samuel B. Watrous' ranch on the Río Colorado, killed his Anglo *mayordomo*, destroyed his

property and made off with all his livestock. The Indians allowed the *mexicano* herders and ranch hands to return to the other settlements with instructions to warn other Anglos not to settle in their domain, for they intended to kill anyone who would do so.³⁷ The Comanches then remained fairly quiet on the eastern frontier, although Carleton and the Americans continued to war with them during the early 1860s.

In 1865, General Carleton relaxed trade restrictions which had been imposed on the *Comanchero* trade. He allowed some traders to go trade with the Indians as long as they had written authority from him. Part of his intent was to have traders ransom captives from the Comanches and return them to the settlements. This situation was seen as favoritism by native New Mexicans who had engaged in this trade as a means of livelihood. One Las Vegas complained that military authority were depriving many worthy citizens of their liberty and livelihoods by not giving *them* passes to trade with the Comanches.³⁸ And now that Carleton had placed the Navajo on the Bosque, the Comanches remonstrated that their land had been given away. In 1864, they sent word to Carleton with survivors of a caravan they attacked that the General's scalp would be taken if he ventured to the plains.³⁹

The *mexicano* residents of the Las Vegas Grant and San Miguel County found 1865 an opportune time to continue their

disapproval of the Bosque Redondo Reservation through the election for Congressional Delegate. New Mexico's representative, Don Francisco Perea, was being challenged by his first cousin, Colonel José Francisco Chávez. Chávez was a Civil War veteran, and in 1863, he was the military commander at Fort Wingate where he led campaigns against the Navajos. Chávez disagreed with General Carleton on military and political matters and subsequently resigned his commission that year.⁴⁰

Chavez supporters quickly stated that they wanted Chávez in Congress because he would truly represent the people and not Carleton. Carleton and his supporters were accused of dominating Delegate Perea and the federal appointments for New Mexico.⁴¹ On July 21, 1865, Samuel Watrous wrote to *The New Mexican* that he was supporting Chávez for delegate. Watrous had visited with Perea in Washington seeking his support with the Indian problem. He reported that Perea told him there was a strong sympathy for the poor Indian in Washington and that it would be useless to seek relief for the people of New Mexico.⁴²

The fear of Comanche attacks on the eastern frontier also became an issue during the congressional race. Carleton and the editor of the *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette* were staunchly supporting Perea. *The Gazette* reported in February 1865 that Carleton had successfully launched campaigns against the Comanche and would soon be bringing

them to peace.⁴³ *The New Mexican*, on the other hand, reported that one of Carleton's embassies and trading party to the Comanche country brought alarming news. The Comanches were very hostile to them and refused to trade with them. Instead, they were threatening to lay waste to the eastern New Mexico frontier and the commerce of the plains during the coming summer months.⁴⁴

As the electoral campaign continued to unfurl, Colonel Chávez visited the northern counties seeking support from the citizens. At a political meeting in Mora, he delivered a lengthy speech expressing his political sentiments and detailing his platform. Chávez was well received, but *moreños* were set on supporting the incumbent Perea. They also passed a resolution endorsing Carleton's policies as they related to the management of the Indians in New Mexico, and at the same time, they expressed that they were completely satisfied with the relocation of the Navajos to the Bosque Redondo.⁴⁵

Mora's support for Perea undoubtedly caused strong feelings of disapproval and resentment from the neighboring county of San Miguel. Both counties extended to the eastern plains, but it appears that Mora was more concerned about her own good fortune than being preoccupied with the reservation and Indian threat. Mora County's support were likely based on the commerce established with Fort Union and the many government contracts its citizens received.

By this time, Mora County was the leading grain producer in the territory, and farms along the valley extending to La Cueva and Buena Vista were reaping abundant harvests in grains, vegetables, fruits and other products. Germans, French, and Irish immigrated to the Mora Valley prior to 1850, and along with local *mexicanos*, many had established thriving mercantile stores and farms. Mora farmers and merchants alike were selling the products and merchandise to Fort Union and other forts in New Mexico. Most settlements in the county were contained within the Mora Valley, and the residents were not exposed to the same hazards as the San Miguel residents who resided in the eastern plains.⁴⁶

San Miguel County representatives of the Union Party held a meeting at Tecolote in August and nominated Francisco Perea for Delegate.⁴⁷ These, however, only represented a minority of the population. The Administration Party, which was much stronger at this time, nominated Francisco Chávez y Perea. When the official election returns were tallied in September, Chávez had won by a majority of 2,407 out of 8,586 votes that were cast. Mora voted 1,072 for Perea to 488 for Chávez, but San Miguel gave Chávez 1,761 votes to 782, an overwhelming majority of 979 votes in that county.⁴⁸

The 1865 congressional delegate race was the first election in which San Miguel County residents rallied to a major political cause. And while they succeeded in helping

chávez get elected, their fight to have the Navajo removed from the Bosque Redondo was far from over. The reservation experiment continued to show negative results, but General Carleton was still determined to keep the Navajos confined to the Pecos River. The cost for maintaining the reservation during a six-month period in 1865 was an exorbitant \$452,156.98, and this did not include crops the Indians had grown for subsistence.⁴⁹

Life at the Bosque Redondo did not turn out to be as pastoral and ideal as Carleton had expected. There was not enough farm land for the thousands of Indians who were living there, and the crops they planted were falling victim to flood, drought, hail, worms, grasshoppers, and other insects. Meager government rations were barely keeping the Navajo from starvation, and their physical well-being was weakened by malnutrition and exposure. Many died from pneumonia, measles, and other illnesses. They also fought and quarreled with the enemy that they had to share the reservation with, the Mescalero Apache. The Apaches finally deserted the Bosque in late 1865, never to return again.⁵⁰

Throughout 1865, *The New Mexican* and the majority of the San Miguel County residents clamored for Carleton's removal as military commander in New Mexico. And in 1866, the New Mexico Legislative Assembly, headed by Miguel E. Pino, submitted a memorial to Congress outlining their problems with the Indians and the depredations which had

continued during the eighteen years of American rule. Many of their losses to the Indians, they insisted, were never reported accurately.⁵¹

For the two-year period of 1865 and 1866, New Mexican losses to the Indians were provided in government reports as follows: 1,672 horses, 1,155 mules and asses, 7,189 cattle, 20,705 goats, and 192,975 sheep for a total valuation of \$934,814. Ninety persons were killed, thirty-one wounded, and twenty taken captive.⁵²

New Mexicans continued to complain about Navajos who left the reservation to roam the county in bands of from ten to fifty. Many of their attacks were concentrated on the settlements and ranches in the Antón Chico and Río Colorado areas. Eleven murders of herders and travelers were reported within one two-week period in 1866. One individual complained that the Bosque Reservation had failed miserably, and that its only purpose was to serve as "a refuge and headquarters for roving bands of Indians who have rendered life and property so uncertain..."⁵³

Citizens began to threaten that if nothing were done soon, they would take the matter in their own hands to avenge the deaths of massacred friends and relatives by killing any Navajos they found outside the reservation.⁵⁴ And the Comanches, who had been threatening to drive the Navajo away from the domain they claimed, finally began to carry out their intent in July 1866. They entered the

reservation and drove off almost all the horses belonging to the Navajo. The Comanches left word with a herder that they would return in fifteen days to "clean out" the Navajos.⁵⁵

By the end of September 1866, the Secretary of War issued an order relieving Lieutenant Colonel James H. Carleton from duty in New Mexico. He was reassigned to join his former regiment in the Department of the Gulf. The *New Mexican* lashed out at him by stating that almost the entire population of New Mexico had detested his presence, his lack of protection for the people, and the favoritism he had demonstrated towards "speculators" and "favorites." His removal was sure to profit the territory.⁵⁶

By 1867, the government finally began to admit that the Bosque Redondo reservation was a miserable failure. The 2,367 acres that were being farmed at this time were being cultivated without any positive results. Nothing had worked in favor of the experiment. Nature's unstable cycles were devastating. The want of timber, both for construction and heating was another obstacle that had been overlooked. And while the protest by the residents of San Miguel County surely made an impact on the Navajos' eventual removal, an official only stated that "the selection of that location as a place for the attempt to civilize these Indians was unfortunate, and that it ought not be further continued, but that some more suitable location should be selected and the Indians transferred to it."⁵⁷

In 1868, the Navajos were finally able to obtain a treaty that permitted them to return to their homeland. The government gave each member of the tribe three sheep or goats to start new herds, as long as they promised not to raid any more. They returned to their arid desert and kept their promise. While all the Indian tribes were not yet subdued, highly relieved *nuevomexicanos* were finally able to begin putting their centuries-old fear of Indian attacks to rest. They could now sleep a little easier, knowing that their lives and property were becoming more secure.

Thousands of *nuevomexicanos* were killed in Indian wars and raids during the Spanish, Mexican, and early Territorial periods. Many were also taken as *cautivos* to live with their captors or to be traded to other tribes. Occasionally, a few lucky individuals were returned to their families for a ransom, after enduring the rigors of captivity and servitude for weeks, months, and sometimes years. The most celebrated of all the captives taken in San Miguel County, however, was Andrés "Andele" Martínez, who was taken in an Apache raid near Montón de Los Alamos on October 6, 1866.⁵⁸

Eight-year-old Andrés Martínez, who was herding cattle for his father at the small settlement of Los Alamos five miles from Las Vegas, was captured by a roving band of Apaches. The Mescaleros might have been deserters from the Bosque Redondo. He was soon after traded to a Kiowa chief for a serape and a mule. Andrés was nicknamed "Andele" by

his captors who kept him for almost twenty years.

The captive, who only remembered that his name was Andrés, was able to survive the early horrors of captivity until he was accepted as a full-fledged warrior with the Kiowas. A Methodist missionary among the Oklahoma Indians was finally able to locate the boy's family in San Miguel County. In March 1885, Andrés' older brother Dionicio went for him and returned him for an emotional encounter with his mother and other relatives.

Andele had to learn how to speak Spanish again and remained in Las Vegas for four years. However, the Indians, who later treated him so well, and the freedom and life he had enjoyed so much in the plains beckoned him. He returned to live with the Kiowas and do Protestant missionary work among them for many years. Andrés, who never returned to live in New Mexico, died at Anadarko, Oklahoma in 1935 at the age of 81.⁵⁹

A book that was written about Andrés Martínez in 1899 recounted his early harrowing experiences in captivity and the many other encounters and episodes he engaged in as a warrior among the Kiowas. His unique experiences placed a final stamp on the legacy of hundreds of New Mexican *cautivos* who had experienced similar fates among the Indians for centuries. A few were probably as fortunate as Andrés, but many more were killed—never to be heard from again.

The final subjugation of the Navajo nation and return

to their homeland was met with great approval by the people of San Miguel. This result would make it easier for the United States government to deal with the other tribes such as the Apache and Utes until they, too, were placed on reservations. This new relief from their encounters with the Indians gave the citizens of Las Vegas and San Miguel County a new lease to concentrate on other pressing concerns. One of these was the all-important issue of educating their youth and bringing them in pace with similar developments in the outside world. Las Vegans found the decade of the 1870s a most challenging one in this exciting endeavor of learning.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER VI

1. Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, p. 15.
2. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, pp. 56, 61.
3. Wilson, *Historical Sketch of Las Vegas New Mexico*, p. 11.
4. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 55.
5. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, II, p. 589; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 5, 1883.
6. Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, II, p. 523.
7. *Leyes de La Tercera Sesión de la Asamblea Legislativa, 1852*, NMSRCAA.
8. *The New Mexican*, January 31, 1864. The wealthy Celso Baca settled and founded the community of Santa Rosa the following year in 1865.
9. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1864, April 6, 1867. The April issue of the newspaper carries the contents of a speech Congressional Delegate José Francisco Chávez delivered in Congress. Chávez talked about Viscarra's campaign while addressing the Indian problem in New Mexico.
10. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, 1850. This report is found in the Anderson Room, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Perrigo, "The Original Las Vegas, 1835-1935," p. 58.
13. Benjamin M. Read, *Popular Elementary History of New Mexico* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1914), p. 115; Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 506-507.
14. F. S. Donnell, "When Las Vegas Was the Capital of New Mexico," *NMHR*, VIII(1933), pp. 265-271; Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 71.

15. Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, IV, pp. 220-221.

16. *The New Mexican*, October 13, 1865; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (University of New Mexico Press, 1984), p. 81.

17. Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* pp. 199-200; Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West*, pp. 82-83.

18. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West*, pp. 83-84.

19. Read, *Historia Ilustrada de Nuevo México*, p. 525.

20. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, February 24, 1866.

21. *The New Mexican*, January 31, 1864.

22. *Ibid.*, June 23, August 12 1864.

23. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, September 21, 1864.

24. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1864.

25. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, July 2, 1864.

26. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1864.

27. *The New Mexican*, August 12, 1864.

28. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, November 12, 1864.

29. *The New Mexican*, November 25, 1864. Romero defended his previous letter and detractors in this second letter published in the newspaper. Two hundred other San Miguel County residents endorsed the letter and attested to killings and losses they had incurred to Mescalero Apaches three months prior in August.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, November 26, 1864.

32. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1864.

33. *The New Mexican*, January 20, 1865.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1865.

36. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, pp. 120-123.
37. Ibid.; *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, January 7, 1865.
38. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, p. 151; *The New Mexican*, March 24, 1865.
39. *The New Mexican*, July 28, 1866.
40. William A. Keleher, *Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846-1868* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952), p. 480, f.n. 1.
41. *The New Mexican*, April 28, 1865.
42. Ibid., July 21, 1865.
43. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, February 4, 1865.
44. *The New Mexican*, April 28, 1865.
45. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, July 1, 1865.
46. Anselmo F. Arellano, "Sierra Acequias and Agriculture of the Mora Valley," Unpublished Paper, Southwest Hispanic Research Institute, University of New Mexico, 1988, pp. 10-11.
47. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, August 12, 1865.
48. *The New Mexican*, September 29, 1865.
49. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, October 21, 1865.
50. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890*, p. 85.
51. *The New Mexican*, November 10, 1865; United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1866, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Reel No. 553. Frames not enumerated. Found in Coronado Room, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico.
52. Ibid.
53. *The New Mexican*, April 27, 1866.
54. Ibid., June 15, 1866.
55. Ibid., July 28, 1866.

56. Ibid., October 27, 1866.

57. 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., House of Representatives, Executive Document No. 248. "Letter from the Secretary of War, Relative to the Unsuitableness of the Bosque Redondo Reservation in New Mexico for the Location of the Navajo Indians," pp. 2, 7, 8.

58. *The New Mexican*, October 20, 1866.

59. Reverend J. J. Methvin, *Andele, or The Mexican-Kiowa Captive: A Story of Real Life Among the Indians* (Louisville, Kentucky: Pentecostal Herald Press, 1899). I searched for other information about Andrés Martínez and found the following: For his obituary see the *Mora County Star*, December 26, 1935; For the notice sent from Oklahoma stating that he wanted to find his family see the *Revista Católica*, VII(1881) p. 458; For the article "*Perdido y Hallado*," announcing his return, see the *Revista Católica*, XI(1885), p. 157. The 1860 U.S. Census also enumerates the family when they lived at Montón de los Alamos.

CHAPTER VII

LAS VEGAS IN THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF SECTARIAN AND NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATION

During the 1870s, the community of Las Vegas emerged as the territorial leader in addressing efforts to establish meaningful, permanent educational structures for the citizens of New Mexico. For many generations, the educational development of New Mexico had been mired in a morass of economic and societal setbacks, keeping its many citizens from gleaning the benefits of this important endowment. Las Vegans were well aware of the importance of an educated society since they first settled the area in 1835. But these developments did not occur until they began to establish a permanent foothold brought about through new prosperity and a stronger protection and defense against the Indians.

The Spanish Crown and Catholic Papacy had directed some attention to the educational needs of New Mexicans since the late 1700s, but their good intentions were apparently unrealistic. In 1799, the king and pope ordered a missionary college be established in New Mexico, but the decree was never carried out. At that time the feeling was

that education was the responsibility of the church and not the state. The church's primary concern in the Spanish frontier, however, was the conversion and education of the Indians in religious matters, and the orphaned colonists of the northern frontier were all but ignored in educational matters.¹

Soon after, in 1812, Don Pedro Bautista Pino from New Mexico represented his people as a special envoy and delegate to the Spanish *cortes* in Spain, and he, too, appealed to the Crown for special consideration of New Mexico's educational needs.² His request to establish a system of schools in New Mexico to be supported by church tithing was decreed by the Spanish courts through the Mexican attorney, Antonio Barreiro, who visited New Mexico the following year.³

The only schools Barreiro found in New Mexico were at Santa Fe, San Miguel del Vado, Santa Cruz de la Cañada, Taos, Albuquerque, and Belen. He did not report how many students were gleaning the benefits of an education, but it is apparent that they were few in number and only represented the wealthier families in New Mexico. In 1815, Barreiro complained that he wanted his 1813 decree to be carried out, establishing a seminary for major studies at Santa Fe. Furthermore, he bemoaned the lack of education and books which were essential in promoting ideas in society. He also lamented the lack of a free press and the absence of news-

papers in the northern territory—a medium through which a public spirit among the people could be fostered.⁴

The decree for public education in New Mexico in 1813 and another issued in 1818 went unheeded through the end of the Spanish Colonial Period in 1821.⁵ On April 27, 1822, the New Mexico Provincial Deputation of the Mexican Republic enacted the first public school law for its citizens. It read:

Resolved, That the said *ayuntamientos* [municipal bodies] be officially notified to complete the formation of primary schools as soon as possible, according to the circumstances of each community.⁶

Apparently little became of this new law, for again in 1824, Pedro Pino issued a new manifesto characterizing the need for schools in New Mexico. By studying Castilian and Latin grammar, philosophy, and morality, he felt that the territory would produce young men with various aptitudes in economic endeavors and political and military positions. However, he lamented that "after being occupied by Spaniards for 300 years, New Mexicans are still not familiar with schools, except for an occasional individual who has traveled great distances to Mexico to receive an education."⁷

While the intent of the 1822 law was commendable, the

practicality of establishing such a system was again unrealistic. New Mexico's poverty and lack of an economy to support a tax base kept the territory's public coffers virtually empty. Meager revenues and limited support from the central administration in Mexico were customarily used to support New Mexico's under-manned and ill-equipped army. Throughout the Mexican Territorial Period, those who received any type of education were the fortunate few who came from wealthy families. These families continued to support small private schools for their children while the majority of the poor citizens remained illiterate. In 1827, the territory had eighteen small schools; however, by 1832, the number had dwindled to six—located at Santa Fe, San Miguel, Santa Cruz de la Cañada, Taos, Albuquerque, and Belen. Since public monies diminished rapidly, the Territorial Legislature beckoned the local *ayuntamientos* to reopen community schools through private subscriptions.⁸

The few existing schools did a commendable job of educating some of New Mexico's youth with whatever limited resources were available. This is evidenced by the voluminous archive of records left in New Mexico from the Spanish and Mexican Periods. The highly literate letters, reports, and other records of hundreds of New Mexicans during this time illustrate that many were well-prepared and versed in educational matters.

One of the private schools that rose above the rest was

a Lancasterian school for youth at Santa Fe in 1829. Taught by Marcelino Abreu, most of the students were from the wealthier families who represented the military, civil government, and *ricos* from the private sector.⁹ Many colorful leaders and politicians who emerged during the Territorial Period of New Mexico studied in these private schools or under the tutelage of private tutors. Two priests who gained much recognition for their efforts in educating New Mexico's youth prior to the American Occupation are Padre Antonio José Martínez from Taos and San Miguel del Bado's Padre José Francisco Leyba.

In 1835, Albino Pérez, who was not a native, was appointed Governor of New Mexico. While he was governor in 1836, Pérez issued an ambitious proclamation for the establishment of public schools in New Mexico—the first ever proclamation for schools by a New Mexico governor. The progressive ideas this man brought from Mexico, along with his adamancy to enforce tax collection and other policies of Mexico's central administration, were impractical at the time.¹⁰ New Mexico's Governor in 1844, Félix Martínez also promoted education, but due to New Mexico's limitations, he encouraged families to send their sons to Durango and Mexico City to be educated.¹¹

The prairie traveler, Josiah Gregg, wrote in his classic *Commerce of the Prairies* that New Mexico's school system had been suspended due to the lack of funds to

support it. He stated that about seventy-five per cent of the people could not read or write, apparently in their own language. One observation that did amaze Gregg, however, was the *nuevomexicano's* proper diction and excellent command of the Spanish language. New Mexicans, he said, seldom violated simple language and grammatical rules; on the contrary, uneducated, illiterate English-speaking people often committed many errors when speaking their own language.¹²

Gregg's observation about New Mexico's weak educational system compelled him to bring books and other materials to New Mexico to sell. One year he brought 749 books for the instruction of children and 292 additional volumes. Although the majority were written in English, many were in Spanish. In addition, Gregg brought small chalk boards which sold for \$1 each.¹³ These books, and many more brought by other merchants, probably remained in New Mexico and were certainly used in New Mexico's alleged unstable school system by private instructors and other literate individuals who were making an effort to educate the youth in the territory. Evidently, New Mexico was educating more people than it has been given credit for.

Within weeks after he successfully occupied New Mexico in 1846, Kearny drafted an "Organic Law" which guaranteed certain rights for New Mexicans and addressed other issues concerning them. Regarding education, Kearny stressed that

one or more schools would be established in every community in New Mexico as soon as it would be practicable. Everyone would have access to education free of charge, including the poor.¹⁴ Like Josiah Gregg before them, Kearny, the new American arrivals, and, later, the Catholic clergy, stressed the need for educating the citizenry of New Mexico—especially the women.

In 1847, provisional Governor Donaciano Vigil addressed New Mexico's Legislature stating that Santa Fe had the only public school in the territory. While all children were free to attend the school, the county only had funds for one teacher. He was concerned that New Mexico had no private schools or academies at this time, making it extremely difficult for children to obtain an education.¹⁵

That same year the *Santa Fe Republican*, the first American newspaper to publish in New Mexico, addressed the topic of education in a Spanish article. Concerned about the young people, the writer stated that "not only should they learn to read and write, but that public libraries or circulating libraries be established, from which essential knowledge important in a free society can be gleaned, and which is a necessary element to establish a large and knowledgeable population."¹⁶

A few months later the *Santa Fe Republican* was advocating a "Library Association" for the advancement of literature in New Mexico. The association would acquire a

vast knowledge of the history and traditions of the new territory; additionally, scientific and philosophic research would be preserved for the future benefit of everyone.¹⁷ These concerns for education in New Mexico by Americans during the early period of the American Occupation had been addressed by New Mexicans many times during the Spanish and Mexican Periods. Now that the issue to establish schools had been rekindled under American rule, efforts were launched by the Catholic clergy and continued by other religious denominations to establish sectarian education.

By August of 1848, it appears that the first English school in the territory was opened in Santa Fe.¹⁸ Three years later in 1851, the first American Catholic Bishop in New Mexico, Jean Baptiste Lamy, established a school for boys in Santa Fe. He brought a teacher, E. Noel, whose primary object was to teach English. Noel taught in Santa Fe for several years. When the second legislative assembly convened in 1852, legislators asked the general government to appropriate yearly funds for school purposes. That same year the wife of a military officer, a Mrs. Howe, opened a private English school for girls in Santa Fe, the first in New Mexico.¹⁹

Bishop Lamy again addressed the issue of education by bringing the Sisters of Loretto to New Mexico. On the first day of January 1853, the sisters opened their school for

girls, "Our Lady of Light," in Archbishop Lamy's own house. In 1857, they moved to a two-story structure. They expanded their schools to Taos in 1863, Mora in 1864, Las Vegas in 1869, Las Cruces in 1870, and Bernalillo in 1875.²⁰ These early efforts to educate the young women and men of New Mexico by the Catholic church were continued by the Sisters of Charity in 1865.

In 1859, the nuns were followed into New Mexico by the Christian Brothers, who had been recruited by Lamy in France. The Brothers opened the doors to St. Michael's College at Santa Fe on November 9, 1859. By the end of the year, the school had 250 day students and 30 boarders. Brother Botulph became the president of the College in 1870 and continued in that capacity until his death in 1905. During his tenure, his efforts resulted in the construction of many fine buildings for the college as well as excellent instructional programs for young men from throughout New Mexico.²¹

Instruction at St. Michael's centered on "Reading, Writing, Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, Bookkeeping, Algebra, Geometry, Mensuration, Surveying, Drawing, Logic, French, and Music, etc. and etc." Because the school emphasized learning the English language, young scholars were required to speak even during recreational hours. By 1866, the college provided two classes, free of charge, for poor children.²²

In 1867, the Jesuit priests continued the Catholic church's educational pilgrimage into New Mexico when they arrived in Bernalillo. It appears that the Jesuits first established themselves in that community because they planned to establish a college there. They opened a mission in Bernalillo and another in Santa Fe in December of 1867. The citizens of Santa Fe quickly petitioned the Jesuits to begin a college at the capital. Since the Christian Brothers were already conducting a college there and experiencing financial problems, the Jesuits determined it would be best to open their college elsewhere. In 1877 the site was determined, and the Jesuits opened their school at Las Vegas.²³

The Jesuit College was established in Old Town—operating as both a day and boarding school. Students came from many New Mexico communities and Mexican cities such as Chihuahua, Durango, Mexico City, and Puebla. Students from Colorado also came to study in Las Vegas with the Jesuits. The college made a major impact in educating many of the future leaders of New Mexico until it was closed and moved to Denver, Colorado in 1888.²⁴

Although Kearny's "Organic Law" in 1846 and the Legislative Assembly in 1852 requested appropriations for public schools, feeble attempts to carry out the effort in New Mexico were tenuous and ineffective for decades. In 1857, the Legislature of New Mexico sent a "Memorial" to

Washington asking Congress to assist in providing education for the people of the territory. The Legislature requested that in lieu of lands which were to be set aside for public schools, Washington should appropriate \$500,000.00 as an educational fund for New Mexico. Said fund would be interest-bearing and placed under the control of a Territorial Board of Education comprised of the governor, secretary, and judges of the supreme court of New Mexico.²⁵ This request, although ambitious and progressive, apparently died in committee and never reached fruition.

The 1857 legislative body in New Mexico also made an attempt to establish public schools through a local taxation referendum; however, this procedure was new to New Mexicans and posed a threatening situation. Many surely recalled Governor Albino Pérez' efforts to enforce taxation on the impoverished citizens of New Mexico twenty years earlier, leading to the Chimayó Rebellion in which Pérez and top members of his administration had been massacred. Sternly opposed to this new tax law for public education, the counties of Taos, Río Arriba, Santa Ana, and Socorro defeated the measure 5,016 votes opposed to 36 in favor.²⁶

Succeeding legislative assemblies in New Mexico passed similar taxation laws for public education, but the lack of vigorous measures to collect taxes all but killed them. In 1860, the total New Mexico revenue from taxation was under \$30,000, and little of that ended up in the hands of local

school districts. School reports show that approximately 600 pupils attended four private and seventeen public schools, with thirty-three teachers providing the instruction.²⁷

Various causes were blamed for the poor efficiency of the public school system in New Mexico during this early period. The poverty of the great masses of citizens was the biggest reason. There was little wealth in the territory, and it was confined to a few prominent families. Another reason was the major opposition to taxation—opposition by the poor for having no money and opposition by the wealthy for not wanting to give up their wealth to support a system. Also, many of the poor people were living in widely scattered villages too small to support schools.

During this time, few immigrants from the eastern states lived in New Mexico. And those moving to the territory were mostly single men. Thus, while the local natives were too poor to encourage and support public schools, the immigrant population, accustomed to public schooling, were not present in great enough numbers to provide support towards that end.²⁸

One American newcomer to New Mexico complained in 1863 that the masses of New Mexico natives would not be considered intelligent in the "States," and that the few who were educated regretted but accepted that fact. He blamed the priests, especially Padre Gallegos, who were in charge

before the Americans came, for the lack of schools. No school worthy of the name existed in the territory according to this individual. Citing the defeat of the 1855 public school law, he stated that the "opponents of the *Ley de Educación* were not 'Gringos' but native demagogues;..."²⁹

A few months later, another individual stated that many families who had been accustomed to seeing their children grow up in ignorance were indeed trying to ensure that their children would become "useful members, male and female, of society." This person, however, credited the many youth who were being educated in the Catholic schools, the seminary *Nuestra Señora de la Luz* for girls, and St. Michael's College for boys, both in Santa Fe.³⁰

During the legislative session of 1867-1868, the governor of New Mexico declared that there were no public schools and no tax for schools was being collected; however, the 1870 census showed that 1,889 students were attending schools that year. The following year, in 1871, the twentieth assembly passed a law providing for county school boards of four members each. Assessment and collection of a direct tax on personal and real property was also allowed. Twenty-five percent of the tax, as well as a poll tax, was to go toward establishing a common school system throughout the territory.³¹

During this year, of 1871, Las Vegas apparently heeded this law and made a direct impact on the public school

scene. The community laid claim to having the first public school in the territory. San Miguel County and Lincoln County were reportedly the only counties in New Mexico actively supporting a public school system. Lincoln County boasted that their school, which had forty-five children and was conducted by Notre Dame-educated Juan Patrón, was the only public school in the territory, but residents from Las Vegas soon put an end to that claim. Members of the Las Vegas Progressive Lyceum had established a public school in January of 1871. It had seventy children and preceded Patrón's school by a few months.³²

The Progressive Society in Las Vegas actually met on January 5, 1871, to assess the condition of their public school. The teachers in the school were Olivas V. Aoy who was a Spanish immigrant, Ruperto Bojórquez, and Genovevo García. A complaint was lodged that some families were no longer sending their children to school, and Secretary J. M. H. Alarid made a motion that the parents be contacted to return their children to school. Aoy then reported that the library was in good condition, containing thirty volumes.³³ Alarid followed with a new resolution that the society would henceforth be called the "*Sociedad Progresiva de los Amantes del Estado de Nuevo México*" (Progressive Society of the New Mexico Supporters of Statehood) which had been inaugurated December 20, 1870. Another resolution followed in which the members wished to recognize another organization, *Liceo*

Progresivo, which had existed since January, 1869. They openly stated that, "all credit is owed to the officials and other members of that organization who exerted all their efforts to carry out the same objectives that we now proclaim, but for reasons that no longer exist, they encountered tremendous obstacles to carry out their project."³⁴ These obstacles were probably a result of no school law and no revenues to support a school in 1869.

Desiderio Romero then made a motion that the society be renamed the *Sociedad del Liceo Progresivo de Las Vegas* (Las Vegas Progressive Society and Lyceum) after the same one that was established January 10, 1869, reorganized on December 8, 1870, and incorporated January 1, 1871. The first society had been founded by "friends of New Mexico's youth and progress." Apparently some of the members of the first society now belonged to the new group of forty members who were holding this meeting. The motion was made and the society subsequently became known by that name. As the meeting came to a close, another motion was made to appoint a committee to speak on scientific and literary themes at the next meeting.³⁵

Las Vegas' nearby neighbors at Tecolote launched a movement for education in 1870 when they formed the *Sociedad de Aplicación Intelectual* or Society for Intellectual Application. Their new movement and consciousness addressed the deplorable state of ignorance people found

themselves in due to the lack of a public educational system. The members admitted that they were ashamed to belong to the American government which was "illustrious and liberal" only to be a dark spot in New Mexico where people suffered from ignorance.

Members of the society at Tecolote also commented on the many remarks directed at New Mexicans by outsiders who complained about the lack of progress New Mexicans made towards education. Their intent was to challenge those comments and criticisms by dedicating themselves to education and intellectual application for four hours every Sunday. Their intellectual and progressional development was a primary goal of the members, and they stated:

For this reason each and every one of us members of this society, found the same upon these principles, and we will extend them with all our possible force, in order to drive away from our midst those complaints of oppression and of usurped rights that is every day heard among the people, caused by ignorance ...and in the same manner make immaculate justice triumph for our welfare and general prosperity.³⁶

In 1871, a resident from Las Vegas estimated that about twenty-five youngsters—from each of New Mexico's thirteen

counties—were sent to the *estados* to receive an education every year. He calculated that it cost about \$600.00 per year to educate each one away from the territory; furthermore, for the projected three hundred and twenty-five students, this totaled \$195,000.00 annually. He complained that these youngsters spent three to five years away from New Mexico only to receive an ordinary education. They were receiving the rudiments of English, writing, arithmetic, a little geography and history, and sometimes bookkeeping. With these "mediocre acquisitions, they are known as erudite among the ignorant," he chided.³⁷

An American immigrant to New Mexico once responded to an article which appeared in the *New Mexican* and which accused the "American element" of reproaching the Mexican citizens for opposing education. He said it was highly evident that *nuevomexicanos* were totally aware of the importance of "intellectual cultivation." He further stated that *americanos* were equally aware of the causes for a lack of education but that they would be willing to assist in educational matters and the educational development of their Mexican neighbors whenever they could.³⁸

It appears that Las Vegas' 1871 claim to having the first public school in New Mexico was true since no other evidence supports efforts by other communities in that respect. And quite possibly, Las Vegas has the oldest continuously on-going public school system as well. A

report issued in 1874 indicated that a law passed in 1871 for common schools had been in effect for three years, and 133 public schools were in full operation by that year. New Mexico was also boasting a number of high schools and colleges at this time. Whether true or not, the report further indicated that New Mexico appropriated a larger share of its taxes for support of public schools than any other state or territory in the Union.³⁹

These efforts by Las Vegans to educate their local youth continued beyond 1871, and the movement grew and extended to reach more and more young men and women from the various settlements throughout the county. Much early leadership was provided by young men who had been educated at St. Michael's College in Santa Fe, in northern Mexico, and a handful who had been sent to Missouri and other eastern states. In 1871, one Las Vegan prophesied in Spanish that the native people had to strive for better positions in society through education:

The time shall arrive and soon, when the people living in New Mexico will be the minority; and if they do not become educated, the majority who will come from other parts will consider and treat them as their inferior, and the Mexican will be a stranger in his own land.⁴⁰

While San Miguel County was making progress towards

establishing literary societies and public schools, Albuquerque lagged behind. The editor of the *Revista Republicana* complained that Las Vegas, Tecolote, and various other communities of little importance were surging to the forefront in this realm of human endeavor. Albuquerque simply did not have the monetary means to promote education at this time.⁴¹ By 1870 a convent and Catholic school, established in Albuquerque by Father J. A. Truchard, was closed due to the lack of funds to support it.⁴²

Las Vegas had started a public school system in 1863, but due to the absence of records, it is uncertain how long the schools remained open before 1869. Later records reflected that between 1869 and 1872 public school in Las Vegas was intermittently taught by O. V. Aoy, J. L. Lucrecio, L. H. Newman, and Valentín Vásquez.⁴³ Of these, Aoy was the only one listed as an instructor in the meeting held by the literary society in 1871.

The people in Las Vegas met some competition in promoting public schools after sectarian schools began to appear in the community. First, the Sisters of Loretto established their school in 1869,⁴⁴ and the following year, the Reverend J. A. Annin opened a Presbyterian Mission school. Annin's school was opened under the name San Miguel County Educational and Literary Institute. In the beginning there was resistance by local *nativos* to Annin's efforts in opening the school; however, he began operations with four

scholars, his son and three Anglo children. Eventually the school gained popularity, and the Hispanic student body grew. When it closed in 1892, there were five teachers and seventy students.⁴⁵

Antonio Lucero, who later became New Mexico's first Secretary of State in 1911, attended public schools in Las Vegas during the early 1870s. He began his public schooling in San Miguel del Bado, but eventually his parents moved to Las Vegas in search of better school facilities for their children. When speaking of public education during the Mexican and early Territorial Period, Lucero admitted that school systems were weak, but he insisted that they had not been ignored or neglected. He emphasized that the hardy colonists were so preoccupied with tending to their crops, protecting their livestock, and fending off the many forays and incursions on their settlements by the Indians, that little time was left for anyone to pay much attention to education.⁴⁶

During the decade of the 1870s, Las Vegas and San Miguel County made the first significant inroads to establishing permanent public schools and sectarian school which remained open for many years. By 1874, 138 public schools were reported in New Mexico with 5,151 students attending. The final six years of the decade continued with shaky, unstable legislative acts sometimes passed and at other times defeated.⁴⁷

The Jesuits, who first arrived in Albuquerque in 1867, moved to Las Vegas in 1874 and opened a school for boys called the Las Vegas College. The Jesuits also brought a printing press from Albuquerque and began publishing a small newspaper called *Revista Católica*. Within a few months, the priests boasted that they had the largest circulation of any newspaper in New Mexico and that it was read throughout the United States and Europe.

Aside from being a family newspaper, the Jesuits intended to introduce *La Revista* to the schools. Valencia County had already received approval from preceptors and School Commissioners to use the publication, and seventeen subscriptions were ordered for each school. The Jesuits stated that they strongly advocated education and that "New Mexico, being what it might be, with regard to religion, has to appreciate and congratulate its Archbishop [Lamy], who from the lowest degree, has elevated it to the highest level of ecclesiastical hierarchy during these past 25 years." ⁴⁸

By 1877, the Jesuits had expanded their instruction of young boys to include collegiate level courses. During the first year, seven Jesuit faculty members provided instruction to 132 scholars in elementary and advanced classes in a variety of fields including language instruction in English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Latin. The student body was comprised of both day and boarding students from Las Vegas, New Mexico, Colorado and northern Mexico. ⁴⁹

The Jesuit College grew rapidly and, by the second year, a larger school was built on *La Calle de la Acequia* in Old Town. While many of the pupils were day students from Las Vegas, many more were boarders who stayed in the living quarters that accommodated up to two hundred students.⁵⁰ By 1885, the Las Vegas College had twelve faculty members, and 164 students were enrolled in the College. Its library had 1,500 volumes. Other interesting developments at the institution included evening classes in Spanish, a school orchestra, and a debating society comprised of students.⁵¹

During the 1870s, the Jesuits were actually involved in public school instruction in Las Vegas. The lower grades at the school were designated as a public school, and the school commission authorized school funds to be used by the Jesuits for that purpose. This sanction and activity brought opposition from some of the Protestants in Las Vegas. In 1878, W. G. Ritch, Secretary of New Mexico's Territorial Government, attacked the Jesuits for becoming involved in public instruction when he wrote "Public Schools of San Miguel [County] Infamous."⁵²

In his report, Ritch complained that the public schools in San Miguel County had been entirely broken up due to this misappropriation of public funds by the school commissioners. Also, he accused the Jesuits of using their influence to defeat the Public School Bill of 1877. Ritch cited the contradiction of the school regulations which had been

adopted by the "Roman Catholic" school commissioners in 1876: "Our schools shall not be sectarian, but essentially American, and it shall be the duty of the teachers to instill into the minds of each one of their pupils a just appreciation of the dignity, rights and duties of the citizens of the United States."⁵³

Despite the criticism launched against the Jesuit College, the priests were excellent instructors, and in addition to carrying out the job of educating young men, they were also lauded for the impact they were having on the artistic, literary, and overall development of Las Vegas.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding these major contributions, the priests were apparently dissatisfied that they were not making the progress they expected because Las Vegas was still primarily a Spanish-speaking community. Hispanos in Las Vegas and San Miguel County became very upset in 1887 when they learned that a new Jesuit College was being built in Denver to transfer the Las Vegas College to that city. Since the young city of Denver was an English-speaking community, the priests felt that the environment would facilitate learning the English language, especially for students from Mexico and the Spanish-speaking youth of New Mexico and southern Colorado.⁵⁵

Unsuccessfully, the local citizens appealed to the Jesuits to remain in Las Vegas. Another problem recognized by the priests was that the people were pouring more money

into the college than into the church, and the money was insufficient to support both. By the summer of 1888, townspeople honored the Jesuits with a farewell dinner, and they moved on to found the prestigious Regis College in Denver.⁵⁶

To fill the void left by the exit of the Jesuit College, the Catholic church established the Institute of San Juan B. La Salle in September 1888. This private, parochial school for boys, along with the Catholic school for girls, flourished in Las Vegas for approximately forty years.⁵⁷

After the railroad's arrival in Las Vegas in 1879, the Protestant community grew substantially and began to compete with the public and Catholic schools by establishing their own denominational schools. Congregationalists in East Las Vegas opened the Las Vegas Academy on Douglas Avenue in 1880, and by 1886, the school had 121 boys and ten girls attending classes. Enrollment in the school increased to 500 students by 1891. The growing popularity and funding support for public schools finally caused the Academy to close in the 1890s.⁵⁸

In 1880, the Academy of the Immaculate Conception was founded in Las Vegas by Reverend J. M. Courdert. The school was placed under the direction of the Sisters of Loretto who still maintained their girls' school in Old Town. Also a girls' school, this academy stressed that it was open to

girls from all creeds, non-Catholics were not obligated to participate in the religious instruction provided.⁵⁹

These various efforts to establish different schools in Las Vegas during the 1870s and 1880s gave the community the reputation of being the leading educational center in New Mexico. However weak the public schools might have been during the early stages of their development, by the fall of 1881, San Miguel County School Commissioners boasted that they had appointed public school instructors for thirty of the county precincts. Public School Precinct No. 26 was being taught by the Sisters of Loretto at this time. Teachers who taught in both Spanish and English would receive \$45.00 per month, while those who taught only in Spanish would receive \$35.00 per month.⁶⁰

In August 1882, the parish priest from Mora, J. B. Guerin, delivered a commencement address to the graduates of the Jesuit College in Las Vegas. He lauded the efforts of the community, the Catholic church, and the Protestants, for establishing the many fine schools which existed in Las Vegas and the county. He mentioned that some of the leading citizens and politicians of New Mexico were individuals who had traveled a thousand miles across a dangerous desert to receive a good, literary education in their youth. Guerin stated that no longer was it necessary to be rich in order to be well-educated in Las Vegas, and alluding to the caravan which almost thirty years earlier approached the

hills east of Las Vegas with Bishop Lamy, he stated,

"What happened to the small town that existed in 1854? It melted in the heat of intellectual progress, and on top of its ruins this beautiful city has risen. It is the pride and honor of our Territory. What gave it this rise? Civilization, or shall I say Education."⁶¹

During the winter legislative session of 1888-1889, San Miguel County Representative W. D. Kistler introduced a progressive educational bill in the Territorial House of Representatives. The bill would allow local school districts, through majority vote, to levy taxes on private property for the purpose of constructing school buildings. It would call for establishment of the Office of Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction and allow monies for the maintenance of better public schools than the general fund allocations currently allowed.⁶² Large land holders in New Mexico were adamantly opposed to this bill, and Councilman Thomas B. Catron spearheaded the movement which led to its defeat.⁶³

Although Kistler's proposed bill was defeated in the New Mexico Legislature in July of 1890, Representative Perkins from Kansas introduced a similar bill in Congress. New Mexicans received news of the bill and began to support

it in great numbers. Hundreds of petitions were circulated in San Miguel County and mailed to Congress.⁶⁴ Captain Juan José Herrera, a prominent leader of San Miguel County citizens and the Knights of Labor, strongly supported the bill, and he encouraged the people to endorse the petitions.⁶⁵

Finally, during the twenty-ninth Territorial Legislature of 1890-1891, legislators supported passage of the Perkins Bill, similar to the earlier bill proposed by Kistler. This time the legislature passed the law on February 17, 1891; it was called "An Act Establishing Common Schools in the Territory of New Mexico and Creating the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction."

In some respects, the new law merely continued the county school system of education begun in the 1860s, but it did allow for major improvements in the system.⁶⁶ The law permitted local taxation and created the office of Territorial Superintendent assisted by a territorial school board. It allowed for increased tax levies and bonding for construction of school houses. Counties were to have elected superintendents of instruction and elected school boards in each district. The new law consequently placed the public school system on a permanent foothold comparable to established systems of older states in the Union.⁶⁷

By the early 1890s, Las Vegas was ahead of the other cities in establishing schools in the territory. The law of

1890 allowed schools to issue bonds to construct schools from the proceeds. Two school districts in Old Town held elections and each voted yes on \$10,000.00 bonds for erection of buildings.⁶⁸ School District No. 2 in East Las Vegas did the same for a bond issue of \$15,000.00, and construction of that school building was completed before the two in Old Town. When dedicated on March 1891, the Douglas School in East Las Vegas became the first one in New Mexico to be built through a bond issue passed in public referendum.⁶⁹

By 1890, Las Vegas and San Miguel County had taken major steps in becoming the premier educational leader in New Mexico. By that year, 342 schools were operating in the territory; 143 were taught exclusively in English; 92 were taught in English and Spanish; and 106 were taught in Spanish alone. Spanish-only schools were in those settlements that were remotely located far from the larger cities and the railroad where the influence of the English language had not yet penetrated. By 1892, however, it was reported that English was taught in all the schools.⁷⁰

The first elected County Superintendent of County Schools in San Miguel, Charles F. Rudolph, was happy to report in 1891 that parents no longer had a legal excuse to keep their children out of the public schools. On the contrary, parents who did not send their children to school would have to provide legal justification. Rudolph strongly

urged all parents to send their children to school to take advantage of those opportunities. He admonished that this was the only way New Mexico's youth could remain at a par with the tide of immigration that would engulf the territory within a few years. Rudolph was most concerned with poor attendance in the schools, and again he forewarned:

Our children will be trampled and inundated, paralyzed, and immobilized in ignorance; and they will be incapable of continuing to maintain pace at an educational level; and many of us will be present and witness this lamentable disgrace, when it shall be too late.⁷¹

The strides the community of Las Vegas took in the development of public and sectarian schooling during the 1870s gave the community the leadership role in educating New Mexico's youth. And as education continued to improve during the following decade, the people pursued other cultural, material, and intellectual attainments which contributed greatly to their progressive development. Many of these changes that occurred during the 1880s were a direct result of the railroad's arrival in 1879.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER VII

1. TANM Reel 72, Frames 747-760. This information is contained in the following published book by the East Las Vegas School Board on March 27, 1893: *Historical Sketch of Education in New Mexico from the Earliest Date to the Present Time, with A Résumé of School Matters in the Dual City of the Territory*, by George T. Gould, D. D. This source is found in and will be referred to as TANM, Reel 72.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., Antonio Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo-México*, p. 17.
4. Barreiro, *Ojeada Sobre Nuevo-México*, pp. 17-18.
5. TANM Reel 72, Frame 752.
6. Ibid.
7. MANM Reel 5, Frame 1124.
8. Ibid.
9. MANM Reel 9, Frames 843-844.
10. Wayne Moquin, *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*, pp. 163-166. Moquin cites Ralph Emmerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1912), II, pp. 57-59.
11. TANM Reel 72, Frames 752-753.
12. Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, pp. 141-142.
13. Bork, "Nuevos aspectos del comercio entre Nuevo México y Misuri," p. 85.
14. *Missouri Republican*, January 4, 1847.
15. TANM Reel 72, Frame 753.
16. *Santa Fe Republican*, September 17, 1847. The newspaper was a bilingual publication which stated it was devoted to "Science, Literature and Agriculture."
17. Ibid., January 29, 1848.

18. TANM Reel 72, Frame 753; Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 539-540.
19. TANM Reel 72, Frame 753; Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 541-542.
20. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 543-544; *Revista Católica*, I(1875), p. 181; XXVIII(1902), pp. 486-487.
21. Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, pp. 548-550; *El Nuevo Mexicano*, June 12, 1909. This issue of the newspaper featured the history of St. Michael's College as it celebrated its Golden Jubilee.
22. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, September 23, 1866.
23. E. R. Vollmar, "First Jesuit School In New Mexico," NMHR, XXVII(1952), pp. 297-299.
24. Father Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story* pp. 243-244.
25. 34th Cong. 3rd Sess., House of Representatives, Miscellaneous Document No. 40. "New Mexico—Education of the People," pp. 1-2.
26. TANM Reel 72, Frame 753.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. *Rio Abajo Weekly Press*, July 21, 1863.
30. *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, September 1, 1866.
31. TANM Reel 72, Frame 754; *Mesilla News*, June 13, 1874.
32. *The Santa Fe Weekly Post*, December 23, 1871.
33. Ibid., January 14, 1871.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. *The Republican Review*, April 30, 1870.
37. Ibid., August 26, 1871.
38. Ibid., April 30, 1870.

39. *Mesilla News*, June 13, 1874. This report and information on the public school law and the development of public schools is also found in Elias Brevoort, *New Mexico, Her Natural Resources and Attractions* (Santa Fe, 1874), p. 173.

40. *Revista Republicana, The Republican Review*, October 7, 1871. This newspaper was bilingual and each section carried their own heading.

41. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1870.

42. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1870.

43. TANM Reel 72, Frame 756.

44. *Revista Católica*, XXVIII(1902), pp. 486-487; *Resources of New Mexico*, Bureau of Immigration (Santa Fe: New Mexican Book and Job Printing Department, 1881), p. 29.

45. TANM Reel 72, Frame 757; Gabino Rendón, *Hand on My Shoulder*, Edith Agnew, ed. (New York: United Presbyterian Church, 1953), p. 20. Rendón, who became one of New Mexico's first Hispanic Presbyterian ministers, was one of Annin's first pupils.

46. *Old Santa Fe*, Vol. II, No. 2, October, 1915.

47. TANM Reel 72, Frame 754.

48. *Revista Católica*, I(1875), pp. 181, 372-373.

49. Lynn Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, pp. 135-136.

50. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 244.

51. Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, p. 136.

52. *The Independent*, December 14, 1878.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Revista Católica*, VII(1881), pp. 5, 543.

55. *Ibid.*, XIII(1887), pp. 451-452; Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, p. 136.

56. Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, p. 136.

57. *Revista Católica*, XXVIII(1902), pp. 438-440.

58. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, pp. 244-245; Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, pp. 136-137.

59. Stanley, *The Las Vegas Story*, p. 245.
60. *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, October 27, 1881.
61. *Revista Católica*, VIII(1882), pp. 394-395.
62. TANM, Reel 72, Frame 755.
63. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 19, 1990.
64. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1890.
65. *El Eco de Mora*, July 8, 1890.
66. Charles D. Biebel, Jane C. Atkins, "The Role of Nonpublic Schools in New Mexico, 1800-1950," *Education New Mexico*, Doug Swift, Sister Evelyn Booms, eds., Fall 1981, p. 14.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 15; TANM, Reel 72, Frame 755.
68. TANM, Reel 72, Frame 757.
69. Perrigo, *Gateway to Glorieta*, p. 139.
70. 52d Cong., 1st Sess., House of Representatives, Report No. 736, "Admission of New Mexico," pp. 17, 43.
71. *La Voz del Pueblo*, October 10, 1891.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GROWTH AND EMERGENCE OF VEGUEÑOS DURING THE 1880s

During the early history of Las Vegas, the community received cultural and economic infusions from the United States through the thriving commerce of the Santa Fe Trail. This gradual growth continued through the 1870s as a result of the American Occupation and incorporation of New Mexico into the American Union. Immigration to Las Vegas throughout this period contributed greatly to that early growth and development which occurred on the land grant and the community of Las Vegas. The biggest impact, however, was felt after 1879, following the arrival of the railroad.¹

The cultural collision which occurred on the Las Vegas Land Grant during the decade of the 1880s resulted in major cross-cultural interactions between the dominant American society—which continued to make inroads into New Mexico—and the subordinate culture and society of the *mexicano* occupants of the grant. Americans immigrating to New Mexico were products of America's maturing industrial society whose economy was based on material acquisition, competition and profit.² This prevailing national American character contrasted tremendously with the pastoral, agrarian culture of the native *mexicano* inhabitants who depended on a self-

sufficient economy gleaned from a harsh environment.

Many changes occur within a society whenever cultural borrowing takes place. People must adjust to new institutions and material innovations which are introduced by the dominant and more technologically advanced culture. The growth of American influence on the land grant during this transitional period uprooted and altered the social, economic, and political institutions of the established *mexicanos*. The cultural interaction which occurred on the land grant during this period was concentrated in the community of Las Vegas due to its location and the potential it offered for economic growth. Las Vegas was rapidly transformed from a rural community into one of the leading urban centers in New Mexico. The remaining villages on the land grant adopted many elements from American culture, but they retained a firm, pastoral and agrarian character.

Since the early 1870s, New Mexicans were well aware that the railroad was making its way towards the West and that it would eventually arrive in their territory. By 1874, five different railway lines were under construction leading to New Mexico: the Texas and Pacific; Atlantic and Pacific; Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; Denver and Río Grande; and the Kansas Pacific. Three of these lines were already within ninety miles of the New Mexico border.³

In Las Vegas, the residents of the land grant became aware that the railroad would bring more immigrants to New

Mexico, and as a consequence, ownership of their lands would be in jeopardy. Since litigation of land grants was still in its early stages, many did not have clear titles. The Jesuit priests in Las Vegas warned the people that the railroad might arrive in New Mexico as early as 1877. The priests were concerned that when the railroad arrived it would ruin the town by forming two cities. Great expectations and progress were projected from the railroad's advent, but the clergy also cautioned the *nuevomexicanos* that the railroad would surely increase the number of immigrants who would try to obtain possession of the best lands of the territory.⁴

The Jesuits earnestly stated:

There are many Mexicans who have no documents to their land, and others do not own one yard. We strongly recommend, and we repeat, that you obtain title to your lands...If you lose your land, you will lose your livelihood...We encourage this new immigration, but we surely do not want the old New Mexico natives to be ruined. The concern and caring we have for these Mexican people prompts us to urge the more intelligent Mexicans, and the foreigners who already live in the

territory, to protect these people who deserve and need it.⁵

The iron horse finally arrived in Las Vegas in early July 1879, leading to a major collision between American culture and the *mexicano* society of the Las Vegas Land Grant. The Atchison, Topeka, and the Santa Fe Railway's arrival was part of the transcontinental railroad construction that revolutionized transportation across the country and opened the Southwest to modernization, economic growth, and development. The railroad brought with it many technological innovations and economic institutions which radically altered the pastoral-agrarian society of the land grant.

Continual pressures of Americanization during the 1880s had varying cultural, socio-economic, and political effects on the native *mexicano*. During this transitional decade, an ethnic consciousness emerged among the indigenous population, and an educated middle class emerged within Las Vegas society during that relatively short period of time. Segments of the rising middle class provided a new leadership which addressed the social concerns of the native population's changing role in American culture and society.

The railroad created a boom which immediately affected both Mexican and Anglo residents of Las Vegas. The arrival of the iron horse drew considerable attention from merchants and residents because it bypassed the Las Vegas Plaza, run-

ning east of the Gallinas River. The Anglo and *mexicano* merchants were especially upset because they had expected to see the Old Town grow and prosper economically. On the contrary, a new boom town, known eventually as the City of Las Vegas emerged on the east side of the river along the railroad. The railroad launched a new era in which both combined communities—collectively considered and called Las Vegas—prospered economically and achieved national prominence as a western commercial and railroad center. East Las Vegas was established primarily as an Anglo settlement while Old Town remained largely a Mexican community, both a "stone's throw" from each other with the demarcation line provided by the tiny Gallinas River. Except for a brief period between 1880 and 1883, each continued as a separate municipal, political entity until joint incorporation was reached close to a century later in 1970.⁶

Throughout the early history of the joint community, ethnic animosities and political and economic rivalries prevented the two communities from legal merger. The town's oldest surviving newspaper, the *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, was established in East Las Vegas soon after the railroad's arrival. Its editor, R. A. Kistler, was newly arrived from the midwest, and some insensitive views he expressed about Old Town and the Mexican culture provide the earliest evidence of the ethnic cleavage that divided the communities. When J. H. Koogler, editor of the *Las Vegas Daily*

Gazette, advocated joint incorporation for the two communities, Kistler responded:

The *Daily Gazette* of Saturday morning alludes to the brilliant future of the 'one town' which it says should be organized out of two. This paper would not like to disappoint Mr. Koogler in this matter, but it would certainly prefer declaring him and his Mexican friends a 'leetle off', than to entertain for a brief minute, the thought that American people, full of activity and enterprise would consent to lock arms and join destinies with the Mexican portion. Only the fair-minded and most liberal merchants on the plaza patronize the *Daily Optic* simply because by doing so, they might assist along a town which they hate as no set of men ever hated before...However, their constant treatment of us had lead the people on this side to believe that they would much rather see our busy, bustling American town in ashes than see it go ahead, without fear or favor, as it has from the start.⁷

Kistler wrote his editorial to criticize the Old Town merchants who were unwilling to advertise in the *Optic*, but in it, he expressed the contempt he held for the *mexicano* in the editorial cross fire. Prevailing attitudes identified the *mexicano* during the Territorial Period as an obstacle to the progress and development of New Mexico. Other articles during Mr. Kistler's early tenure with the *Optic* continued to reflect biased opinions about Mexican culture. Whenever originality escaped him, the editor would reprint articles from other writers and newspapers. A quote from the *Wa-Keeney Leader* [Kansas] in 1879 described the adobe homes of Old Town:

Judging from appearance, the old town of Las Vegas certainly must date back to the birth of Christ. At this day Jesus is seen within the enclosure of its cathedral nailed to the cross. The two thieves have by some means managed to get away. The identical ass on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem is also here; we saw it grazing just outside of city weary and worn...We doubt whether a plat of the old town was ever taken into the ark by Noah.⁸

The collision of both material cultures brought much criticism by non-*mexicanos* throughout the Territorial

Period. Adobe homes, which today are praised as architectural marvels of adaption to the environment, appear throughout early American chronicles and literature. The dwellings were usually referred to as "mud hovels" or "brick kilns" which had neither windows, floors, furnishings nor ample living space for the occupants. The *burro* or donkey was also a central point of criticism by the immigrants and travelers since the early days of the Santa Fe Trail. The practical and popular use of the donkey among the Mexicans as both a beast of burden and transportation for short distances highly contrasted with the dominant popularity of the horse among the Americans.

The bulk of the early literature on the Mexicans did not provide any rational analysis of the culture to which the Anglos had been exposed. Americans usually attributed the so-called primitive material culture and "technological backwardness" of the *mexicano* to a class of people who were allegedly satisfied with their few earthly possessions. In Las Vegas, as was the case in other areas of the Southwest, Anglos who were sensitive to the Mexican culture wrote rebuttals to offensive articles or literature printed about Mexicans. An article of November 12, 1879, which appeared in the *Optic*, criticized the material furnishings of the Mexican home and Mexican diet. The article alluded to the laziness of the people when it concluded, "Give a Mexican a peck of beans and a string of red peppers, and he is

thoroughly contented, nor will he work while a particle of either remains." The following day a letter signed "Old Missouri" appeared in the *Optic* providing a defense. The Missourian wrote:

...he [the author] has hit the natives of this fair land a pretty hard lick, and I want to say a word, too, in their defense. It is true that the lower classes of the cities of New Mexico have it about as the fellow wrote, but of the higher classes it is not true, for if you should go to their houses you will find that they are furnished as well as any of the houses of the better classes in the east, and on their tables you will find as fine a bill of fare as at any table in the old states.⁹

The defense of New Mexicans usually made distinctions between the "lower" and "higher" classes of people. The majority of New Mexico's natives still belonged to a poor and lower class if they were to be judged by American economic standards. The privileged few who were defended were those wealthy and prominent *mexicanos* who had already adopted much of the material culture and lifestyle of the Americans. They were also the ones who could read English and, thus, protest the publication of defamatory literature.

Eventually, Kistler developed some tolerance of the Mexican culture of Las Vegas, and he used more discretion in publishing articles. On one occasion, the *Optic* mentioned that the wife of one of the wealthiest men in New Mexico, Mrs. Miguel Otero, had visited Moore's Hotel in Las Vegas. A different section of the same issue was apparently referring to Mrs. Otero when it suggested that the "Spanish" people were also expressing hostility toward Anglos. The article stated:

A Spanish lady says: "Since the country has been opened to Americans, the Spanish people are not so hospitable as formerly. They rather fall in with the more mercenary ways of the Americans."¹⁰

The reference to Mrs. Otero and the "Spanish" people is a rare example of the usage of the ethnic term when the *Optic* was careful not to offend the prominent Mexicans. Mrs. Otero was a member of the emerging class of affluent *mexicanos*, most of whom had moved to the land grant after its initial settlement in 1835. Some of these such as the Otero, Delgado, Baca, Romero, Manzanares, López, and Pérez families had achieved positions of wealth and prominence prior to the American arrival in 1846. Some of them had been involved in mining around Santa Fe or had held political positions within the Mexican administration. These wealthier Mexicans moved to Las Vegas during the early

days of the Santa Fe Trail to engage in the business activity which established the community as a trade center. Marriages among the wealthy "Dons" was usually restricted to this upper class.

Following the arrival of the railroad, some of the prominent Hispanos in Las Vegas formed economic and political alliances with the Anglos. For some it was a continuation of relations they had established years before while others sought mergers which would ensure positions of wealth and influence for them. These mergers also provide evidence of early accommodation of *mexicanos* to the new American society.

Some of the new business ventures competed for the natural resources on the land grant. One was a sawmill owned by Trinidad Romero and a Mr. Wooten of Las Vegas. Apparently an arsonist set fire to the mill in which forty thousand feet of lumber burned. The business was not insured, and the consequent loss was set at \$11,000. In 1880, a mercantile store known as Brown and Manzanares was established by L. P. Browne and F. A. Manzanares who sold everything from groceries and clothing to farm machinery.¹¹

Eugenio Romero and F. A. Manzanares were among the *mexicano* stockholders elected to the *Agua Pura* Company board of directors. *Agua Pura* was a water works company in East Las Vegas. Eugenio was one of five Romero brothers, sons of Don Trinidad, who were among the wealthiest *mexicanos* in Las

Vegas. As strong political leaders in the Republican party, they formed the most influential political family Las Vegas has known.¹²

Residents of Las Vegas also sought ways to improve travel in and around the area. In November 1879, they held a meeting to discuss improvement of the public roads which led north to Taos, east to the Red River (Canadian River) area, and south to Santa Fe. Trinidad Romero, Francisco Manzanares, Lorenzo López, Benigno Romero, and Eugenio Romero were among the committee members appointed to review and plan road improvements.¹³

During late 1881, another group of Las Vegas investors met to form the "El Dorado Town Company" with the prominent and wealthy Lorenzo López elected president. Lorenzo was the son of Francisco López, one of the early merchants of the Santa Fe Trail. The concern issued stock amounting to \$100,000 and was incorporated as a mining company whose objective was "the construction and operation of wagon roads, the construction of irrigation ditches, acquiring and improvement of lands, the erection of building, the colonization of lands, etc., etc." Another group, which consisted basically of the same Anglo and *mexicano* investors, established the San Miguel Stock, Agricultural and Fair Association. Lorenzo López was also president of this association whose main concern was to promote the cattle and sheep industry and agriculture.¹⁴

The direct and indirect contributions of the railroad to the economic boom in Las Vegas during the 1880s were manifold. Las Vegas was established as a railroad division headquarters, and as a result, hundreds of employees maintained their residences in the growing community. The company soon built a depot on the main line and a spur line to the Montezuma Hot Springs which was developed as a resort area. A hospital for railroad employees was built north of Old Town, and soon after, a brick, nine-stall roundhouse was constructed at the south end of East Las Vegas. The railroad company also established a tie and timber preserving works for thousands of ties which were cut in the surrounding mountains. Facilities were also constructed for loading cattle and sheep raised on the ranches of northeastern New Mexico.

A working class of laborers simultaneously emerged with the economic boom that hit Las Vegas. Many of these men were employed to fill the jobs created by the various business enterprises. Local citizens who resided on the land grant competed for jobs with Anglos and other *mexicanos* who immigrated to Las Vegas. Some people cut railroad ties and mine props independently on the land grant reserves and sold them to the railroad. Others worked for major contractors and lumbermen such as Eugenio Romero. Romero, the largest tie contractor, at one time had a payroll of \$15,000. After filling his initial tie contracts, Romero

had a remaining inventory of 60,000 ties valued at over \$40,000. The *Gazette* reported that the large outlay by the tie company would be felt during the winter months when the workers would be unemployed.¹⁵

During the 1880s, ethnic cleavages such as those which originated among *mexicanos* and Anglos in the Mexican Period continued and further exacerbated existing bad feelings between the groups. In 1882, a lengthy, anonymous letter opposing statehood for New Mexico was published in the *New York Times*. It provided a vilifying description of native New Mexicans and what the author termed their "total unfitness to become citizens." The writer presented every characteristic of race, economics, education, politics, social life, and religion in an offensive, negative manner. The author did not mention Las Vegas or any specific community, but reference to the article is mentioned due to the position Las Vegas had attained in 1882 as one of the New Mexico's leading communities.

Without statistical authority at hand, I think it not far wrong to say that about two-thirds of the population of the territory is of the mongrel breed known as Mexicans—a mixture of the blood of Apache, negro (sic), Navajo, white horse-thief, Pueblo Indian, and old-time frontiersman with the original

Mexican stock. You may sift and rake this Mexican population, and you will scarcely find man, woman, or child who does not hate with a passionate hatred everything that is known to him or her as American...The latter hate their greaser neighbors quite as unanimously and as cordially as they are hated, and they have much more frequently the disposition and the power to give vent to their feeling by word and act...In his present condition the Mexican is far less fitted to be intrusted (sic) with political power than was the negro (sic) when emerging from slavery...he is nearly, if not quite, as uneducated as was the negro (sic) at the close of the rebellion. With the exception of a handful in the larger towns, scarcely any of the Mexicans have more than the beginning of a knowledge of the English tongue...Under a State form of government the Catholic clergy, too, would doubtless have a thick finger in the political pie...As a whole, the Mexicans are Catholics after a paganish fashion.

An obscene story with a priest for a central character is sure to be greeted with "laughter and applause," to quote from that exciting and entertaining work, the *Congressional Record*. A Mexican woman living first with this man and then with another as his defacto wife is not considered by her female neighbors to be committing a serious impropriety, at least not such a heinous offense as should debar her from the countenance and society of others of her sex assumed to be leading a regular life...I don't believe that a community run on the free-love principles and practice of the Mexicans of New Mexico is eminently desirable as an addition to the number of States.¹⁶

Le Baron Bradford Prince, Chief Justice in New Mexico at the time, contested the letter in the *Times* with another which defended the people of New Mexico. Prince, like other Anglos who came to New Mexico, had friends among the wealthy Hispanos, and throughout his tenure in New Mexico, which included serving as Territorial Governor between 1889-1893, he was a big investor in mining properties and other ventures. Prince was also identified and associated with

the Santa Fe Ring's illegal acquisition of New Mexico land grants during this period. He challenged the native people's purported ignorance by citing the English, Spanish, and bilingual newspapers existing in the territory and then designating the women as "noble," "pure minded" "Spaniards" of "virtuous sacredness." Prince maintained that New Mexico's natives were the most misunderstood people of the country since "they are fit representatives of the land of the Cid, and successors of the discoverers of the soil."¹⁷

Prince should have gained the favor of the native New Mexicans by defending them; however, as a conservative Republican, he agreed that New Mexico should wait a few years before it became a state. He felt that the territory should first be modernized and developed through capitalistic endeavor. And since Prince was involved in land grant speculation, he suggested that if the titles to the land grants were settled, immigration to New Mexico would greatly enhance the development of the territory.¹⁸

The labeling of the Mexicans as a "mongrel" breed was present in many Anglo-American views of Mexicans. The article appearing in the *New York Times* relates closely to the book, *El Gringo; or New Mexico and Her People*, written by W. W. H. Davis in 1857. Davis had spent two years in New Mexico while he served as United States Attorney, and his book became a popular work throughout the United States. Without a doubt, the book was one of the singlemost damaging

accounts of New Mexico's culture; however, it was especially popular in Congress when Statehood for New Mexico was proposed for legislation.

As late as 1888, the Committee on Territories referred to Davis' book, stating that although thirty years had transpired since it was first published, "to which we answer that a race of people residing for many years immediately adjacent to the American Republic, whose ancestry inhabited that country long prior to the landing of the Pilgrims, and who for more than thirty years have been a part and parcel of the territory of the United States and under their care and control, and yet among whom so little advancement in education and the common arts of civilization has been made, can not reasonably be expected to have greatly changed for the better, nor that the most rapid progress will be made in the future."¹⁹

While New Mexico was necessarily inhibited in its efforts to establish a viable public school system during the early Territorial Period, individual efforts by the Catholic Church and other interest groups had laid the foundation for the territory's public school system. By the early 1880s, Las Vegas already had an educated class of young adults that consisted not only of the wealthier Hispanos on the land grant but also of the poorer families. Some of the older persons, for example, such as Francisco Manzanares, had been educated in the college Father Antonio

José Martínez had established in Taos prior to the American occupation. Others had been educated in the first public schools opened in the 1870s and the parochial schools which had been opened through the efforts of Bishop J. B. Lamy.²⁰

After two decades of religious and public schools in the area, one can safely assume that a literate, educated class had emerged. A review of the Spanish-language newspapers published in New Mexico by the late 1880s reveals that the native New Mexican was undergoing an identity crisis which can be attributed to the ethnic ridicule they had been subjected to through English newspapers, other literature, and personal contact.

The columns of *La Voz del Pueblo*, a Spanish-language newspaper established in Santa Fe in 1889 and transferred to Las Vegas the following year, illustrate the different terms the Mexicans used in self-identity. Throughout the earlier Territorial Period, it appears that the native people universally accepted the term *mexicano*, carried over from their nationality during the Mexican administration. *Nativo* (native), *neo-mexicano* and *nuevomexicano* were also terms commonly used among the people. *Nuevomexicano* (New Mexican) could apply to citizenship and all New Mexicans, but *nativo* and *neo-mexicano* definitely carried overtones of ethnic self-identity. *Neo-mexicano*, appeared to imply the "new emerging" *mexicano* or those related to *mexicanos*. *Neo-mexicano* was always used when reference was made to the

native and never denoted application to the joint Anglo and Mexican society.

The term *Hispano* achieved popular usage in Las Vegas during the 1880s. A thorough review of the Spanish media in New Mexico during this period does not reveal the term *mestizo* (mixed Indian heritage) being used. However, *Hispano* apparently surfaced as people began to deny that they had Indian blood. This reaction probably developed after *mexicanos* saw that American literature continuously labeled *Mexicanos* in a pejorative context by calling them "half-breeds" and members of a "mongrel race." A bilingual newspaper, *Hispano-Americano*, was established in Socorro in 1886 and reportedly transferred to Las Vegas in 1892.²¹ A few other newspapers had the same title by 1900; and the fact that they were also bilingual implies that cultural interaction among the Anglo population helped create the *Hispano* image. The term *Hispano* also led to popular usage of the term *hispanoamericano* (Spanish-American) as *mexicanos* were beginning to identify with American citizenship.

The class of educated native New Mexicans that emerged in the Las Vegas area had also received literary and linguistic infusions from the rest of the Spanish-speaking world outside the United States through instruction, libraries and the Spanish press. Literary sections in newspapers carried the works of Mexico, Latin America, and Spain, in addition to translated works of American, English

and European poets and writers. The word Hispano was likely an adaptation of the terms used by Latin American writers.

Throughout the 1880s, it appears that the native New Mexicans of Las Vegas shared a common self-identity. Once it emerged, the term Hispano does not appear to have raised any questions or protest among other natives and was used interchangeably with other terms the people used for self-identity. Toward the end of the century and into the early 1900s Hispano, *hispano-americano*, Spanish and Spanish-American gained popularity. The term "Mexican"—as used in English—probably lost its usage among the Spanish speaking due to the pejorative context of the term when "Mexican" or "Meskin greaser" was heard. "Mexicano," however, has always been used by New Mexicans when they converse in Spanish.²²

Las Vegans, like other native residents, also challenged some of the negative stereotyping and characterization of *mexicanos*. Editorials and public speeches by many of these men reveal their intellectual competence and their determination to challenge those issues and ethnic slurs which were damaging to their character. On one occasion in 1901, a Protestant missionary seeking to convert Las Vegans wrote a slanderous article on the local culture and the need for the religious salvation of the native, a group of six hundred people met in a public rally to challenge her and publically denounce her ideas. The main discourse delivered at the meeting by Eusebio Chacón, a graduate of the Univer-

sity of Notre Dame, clearly illustrates how native New Mexicans viewed themselves.

The writer begins to astonish us by saying that the Spanish-American or Mexican, is part Spanish and part Indian; that in language, customs, appearance and habits he looks like both his Spanish and Indian ancestors. How she has twisted the laws of linguistics to merge the Spanish and English language is a mystery to us...I am a Spanish-American like the rest of you who listen to me. No blood runs through my veins other than the one Don Juan de Oñate brought, and the one brought by the illustrious ancestors who bore my name. If in any of the Spanish Americas, or what were previously Spanish colonies, the physical traits of the conquistador race have been retained, it has been New Mexico. There has been some mixture, yes, but so little and only in rare circumstances, that to say that we are, as a community, a mixed race, is not confirmed by history, nor does it resist scientific analysis. But

if it would be true that we are a mixed race, there is nothing in it that would be dishonorable or degrading. If it would be true, rather than degenerate, our race would have acquired new exuberance, as the Romans did from the Goths, and as Normandy did from Albion [England] in feudal times. And it should be noted that the Germanic or Saxon races, during the time of human upheaval which amalgamated the European races, did not have, neither in temperament, or intellectual endowments anything superior to the indigenous race of America when our forefathers conquered it...; she [missionary] will never learn the moral side of our existence, because she never sits down to read with us, near the warm lamplight, those sweet and profound works of those who have brought nobility to the world, the Dantes, the Victor Hugos and Walter Scotts. We have suffered, yes; we have waited with patience the hour of our redemption; but that salvation has not been brought, surely, by those who insult our homes

and our beliefs...People of New Mexico, if your destiny is only to be a beast of burden; if you are to remain in the sad state of tutelage of government which has been your case to the present; if you are not allowed to be part of the public issues of this country, which is yours; if your Anglo-American brothers view you with mistrust and envy the small dignity you might achieve through self government; it is time that you pick up your Penates, and take them, with the remains of your ancestors to a more hospitable country...If the land where your Diego de Vargas sleeps has no hope for your sons, look, for the world is large, the world is good, the world is generous. Look for a country where you can determine your own destiny.²³

Mr. Chacón's lengthy speech came as a strong rebuke for many of the frustrations and tribulations the Hispano in Las Vegas had felt for many years. His elucidation of the situation lends credence to the assertion that a new ethnic consciousness had reached many *mexicanos* by the turn of the century. Most of the people who attended these public and political meetings did not have the education or worldly

knowledge of men such as Chacón, but whenever the community took positions of resistance, protest, or public demonstration, the local people were included and informed about the issues through the media and meetings. Charges of the native people's "ignorance" could thus be challenged in different ways. The native population had its communications networks even before newspapers and other types of literature were popularized.

The quasi-religious fraternal orders of *Penitentes* provided the most formidable means of communication, solidarity, and resistance to assimilation into American society. The transfer of the Catholic Church from Mexican authority to American administration, however, created new religious and educational changes for native Catholics and the *Penitentes*. The Catholic Church's program of reformation in New Mexico was spearheaded by Bishop Jean B. Lamy.

Lamy, a Frenchman, had been a parish priest at Cincinnati since 1839. By the time he arrived in New Mexico in 1851, he knew English well and was familiar with American culture and society. He was also aware of the efforts the United States was undertaking to expand and modernize the Southwest. Lamy is especially recognized for the educational reforms he initiated in New Mexico for both boys and girls. A close friend and fellow priest, Joseph P. Machebeuf, accompanied Lamy to New Mexico to carry out the church's reform of the native people.²⁴ A letter Machebeuf

wrote in 1852 describes his concern for education in New Mexico.

As the source of evil here is the profound ignorance of people, the first remedy must be the instruction of youth, and for this we need Christian Schools for the youth of both sexes, but especially for the young girls. The means of forming them to virtue and good example, which is rare in New Mexico, is the establishment of religious houses conducted by persons devoted to their calling and filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice. To this end the Bishop has already opened a school for boys in our house, and he has knocked at many doors in the United States in order to secure Sisters for the girls.²⁵

Lamy's concerns were not limited to the education and "moral" upbringing of the youth. He removed most of the native clergy who resisted his authority and who held close cultural and social identification with their people. The native priests had not challenged the traditions and rituals of the *Penitentes* since many priests had also been part of that cultural experience. As citizens of the United States, the Mexican priests and their congregations had to adjust

to a new regime separating the powers of the church and state, to a new language, to changes in Catholic Church administration, and to a growing influx of Anglo-American settlers who were largely Protestant.

Bishop Lamy, ultimately New Mexico's first archbishop, made several attempts to suppress the quasi-religious orders of *Penitentes* whose alleged "barbaric" rituals of public penance were heavily criticized by Anglos in newspapers and other literature. With little success, Lamy employed the authority of the Catholic Church to end their practices and religious orders. The *Penitentes'* strength in communal and social solidarity prevailed, and some of the most vehement among them left the Catholic Church and converted to Protestantism.²⁶

Penitentes did not pose the only threat to the Catholic Church in New Mexico. In 1867, Reverend John Anin arrived in Las Vegas to carry out the establishment of Presbyterianism in New Mexico.²⁷ Methodists and Congregationalists soon followed the Presbyterians.

The Catholic publication, *Revista Católica*, was established in Las Vegas by Jesuit priests in 1875, and through 1917, when it was transferred to El Paso, the small periodical had made a major impact on the lives of native Catholics throughout New Mexico. The *Revista* continually supported the local natives, their culture, traditions and continuing education. During the 1880s the journal carried

many articles on the preservation of Catholicism in New Mexico, controversial issues which affected the local populace, and articles which represented a direct conflict with the Protestants, especially the Presbyterians who had been converting the *mexicano*.

During the year 1883, various issues of the *Revista Católica* featured a rivalry with Reverend Alexander Darley, publisher of *El Anciano*, a Presbyterian publication from southern Colorado. Many times, the *Revista Católica* charged that *El Anciano* was damaging to the local culture and customs of New Mexico. Conversion of Catholics to Protestantism was the focal point of Jesuit criticism.

We have only lived in New Mexico a few years, and, without fear of being charged with falsehoods, we affirm that we know the people [Mexicans] better than your reverence [Darley]; consequently, we also know what kind of people allow themselves to be tricked by the preachers of biblical novelties; and what we already know through personal experience, is confirmed every day by correspondence which arrives at this office. A little more and a little less, are 'the savage people,' which the letter from El Moro [Colorado] spoke of

two or three weeks back. And do not think, dear Mr. Alexander, that all Mexicans are like your converts...The other Mexicans, almost the majority, detest you and close their doors to you, burn your books, and laugh about you and your newspaper, and, they run from your houses of worship as they would pestilence.²⁸

The *Revista Católica* expressed little remorse for the Protestants, and the labeling of converted Catholics as "savage people" was equally denigrating to the local native. It is probable that conversion of Catholics was not too difficult in those communities which had no priest. When Bishop Lamy arrived in New Mexico, some of the *Penitentes* were performing priestly rites in those parishes where secular priests had been absent for years. *Penitentes* came under fire by the church and later became some of the earlier converts to Protestantism. Some who became Protestants gave up their *Penitente* membership as well. The "savage people," without a doubt, included the *Penitentes*. It is evident, however, that the type of literature printed about *Penitentes* and Catholics created a cleavage between Hispanos themselves. It appears that many of the outside forces and institutions brought to New Mexico by rival churches only served to divide local community unity and to

fragment the rural *mexicano* society.²⁹

Father P. J. A. Zahm, for example, parish priest at Santa Cruz in 1883, spent much time living and working among the Mexican population of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Chihuahua, Mexico. Strongly defending the Mexican culture and society, he would write brief descriptions about the people and his view of their culture. In one of his articles, "The Great Southwest," he wrote, "there is no people which has been more disfigured and less understood than the *hispano-mexicanos* of our republic and the neighboring one."³⁰ Zahm spoke positively about Spanish society and how *mexicanos* were also part of it. Consequently, his use of the term *hispano-mexicano* inferred that New Mexicans were part of both Spanish and Mexican cultures. He supported his defense of the *mexicano* by saying that it should

...not appear strange that the majority of the defenders of New Mexico and the Mexicans are priests. The reason for this phenomenon is two-fold: No one knows them better or is closer to them. No one is more excited of that spirit which breaks all the barriers and flies above all the ramparts of antipathy and preoccupation—the spirit and charity of Christ.³¹

The Catholic Church's role in education and social reform contributed to the creation of philanthropic and religious societies in many of the churches throughout New Mexico. This was part of a movement among New Mexicans to organize various forms of mutual aid and benevolent societies that would facilitate the adjustment to American society and the dominant culture. The Church's struggle with the *Penitentes*, who were primarily religious and mutual aid societies, also possibly led to the establishment of these Church-sanctioned religious organizations throughout New Mexico.

Catholic organizations already existed in other parts of the world, and by 1883, the *Revista Católica* reported that there was hardly a parish that did not have religious "associations" for women and men. The first religious society was established at the Antón Chico parish in 1876.³² Various other religious societies were listed in the *Revista* from time to time. *La Unión Católica* at Mora and the *Sociedad Filantrópica del Condado de Taos* are two that appear in one issue of the periodical. Another Catholic affiliate was a fraternal insurance group established in Las Vegas. The *Caballeros Católicos de América* (Catholic Knights of America), a national organization, established Lodge No. 324 in Las Vegas in 1877. The influential Lorenzo López was president of the organization, and by 1883, reports showed that \$500,000 had been paid in benefits to

widows and orphans during the previous fifteen years.³³

Various other types of mutual aid and benevolent societies emerged in Las Vegas during the late 1880s as the native population continued to grow and become a subgroup of American culture and society. Cultural borrowing continued between the Americans and *mexicanos* as technology facilitated communication and contact for the people. The organizations emerging in New Mexico continued to undertake forms of accommodation, pursuits for intellectual attainment, economic and cultural survival, and the progressive development of *nuevomexicanos* as they continued to merge with the dominant society. Most groups were partisan in political party affiliation, but they all addressed social, economic, educational, and other concerns relating primarily to the Spanish-speaking people.

A special feature of the Spanish press was the literary sections which carried poetry and other works of writers, scholars, and poets from Mexico, Latin America, and Spain. Translated works of American, English, and European authors were very common also. The appearance of these outside authors in New Mexico's newspapers gave rise to a folk literary movement. Eventually, countless poems and *corridos* (ballads) written by native New Mexicans appeared in the literary columns alongside the poetry and literature of renowned world authors. This emerging tradition of published popular verse was encouraged by the newspapers them-

selves. Editorial staff would write poetry and solicit verses from the community. The resultant poetic expression was highly popularized although some of it had no artistic, poetic style.³⁴

Oral expression of poetic verse was an old tradition in New Mexico, but during the 1880s, the newspapers gave it a new thrust and allowed it to achieve a published form. The composing and singing of *romances*, *versos*, *décimas*, and *corridos* had been popular among native New Mexicans since the arrival of the first Spanish and *mestizo* colonists. The oldest and most famous of these was Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà's epic poem "*Historia de Nuevo México*" (History of New Mexico) written in 1610. The diverse themes appearing in the folk poetry of New Mexicans include life experiences of love, politics, death, culture conflict, religion, technology, the military, language, and patriotism. Often the native literature criticized the American society, which was surrounding the native culture. The poetry also elucidates the complete cultural transformation that *mexicanos* underwent during the Territorial Period.³⁵

The ethnic consciousness that developed among native New Mexicans during the 1880s led to the emergence of literary societies among the social circles of both elite and non-elite Hispanos. It appears that American and Mexican societies both provided the cultural influence that resulted in the diffusion of societal characteristics into

the *mexicano* presence in New Mexico. The *Las Vegas Morning Gazette* reported in March 1881 that Anglos in New Town had established the Shakespeare Society commemorating the famous poet and dramatist's birthday. This is the earliest evidence of a literary society being established by Anglos in Las Vegas. Among the *mexicanos*, *La Voz del Pueblo* reported in 1891 that the *Sociedad Literaria y de Ayuda Mutua de Las Vegas* (Las Vegas Literary and Mutual Aid Society) had been established in 1887 and that it was one of the first in the territory.³⁶ The editors were apparently not aware of the Tecolote and Las Vegas societies that helped launch the public school movement in 1869 and 1870.³⁷

The *Sociedad Literaria* in Las Vegas consisted of an educational circle of the most illustrious and ambitious young men in the community and much like the earlier Tecolote and Las Vegas societies, their main purpose was to promote and sustain educational opportunities for Las Vegas' youth from all economic levels. The *Sociedad* maintained an excellent library with works by the best Spanish, French, Latin, German, and English authors. During September of 1891, the members of the society announced that they were reading and discussing the works of Homer, Virgil, Seneca, Juan de Dios Peza, and others. Peza was a romantic poet from Mexico whose poetry was very popular during this period throughout the Spanish-speaking world, including New Mexico.³⁸

The emerging class of educated scholars in Las Vegas was familiar with other literary genres from Mexico, and poetry was especially popular. New Mexico's Spanish newspapers also reprinted many articles from *El Imparcial* and other Mexican newspapers. Judging from their libraries and exposure to Mexico's press, it is highly probable that Las Vegans were familiar with *La Academia de Letrán* (Academy of Letrán) and *El Liceo Hidalgo* (Hidalgo Lyceum), both literary societies in Mexico during the Romantic Period. *La Academia* was established in 1836 to study and review Spanish, French, German, and Classical literature. The older members of *La Academia* and younger writers later formed *El Liceo Hidalgo* in 1851. The most famous Mexican poets belonged to *El Liceo* until it ceased to function in 1882. The impetus for *El Liceo* had been provided by *La Academia* and its literary function was similar. The members discussed past and present literary themes, reviewed and studied Mexican works, debated new trends of thought and engaged in oratory.³⁹

A book in possession of one New Mexican during the Territorial Period, Juan B. Martínez, provides some evidence that the people had read about the literary societies of Mexico. In 1845, the *Revista Científica y Literaria de México* (Mexico Review of Science and Literature) carried an article about the *Sociedad de Amigos de Jalapa* citing the *Academia de Letrán* as its forerunner. Mexicans were encour-

aged to form similar societies. The *Revista* from Mexico stated that the "effort of people to organize themselves to cultivate the learning of the arts is progress; discussion corresponds to learning, it purifies and adds robustness to wisdom, and gives life and lends wings to genius which would otherwise vegetate in obscure and barren isolation."⁴⁰

The literary societies that emerged in Las Vegas and throughout New Mexico were similar to the ones in Mexico although variations within them addressed the local needs of the membership and community. Their functions included review of literature and debates and oratory on mundane issues. Some of the debates and discourses covered topics such as civil law, intelligence, temporal life, hope, truth, the railroad, and crops. The majority of these societies stipulated that politics were restricted from the internal functions of the membership. However, many members used intellectual attainments and social experiences in the societies to participate in politics and often embarked upon successful political careers in New Mexico.⁴¹

Various other types of mutual aid and fraternal organizations were established in Las Vegas and other communities during the 1890s. Two adjuncts to the *Sociedad Literaria* in Las Vegas were the *Sociedad Dramática Hispano-Americana* (Spanish-American Drama Society) and *La Estrella Literaria* (The Literary Star), both making their appearance in 1891. The *Sociedad Dramática* held public dramatic presentations

while *La Estrella Literaria* consisted of younger men who patterned their organization after the parent *Sociedad Literaria*.⁴²

Members of *La Estrella* held a formal dance in the Spring of 1892 to commemorate the expulsion of the French army in Mexico by General Ignacio Zaragoza on May 5, 1862.⁴³ This Las Vegas celebration of the Mexican national holiday in 1892 provides evidence of surviving affinity and cultural ties some *nuevomexicanos* held with their mother country.

The majority of the literary and mutual aid societies which emerged in New Mexico during the late 1880s and early 1890s often announced that they were not involved in race or political issues. They did affirm, however, that they sought to protect the interests of the people and to bring "Hispanos" together as one family. In 1892, the *Sociedad Hispano-Americana* in Albuquerque stated that although it was painful to admit, the *mexicano* was the most dislocated group of people in New Mexico. The members felt that other groups were taking advantage of the land issue and were absorbing the land because of the lack of unity among the "Neo-mexicano." People were losing their land holdings despite the "thousand land titles" they held.

One of the members eloquently described the purpose of their organization by saying,

Societies are like the seedling of the most progressive ideas. They are like

the sun whose luminous rays of faith reach all minds and give strength, vigor, and a new life to people so that they may confront the overflow of privileged classes and the preponderance of corrupt governments. All ideas of philanthropic benefit to poor people have emerged from societies, and they have served to educate them through the schools which have been established throughout—from the prairies to the most remote mountains. The most difficult questions of public interest have developed in the bosom of societies, and the best laws have been projected which today are a guarantee of all and the pride of modern civilization. All institutions in general have provided great services to the world's progress. What would humanity be without the existence of these societies. Without them we would be living in the middle ages.⁴⁴

The growth of the Spanish press in New Mexico during the 1880s gave the Spanish language new vitality as the class of educated and literate people grew. This medium helped to preserve and strengthen the fluency of the

language among *nuevomexicanos* throughout the Territorial Period. On the other hand, the Spanish press also facilitated the adoption and mixing of English vocabulary into the Spanish language. This resulted in the gradual accumulation of Anglicisms, or English words, which have been Hispanicized through pronunciation, form, and meaning and incorporated into the Spanish language.⁴⁵

It is very probable that the first language borrowing between both cultures originated during the early days of the Santa Fe Trade, but it became more pronounced with increased immigration to New Mexico following the American Occupation of 1846. The first Anglos to enter New Mexico, after the army, were the merchants, lawyers, politicians, and, later, miners and ranchers. These people were quick to adopt Spanish and new vocabulary and terms for the phenomena they encountered in the Mexican culture.

Language borrowing from Spanish eventually ended once the dominant Anglo culture firmly established its economic, political, and social institutions. Consequently, the presence of the Americanization and modernization program began to take its effect on the *nuevomexicano*. Affluent Hispano families were the first to acquire Anglicisms from the English language following the cross-cultural contacts and linguistic interaction which occurred between cultures. Like the Americans, much of the first vocabulary native New Mexicans adopted came from the new technology, social

institutions, and other phenomena foreign to them.

The English newspapers also caused many Hispanics to adopt and incorporate Anglicisms into their local, spoken Spanish. Many of the early newspapers published in New Mexico were bilingual, and presses would employ *mexicanos* to translate English sections into Spanish. Spanish newspapers also translated many articles and literary sections that appeared in the English media. Consequently, translators created Anglicisms for their Spanish readers whenever a word could not be translated. Spanish newspapers had a far-reaching impact as they were read in the most remote rural villages where little direct contact was yet made with Anglos and other immigrants to New Mexico.⁴⁶

Preservation of the language ensured the maintenance of cultural values, traditions, and the rich cultural heritage of the people. The language, more than any other cultural factor, prevented the assimilation of New Mexico's Spanish speaking population into the mainstream of American culture and society throughout this period.

The smaller settlements within the Las Vegas Land Grant did not experience the same type of contact with Americans and other immigrants Las Vegas and larger communities did. Consequently, it is very probable that they did not undergo the same cultural changes Las Vegas was exposed to during the decade of the 1880s. It is very likely that the villages underwent variations of cultural change resulting

from direct contact with the emerging middle class of Las Vegas *mexicanos*. Cultural diffusion in the villages was also effected through direct contact with Anglo culture in Las Vegas, political interaction, and the schools that were being established on the rural precincts.⁴⁷

Prominent Las Vegans and village leaders emerged to keep the villages moving with the tide of cultural, socio-economic and institutional change. The presence of the *mexicano* leaders on the land grant was particularly apparent by the end of the decade when they rose in protest to challenge many of the repressive Anglo institutions threatening their economic and cultural survival.

By the mid-1880s, the Spanish and Mexican land grants were drawing national attention due to growing speculation and fraud which was dispossessing many *mexicanos* of their birthright—the sacred land. The most notorious of these special interest groups involved in land grant speculation was the Santa Fe Ring, a group of influential New Mexico politicians who were mostly attorneys and businessmen. Many of them used their influence in government, fraudulent legal tactics, and other methods to acquire ownership in many Spanish and Mexican land grants.

As 1889 was coming to a close, a classic struggle eventually erupted among the occupants of the Las Vegas Land Grant. It was known as "*El movimiento del pueblo*" (The People's Movement). This struggle resulted from the

cultural differences surrounding land tenure between the Anglo and *mexicano*, but through 1890, it spread to include a challenge to all the pressures of Americanization and the growing threat to the cultural and economic survival of the land grant residents. The chain of events which carried over from 1889 into 1890 began with a vigilante group of masked raiders and continued with a labor organization and finally, a third political party.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER VIII

1. Census figures for 1860 show 735 families living in Las Vegas. Thirty of those residents are American or foreign born. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Records for New Mexico Counties, 8th Census, 1860*; Census figures for 1870 show eighty American or foreign residents in Las Vegas. These came from the United States, Germany, England, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Bohemia, and Ireland. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Records for New Mexico Counties, 9th Census, 1870*.

2. Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, Daniel Aaron, eds., *The United States: The History of a Republic* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), pp. 465-480; Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review*, LXXVIII(1973) p. 585.

3. Elias Brevoort, *New Mexico, Her Natural Resources and Attractions*, p. 173.

4. *Revista Católica*, II(1876), pp. 184, 625.

5. Ibid. p. 221.

6. Lynn I. Perrigo, *La Reunión, The Consolidation of Las Vegas* (Peralta: The Yguado Press, 1975), pp. 2-5.

7. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, November 25, 1877.

8. Ibid., May 31, 1880.

9. Ibid., November 13, 1879.

10. Ibid., May 21, 1880.

11. Ibid., April 7, 1880, October 1881.

12. Ibid., March 18, 1884.

13. Ibid., November 14, 1879.

14. *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, November 10, 1881.

15. Ibid., November 8, 1881.

16. *The New York Times*, February 6, 1882.

17. Ibid., February 28, 1882.
18. Ibid.
19. 50th Cong., 1st Sess., House Report No. 709, p. 45.
20. Louis Avant, "The History of Catholic Education in New Mexico Since the American Occupation," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1940, pp. 44-48.
21. Pearce S. Grove, Becky J. Barnett, and Sandra J. Hensen, eds., *New Mexico Newspapers*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 521. New Mexicans today are beginning to claim some blood mixture with Indians, although many previously denied having Indian blood and always referred to themselves as Spanish Americans. These attitudes among New Mexicans probably carried over from the 1800s due to much of these negative characterizations and ethnic labeling that was more pronounced during that time. Other New Mexicans, of course, continue to claim that they are pure blooded Spanish Americans. Like many other New Mexicans, the writer experienced this early misunderstanding about not wanting to be called a Mexican.
22. The writer has drawn this conclusion by observing the interchangeable usage of ethnic terms used in self-identification by Hispanos in newspapers during this period, especially as they appeared in *La Voz del Pueblo* and *El Independiente*. The writer has also observed that in northern New Mexico most people, especially the elderly, still refer to themselves as "mexicanos" when speaking Spanish and as "Spanish-Americans" when speaking English.
23. *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 2, 1901. I have translated all direct quotes from the newspaper.
24. Paul Horgan, *Lamy of Santa Fe* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), pp. 25, 108. This book provides a complete biography on Lamy and his role with the Catholic Church in New Mexico.
25. Louis Avant, "The History of Catholic Education in New Mexico Since the American Occupation," pp. 9-10.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. *Revista Católica*, IX(1883), pp. 18-19.

29. The writer has drawn these conclusions after a life-long experience of living and working among the people of this area. Some of my relatives became Presbyterians and Methodists, while many more remained Catholic. Further study would be required to examine to what extent communities were divided by the rival churches in the area during the last century. This is no longer the case, however, and Catholics and Presbyterians live in total harmony. Presbyterians are mentioned because they were the most successful Protestant group to establish permanent churches in New Mexico's northern communities.

30. Ibid., pp. 280-281.

31. Ibid.

32. *Revista Católica*, II(1876), p. 88.

33. Ibid.

34. Anselmo F. Arellano, ed., *Los pobladores nuevo mexicanos y su poesía, 1889-1950* (Albuquerque: Pajarito Publications, 1976), p. 13. This book is an anthology which focuses on this literary movement as it concerned native folk poetry and the outside influences it received.

35. Ibid. *Los pobladores nuevo mexicanos y su poesía* set the pace for additional research on New Mexicans, their poetry and other literary pursuits during the late 1800s. For further information on this literary movement see Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, ed. *Pasó por aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

36. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 18, 1891.

37. See previous Chapter VII, f.n. 34, 35, 36.

38. Ibid., September 26, 1891; December 31, 1892.

39. María del Carmen Millán, *Literatura Mexicana* (Colima: Editorial Esfinge, S.A., 1962), pp. 124-131.

40. *Revista Científica y Literaria de México* (Mexico, 1845,) p. 257.

41. Anselmo F. Arellano, "La Sociedad Social, Literaria y de Devates de Agua Negra, Nuevo México, 1898," *De Colores: Journal of Emerging Raza Philosophies* I(1974), pp. 5-18. The Constitution, By-laws, and Minutes of this literary society are contained in this article. Examples of debate topics and other issues discussed in typical literary

societies are provided in this article and transcription of original documents. Ezequiel C. de Baca and Antonio Lucero, editors of *La Voz del Pueblo*, were also members of a literary society in Las Vegas. C. de Baca was elected New Mexico's first Lieutenant Governor, while Lucero was elected New Mexico's first Secretary of State in 1911. See Anselmo F. Arellano, "Don Ezequiel C. de Baca and the Politics of San Miguel County," Unpublished Master's Thesis, New Mexico Highlands University, 1974.

42. Anselmo F. Arellano, "The Rise of Mutual Aid Societies Among New Mexico's Spanish Speaking During the Territorial Period," Unpublished Paper, University of New Mexico, July 30, 1976. Most of the information covering literary societies comes from this paper and additional research collected hence. For information on the Las Vegas societies see *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 14, 1891, December 31, 1892, September 28, 1895.

43. *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 30, 1892.

44. Ibid.

45. Rubén Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1983), pp. xiv-xv. This dictionary and study provides the best interpretation on the adoption of English words into New Mexico's Spanish language.

46. Anselmo F. Arellano, "Cross-Cultural Influences on New Mexico Spanish and the Effects of Acculturation," Unpublished Paper, University of New Mexico, December 12, 1975, p. 22. Part of this study involved an examination and extraction of Anglicisms from the newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo* during a three-year period, 1890-1893. Some examples of English words that were adopted during that period are: janitor=>janitor, convicted=>convictado, smelter=>smelter, druggist=>drogista, depot=>depot, yard=>yarda, presents=>presentes (gifts), bill=>bill (legislative bill), chance=>chanza.

47. *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, October 27, 1881. This issue of the newspaper boasted that twenty-nine precincts in San Miguel County, not counting the sectarian schools, had schools. This accounts for about one-half of the precincts in the county. The county had sixty-one precincts in 1891. See Arellano, Vigil, *Las Vegas Grandes on the Gallinas*, p. 97.

CHAPTER IX

EL MOVIMIENTO DEL PUEBLO

By 1890 San Miguel County was the largest and most populous county in the New Mexico Territory. The counties which bounded it were Mora on the north and Lincoln and Bernalillo on the south. The county extended from the eastern flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the Texas Panhandle border on the east. San Miguel County boasted a population of 24,204 residents out of a New Mexico total of 153,593. Las Vegas was now the largest city in New Mexico, outdistancing Santa Fe and Albuquerque by a few hundred citizens.¹

Native Hispanos comprised close to eighty percent of New Mexico's total population, and due to this factor and its large commercial interests, San Miguel County continued to grow in influence. The power that the county held in territorial politics, as well as its enormous wealth in resources and people, helped it gain the reputation of being the "Imperial County." Within the county, the community of Las Vegas escalated to the forefront in territorial politics as it advocated and promoted issues that directly affected the Hispano. Many popular concerns which had long been submerged were now being addressed by *neomexicanos*.²

The greater questions that concerned or directly affected the residents of San Miguel County in 1890 were land grants, property rights, tax laws, education, labor and statehood. To confront the issues "head on," many felt that a drastic change would have to be made in the political arena of the territory, because by now many were losing faith in their political parties—especially the Republicans. An organized effort addressing change, which directly attacked the Republican Party in the county was initiated through a newspaper which had recently been transferred to Las Vegas—*La Voz del Pueblo*. This Spanish-language newspaper proved to be vital and especially effective in organizing the common people who resided on the Las Vegas Land Grant and scattered settlements of the county.

La Voz del Pueblo had been established in Santa Fe during the early part of 1889 as a strong Democratic Party proponent for statehood. By the middle of 1890, however, E. H. Salazar, owner of the newspaper, negotiated its transfer to Las Vegas. He continued as its administrator for about three years with eventual ownership passing to Félix Martínez, wealthy and prominent New Mexican who resided in Las Vegas. It is evident that the newspaper's transfer was planned as a political mechanism to promote issues fomenting in San Miguel County and the rest of the territory. Salazar's parting words to his Santa Fe subscribers stressed that *La Voz del Pueblo* represented a people's army fighting

for civil rights, and that due to a major battle being imminent, they would be stationing their troops where they would have the most effect and hurt their enemy the most.³

The week after the newspaper was transferred to Las Vegas, Salazar greeted the people of San Miguel County with the first issue, informing them that the purpose of the newspaper would be to protect and defend New Mexico's interests in general and those of Las Vegas in particular. Salazar promised that the paper intended to do everything within its power to assist in the advancement and development of the native people. *La Voz* also stated that it wanted to impress on the people's minds the need to awaken and break away from the oppressive situation they were in through energetic and legal means. The editor further stated that the newspaper did not move from Santa Fe because of a lack of support there, but because of the business traffic and "political movement" which was concentrating in San Miguel County. Salazar and his staff were convinced that in order to participate more actively and fully in New Mexico's diverse interests, they would have to move to Las Vegas.⁴

Many of the conflicts which were developing in San Miguel County were directly related to the vast land grants contained within its boundaries. The larger grants were the Las Vegas Land Grant, which was heavily populated, and the Beck, Ortiz, Antón Chico, Montoya, San Miguel del Bado,

Pecos, Trigo, and Ojo del Apache land grants. There were also smaller grants within the county. Two of the larger grants had already been purchased by wealthy outsiders. The Beck Grant was bought by Stoneroad Brothers and Dickinson, and the Montoya Grant was purchased by a rich entrepreneur, Wilson Waddingham. The Montoya Grant alone was thirty-six miles long and thirty miles wide and covered 800,000 acres.⁵

These Anglo outsiders and a few wealthy Hispanos, who purchased many of the vast tracts of land, established large cattle and sheep companies, and San Miguel County surpassed all other sections of the territory in stock raising. The eastern section of the county extending to the Texas Panhandle developed a large cattle industry soon after the Indian treat had been quelled in 1882.⁶ Hispanos and large cattle companies in San Miguel County consequently soon disagreed over fencing, boundaries and land titles, and water issues.

The major problem in the county had been caused by the confusing status of the Las Vegas Land Grant which contained 496,446 acres and the fact that the courts had not yet settled the title to it. Occupants of the grant were convinced that it was a "community grant" and that it should remain open to every *mercedario*, or legal heir, for grazing, wood, water, and other common needs.

Since about 1880, Anglo parties interested in ranching interests had purchased land from some of the heirs of the

original colonists. Some of the Anglo purchases were small, but some were as large as 10,000 acres. These outside settlers had their own concepts of land tenure, and they began to claim complete ownership. Furthermore, they fenced the land they claimed within the land grant. A test case challenging the claims of the original heirs was filed by a group of buyers, and it went to the courts in 1887. The Las Vegas Land and Cattle Company filed the law suit against José León Padilla and others challenging their claims of community inheritance. In October of 1889, Chief Justice Long finally ruled in favor of Padilla and the other defendants. The ruling, which supported the rights of community land grantees and their descendants, consequently inspired other occupants of the Las Vegas Land Grant to challenge outsiders who had purchased property within the grant.⁷

Land problems for New Mexicans had originated with the American Occupation and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. During the ensuing years, Anglo-Americans—mostly lawyers and traders at the beginning—made major inroads into the territory. Lawyers especially were quick to note that under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, there was a rich environment that promised vast wealth for them by securing title to the land grants covering much of the territory.

By 1890, the Republican Party, which had dominated the politics of New Mexico for decades, was under attack from many Democrats and disillusioned party members. Land

grabbers in New Mexico were continuously under attack, and most of them were, in fact, Republicans. Some had already accumulated a large part of the 15,000,000 acres of land embraced within the land grants of the territory. The *Las Vegas Democrat*, a rival newspaper, charged that some men had grown in influence, and that they knew no limit to their greed and political ambition. It continued that those individuals controlled the Territorial Legislature, the courts, and the political and economic affairs of many counties and municipalities.⁸

Many of the complaints of this period were directed at Republican leaders such as Thomas Catron and friends of his who allegedly formed the Santa Fe Ring. "Santa Fe Ring" was the epithet applied to the Republican leaders who had organized the Republican Party in New Mexico in 1867. Thomas B. Catron, who receives the notoriety and credit of leading the group, and his followers, purchased many of the land grants in New Mexico following the Civil War. They were the ones who controlled the politics of the Territory.⁹ During one protest in 1884, over two hundred *mexicanos* and about twenty Anglos met in Santa Fe to denounce the alleged corrupt politics of the Santa Fe Ring. Eugenio Romero was among the prominent Las Vegans present at the meeting.¹⁰

That same year, one of the reporters from the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* asked Catron if there was such an organization as the Santa Fe Ring and whether he was associated with it.

Catron, who complained that the *Optic* had brought him a lot of cheap notoriety during the past few years, allegedly told the reporter "if there was such an organization as the Santa Fe Ring, he certainly belonged to it and was proud of it." The newspaper remarked that this was the closest the land "grabber" ever came to telling the truth.¹¹

Miguel Antonio Otero, San Miguel County District Court Clerk in 1890—and himself a Republican—corroborated many of the accusations directed at the party bosses. In later years, Otero recalled the politics of that period:

At that, a justice of the peace could acknowledge deeds, mortgages, etc. and the "Ring" would elect their tools, picked and pliable men for such offices, in any precinct convenient and necessary for their nefarious practices. They also had a law passed, where, in case an original deed was lost, or had never been given, a certified copy might be used in proving title, with the same effect as would be the original. They would have deeds made out with forged signatures acknowledged by their justices of the peace, and recorded by the clerks, then destroyed and certified copies made.¹²

Whenever they secured titles to land grants, the alleged political thieves would compound their abuses by stretching boundary distances beyond those the Mexican government had intended. As a result, many community grants, such as that of Las Vegas, were invaded. They would then fence their own boundaries within these grants, thereby depriving the poor people, who had lived on them for generations, of the free use of grass, wood, and water on the public commons. These rights had been guaranteed by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and confirmed by an act of Congress.¹³

In 1890, *La Voz del Pueblo* reported that the occupants of the Las Vegas Land Grant and other grants in the area could no longer tolerate the avarice of land speculators who continued to fence the countryside on common lands. It further stated that the "workingman, poor ranchers, and farmers" were diverting their concerns in the direction of continuing the organized social, political, and labor movement that had begun in 1889 with the emergence of the *Gorras Blancas*, or White Caps. The consequent "*Movimiento del pueblo*," or "People's Movement," as it was called, emerged and blossomed as if it had been planned by a political mastermind.

As an organized group, the *Gorras Blancas* were probably the most secretive and closely-knit association of men ever to exist in the Territory of New Mexico. Their protest

against the encroachment upon and theft of their lands began in 1889, and by the end of 1890 their notoriety had spread throughout the territory and reached the eastern states.

The majority of the families affected by the land grabbers were poor Hispanos with small land holdings whose limited economic means did not allow for litigation in the courts; consequently, they decided to carry out the shortest and quickest means to alleviate their problems.¹⁴ *Las Gorras Blancas* were organized early in April 1889 by Juan José Herrera and his younger brothers Pablo and Nicanor, with support from other poor people in the area of El Salitre, El Burro, Ojitos Fríos, and San Gerónimo. Eventually, all the settlements which fell within the boundaries of the Las Vegas Grant joined the organization.¹⁵ Juan José was popularly referred to as *El Capitán* Herrera by the people in San Miguel County because he had been commissioned a captain with the Union forces during the Civil War. His father, Manuel Herrera, had been a soldier during the Mexican Period and early 1850s of the Territorial Period.

Prior to the settling of Las Vegas and Tecolote, Manuel had patrolled the area with a small military squadron out of San Miguel del Bado. His assignment had been to protect livestock herders in the area and to escort Santa Fe Trail caravans as they approached San Miguel. After Las Vegas and Tecolote were settled, Manuel Herrera continued to maintain a small military outpost near Tecolote at a place called

Plaza del Torreón. After the American Occupation, Brigadier General Manuel Herrera headed seven companies of mounted militia and led organized campaigns against the Apache and Navajo Indians.¹⁶

El Capitán Juan José Herrera, therefore, had military training which served him well in organizing the White Caps. Sometime after the Civil War, Herrera left New Mexico to work as an Indian agent for the government in various states. At this time, he abandoned his first wife Luisa Pinard and spent time in Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Utah, and other states. By 1870, Juan José had returned and was living at Ojitos Fríos with his widowed mother and brothers. He was in the area in 1880, but apparently left New Mexico again before he returned to become actively involved in Las Vegas politics in 1888.¹⁷

During these intermittent jaunts away from New Mexico, Herrera learned English, French, and several Indian dialects very well. He also became familiar with political organizations, a labor organization called the Knights of Labor, and struggles people faced in other parts of the United States. Herrera was aware of the militant activities of White Caps in Illinois and the midwest as well as a populist political movement and party that was gaining strength in the midwest and eastern states—the People's Party. In 1888, Herrera became actively involved in helping F. A. Blake, editor of the *Las Vegas News*, and Anglo members of

the Knights of Labor organize the People's Party.¹⁸

Soon after they established themselves in Las Vegas in 1886, the Knights of Labor drafted a resolution declaring that they wanted to align themselves with a few natives who knew English and Spanish equally well. Their intent was to establish lodges of the order for the Spanish speaking as soon as the people were able to understand the principles and other workings of the order.¹⁹ A few weeks later, *mexicano* laborers on the railroad vainly attempted to request better salaries from the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company. Again, they were encouraged that their best recourse was to align themselves with the Knights of Labor so they could acquire bargaining power in seeking better working conditions and pay.²⁰

Although the People's Party made a weak showing in the 1888 elections, Herrera retained a strong interest in a third political party that would address the needs of the poor people in San Miguel County. He also became one of the first *mexicanos* to join the Knights of Labor whose assemblies to this point had contained mostly Anglo members.

On April 3, 1889, the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* carried an article on the destructive activities of the White Caps in Tuscola, Illinois. White Caps in that state had sent threatening letters to the members of a commission planning to construct an unpopular drainage canal in the area. Their warnings went unheeded, and soon after, a secret group of

hooded night riders destroyed the barn and contents belonging to one of the commissioners to the tune of \$2,000 in losses. There were no clues "to the perpetrators of the dastardly work."²¹ Twenty-three days later, *Las Gorras Blancas* made its first appearance in San Miguel County. Masked riders destroyed four miles of new fenceline belonging to two Englishmen who were ranching near San Gerónimo. Fence posts were turned into kindling and the barbed wire was cut into useless fragments.²²

The *Gorras Blancas* did not discriminate in its attacks on those considered to be enemies. At the village of San Ignacio, riders attacked the farm and sawmill of José Ignacio Luján three different times during June and July of 1889, destroying Luján's crops, fences, farm equipment, and sawmill.²³ Throughout 1889, these types of attacks continued on other fenced-in ranches of the land grant.

County Sheriff Lorenzo López had been serving warrants and indictments against members of the *Gorras Blancas* since early May 1889.²⁴ However, those individuals charged did not go to trial until much later during the November term of the district court. On November 1, 1889, as the first trials approached, sixty-three *Gorras Blancas* rode into Las Vegas and surrounded the courthouse. Next they went to the home of District Attorney Miguel Salazar and finally to the county jail to show support of their fellow *Gorras* who were incarcerated.²⁵ When the *Gorras Blancas* threatened the

jail, Sheriff López promptly sent a telegram to Governor Prince requesting fifty rifles to defend the jail if the *Gorras* attempted to break out their associates.²⁶

As soon as Governor Prince heard of the armed demonstration, he ordered Territorial Adjutant General, E. W. Wyncoop, to take fifty militia-type rifles and plenty of ammunition to Las Vegas in fear that the *Gorras Blancas* would carry out an assault on the jail.²⁷ An attack did not materialize, and on November 19, the first accused *Gorra Blanca* stood trial. While it appeared that the evidence against him was very strong, the jury issued a verdict of not guilty. The prosecution subsequently dismissed the charges against the remaining twenty. The defendants had successfully argued in court that the charges were not related to *Gorras Blancas* activities. Their problem had stemmed from a land dispute.²⁸

During the last day of district court, twenty-six more indictments were handed down. They included forty-seven men who ranged in age from twenty to sixty-five years. Juan José Herrera and his brother Nicanor were among those indicted for fence cutting.²⁹ Judge E. V. Long probably avoided an armed clash with the *Gorras* on that occasion when he lowered the bond from \$500.00 to \$250.00. Although the majority were poor individuals, they all some-how managed to post bond.³⁰ It is likely that wealthier individuals supporting the *Gorras* posted bond for them.

County Sheriff Lorenzo López himself became a victim of the *Gorras Blancas*. Following the destruction of A. N. Wright's fence near Fulton Station in early December 1889, the *Gorras Blancas* proceeded to López' ranch and destroyed eleven miles of fence line.³¹ The attack on López possibly came because he had fenced in a large ranch and because he had been enforcing the warrants and indictments against the *Gorras* members. Later in 1890, López, who was a Republican Party boss in San Miguel County, and who was related to Juan José on his maternal Baca side, became supportive of Herrera and the Knights of Labor.³²

Throughout the winter of 1889 and 1890, the *Gorras Blancas* remained fairly active in their protests and actions. Immediate grievances and attacks had centered on the destruction of fences restricting access to communal grazing and water on the land grant. Eventually their attacks spread to include haystacks, railroad bridges and ties, buildings and crops. These highly secret, organized activities of the *Gorras Blancas* continued into 1891. They were carried out by several hundred armed and masked *mexicanos* from Las Vegas and the many settlements and small ranches found throughout the land grant.³³

Early in March 1890, about three hundred *Gorras Blancas* entered Old and New Town Las Vegas and posted Spanish copies of anonymous leaflets announcing their "Platform and Principles." Although quite lengthy, the following major points

were included in the manifesto:

- Our purpose will be to protect the rights of all people in general, and especially the rights of poor people.
 - We want The Las Vegas Land Grant to be adjudicated in favor of all those it concerns, and we sustain that it belongs to all the people who reside within its boundaries.
 - We want no more land thieves, or any obstructionists who might want to interfere.
- WE ARE WATCHING YOU.
- The people are now victims of partisan politics, and it would be best if politicians quietly maintain their peace; the people have been persecuted and mistreated in one thousand ways to satisfy the whims of politicians. They persist that their acts are customary.

RETRIBUTION will be our reward.

Their platform was signed "The White Caps, 1,500 Strong and Growing Daily."³⁴ It is likely that by this time the membership had grown to over one thousand members.

The political adversaries of the *Gorras Blancas* retaliated against their Platform by stating that the White Caps were attempting to intimidate the court system and the peaceable citizens. One person complained that the *Gorras* did nothing more than scoff at and ridicule the peace officers who already knew the White Caps were coming. The fearful officers, he stated, "ran and hid in their homes where they barricaded their windows with wool mattresses and other pieces of furniture to keep the White Caps from breaking in." District Attorney Miguel Salazar and Probate Judge Manuel C. de Baca called them, "revolutionaries," "anarchists" and "communists."³⁵

In addition to their manifesto, the *Gorras Blancas* posted another notice throughout Las Vegas and in other strategic locations near the mountains. This one ordered the people not to cut lumber or railroad ties unless it was for a price approved by the White Caps. They also asked the people not to work for anyone unless the *Gorras* approved the work and the salaries they would be receiving. This notice was signed "White Caps, Fence Cutters and Death."³⁶

When district court convened for the spring term of 1890, all the accused fence cutters, including Juan José Herrera, presented themselves to honor their bonds. The three witnesses who had initiated the case against them, however, did not appear. District Attorney Salazar charged that the defendants had murdered the witnesses and wanted

the trial postponed. District Judge James O'Brien finally ruled that the prosecution had no case without the witnesses, and charges against all forty-seven were dismissed. The *Gorras*, their families, and friends then retreated to the Plaza to speak about their victory, cheer, drink whisky, and discharge their guns.³⁷

Throughout the spring, the *Gorras* continued their nocturnal attacks on those they claimed as enemies. Eugenio Romero, *jefe político*, wealthy merchant, and county assessor, soon became one of their targets. On one occasion he claimed that they had destroyed 6,000 railroad ties he had contracted to the Santa Fe Railroad. In voicing their concern for the underpaid working man, the *Gorras* also destroyed and burned railroad bridges and tracks. Railroad workers were told to strike for higher wages, and timber cutters, who prepared railroad ties, were ordered to demand higher prices from the railroad.³⁸

By July 1890, according to a letter submitted to the Secretary of the Interior, twenty-five acts of violence had been committed, hundreds of miles of fences had been cut, homes were sacked and burned, haystacks burned and agricultural implements broken and destroyed. Furthermore, railroad bridges and ties contracted for the railroad had been burned and destroyed. The letter also charged that people had been shot to death and many more had been wounded.³⁹ However, there is little evidence to support the statement

that individuals had been killed by the White Caps.

During the early period of *Gorras Blancas* activities, public opinion both in favor of and against them grew. Eventually, however, public commentary increased in their favor. In June 1890, an article appeared in *La Voz* commenting on the criminal charges which had been dropped on the accused *Gorras Blancas*. The editors maintained the lack of a case proved that political enemies had accused those individuals of being *Gorras Blancas* which they were not. But, even if they were *Gorras Blancas*, they would not be society's enemies, *La Voz* concluded.⁴⁰

While the *Gorras Blancas* were gaining fame for their thunderous exploits across the countryside, Juan José Herrera and his brothers, Pablo and Nicanor, continued their role of organizing the poor residents of the land grant and other communities in their struggle for survival. Their primary concerns centered on property rights and land titles. Others were concerned about their rights as members of the working class they had joined since the arrival of the railroad. Juan José, who had joined the Anglo dominated Knights of Labor in 1888, was now seeking membership for the majority of those who had been labeled and accused of being *Gorras Blancas*. In Spanish, the Knights of Labor became the *Caballeros de Labor*, and as a labor party, it became a charter member of the national organization. The Knights members were strong advocates of poor farmers,

ranchers, and the working man, with most of their activities concentrated in the mid-western states.⁴¹

As their organizational efforts continued, the *Caballeros de Labor* planned a large festive occasion for July 4, 1890, in Las Vegas. The members planned to announce their local organization and affiliation with the national labor group. As they prepared for their gala event, the Knights stated that for New Mexico's working population, the Fourth would also mark local independence from the social and political monopoly which had oppressed them. They would act as an independent body in addressing all public issues affecting the Territory of New Mexico.⁴²

La Voz del Pueblo supported the Knights of Labor's efforts to expand their organization among the *mexicanos* by expressing its opinion that the poor people of San Miguel County had the right to organize to protect their jobs and their families. The newspaper stated that for a long time the people had been oppressed by the despotic and extorsive actions of their employers. Great pride was felt throughout the county as the *Caballeros de Labor* organized the masses of small ranchers and farmers, laborers, and farmworkers. The *Caballeros* were determined to challenge oppressive conditions and political dominance in San Miguel County and New Mexico.⁴³

When the time of reckoning finally came for the San Miguel County working man, the events and celebration were

regarded as the most colorful ever held in the territory due to the enthusiasm demonstrated by the hundreds who attended. On the evening of July 3, the *Caballeros de Labor* celebrated vespers by parading through town on horseback, carrying torches to illuminate their resounding presence. The procession consisted of one thousand proud men on horseback, two abreast, headed by a twenty-five member string band playing Mexican music. The musicians were led by teacher, organizer, and musician Jesús María Alarid.⁴⁴

On the Fourth of July, the *Caballeros de Labor* again made their presence felt by holding a daytime procession through town. One thousand men again paraded through town led by County Sheriff Don Lorenzo López. This time, the men on horseback carried numerous banners and slogans in Spanish declaring their principles and objectives as an organization. Among them were: "Free schools for our children;" "He who touches one of us answers to all;" "The villain who dares occupy a public position without being elected by the people shall be hanged;" "War against the public officials who don't account for their administration;" and "We seek protection for the worker against the monopolist." Throughout their procession the *Caballeros'* assuring cries were heard throughout Las Vegas: "*El pueblo es rey, y los oficiales públicos son sus sirvientes humildes que deben obedecer sus mandatos.*" "The people are king, and public officials are her humble servants who must obey her mandates."⁴⁵

Following the termination of the procession, everyone met at the Old Town Plaza where Nestor Montoya, a Knight and one of *La Voz'* editors, introduced the organization to the people. He was followed by Mayor Edward Henry from New Town who welcomed the *Caballeros de Labor* and complimented their successful organizational efforts. Following a large barbeque given by the *Caballeros*, prominent citizens, including Governor Bradford Prince and members of the organization, delivered a series of speeches. Juan José, Pablo and Nicanor were among the speakers who elucidated the purpose and goals of the Knights of Labor, their interest, and their desire to promote the order throughout the territory.⁴⁶

After their celebration was over, the Knights of Labor worked assiduously day and night to perfect their territorial branch and pattern it after the model of eastern and midwestern assemblies of that order. The Grand Master of the organization, T. V. Powderly, granted the San Miguel County organization a charter. The charter included roll-books, by-laws, and all the paraphernalia belonging to it.⁴⁷ Eventually, Juan José Herrera and his fellow Knights succeeded in establishing various assemblies throughout the territory and Southern Colorado.⁴⁸

As the ranks and assemblies of Knights of Labor grew following the Fourth of July celebration, so did the activities and night rides of the *Gorras Blancas*. Due to the growing number of complaints against the *Gorras Blancas*,

Governor Prince was finally compelled to visit Las Vegas in August 1890 and personally inquire into the situation. Since the *Caballeros de Labor* were continuously accused of being associated with the *Gorras Blancas*, they sent a committee headed by Nestor Montoya of *La Voz del Pueblo* to speak with the governor to disclaim such accusations. They assured him of their good intentions and willingness to assist him suppressing violence, fence cutting, and any other depredations by the *Gorras Blancas*.⁴⁹

During his visit to Las Vegas, Governor Prince strongly felt that authorities and county residents should confront the issue and work to solve it together. He urged the *Caballeros de Labor*, for the preservation of their good name which had been attacked, to be the first in starting a movement for maintenance of law and order. He also issued a proclamation dated August 1, 1890, warning all the accused parties to discontinue their acts and called on the citizens to aid in the discovery of the criminals.⁵⁰

Governor Prince found many of the people in Las Vegas to be indifferent to the White Cap situation. He finally determined that one half of the people, including prominent citizens, were highly sympathetic to the fence cutting activities that were taking place on the Las Vegas Grant.⁵¹

Following Governor Prince's proclamation warning the people about "white capism," *La Voz* reacted by saying that the proclamation should not have been limited to lawless

fence-cutting elements in San Miguel County, but it should also have applied to the lawless land grabbers and speculators who were the prime cause of all destruction and turmoil in the area. The editors of *La Voz* also felt that many of the people's problems could be settled if a local court tribunal were established in New Mexico. Such a tribunal would do more to quell the disturbances and uprisings of the people than all the proclamations, rewards and militia which were not effective. The poor people did not want to be oppressed, and the grant owners wanted to secure titles to their lands.⁵²

After Governor Prince visited Las Vegas, the County Commissioners called an open meeting with the purpose of seeking ways and means to stop the state of agitation and lawlessness which existed in the County. Judge Booth explained why the meeting had been called and was elected chairman. Antonio Lucero and Nestor Montoya, both editors with *La Voz*, acted as interpreters.⁵³

Throughout the course of the meeting, the speakers urged the suppression and punishment of the perpetrators of lawless acts in the County. Others clamored for the "retrenchment and punishment of voracious, consciousless land-grabbers and speculators, showing vividly that such class of cormorants were the main cause that led the people to defend their rights and withstand and punish their encroachments." The true sentiments of the people in the

meeting were plainly demonstrated by the enthusiasm they showed whenever the punishment of land-grabbers and speculators was mentioned by the speakers.⁵⁴

La Voz del Pueblo further reported that the people were not very well satisfied with the one-sided steps that were being proposed to suppress the state of affairs in the county. The editors felt that the governor should also try by means of proclamations and otherwise within his power to suppress the ruthless appropriation of people's lands, whether grants or government property, and also to guarantee their right and privileges to wood, water and grazing grounds.⁵⁵

[One of the speakers at the meeting strongly stated that at the rate fencing on the land grant was going on the people had but one of two choices—either cut the fences or sprout wings and fly over them.] A motion was then made that Judge Booth appoint a committee of seven citizens to devise some plan to try to suppress the existing lawlessness and bring the guilty to justice. Many of the people opposed the committee being appointed by the judge and wanted the members elected. The judge, however, commenced to appoint the committee against the people's demands. This action resulted in a wild uproar and the people stormed from the building where the meeting was being held.⁵⁶

During the same week, the *Caballeros de Labor* issued a long communiqué to Grand Master T. V. Powderly, referring to

the insinuations that they were encouraging lawless destruction of property. They mentioned that all such charges were entirely false and without the slightest foundation in fact. They did admit that they opposed Thomas Catron, Benjamin F. Butler, and other political bosses who, "entrench themselves behind technical forms of law, in the possession of vast tracts of land, embraced in some of our community and colony grants, [and we have] taken a stand against clandestine and violent resistance on the part of individuals, to the lawless and tyrannical aggressions of these community land thieves and public corruptionists."⁵⁷

In contrast, Anglo members of the Knights of Labor who were visibly upset at *Gorras Blancas* attacks on Anglo and other properties, also wrote to Powderly. They protested the violence and destruction and stated that the ranks of the Knights of Labor were now being increased tremendously by ignorant Mexicans.⁵⁸ The *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, although at times sympathetic with the complaints of the occupants of the Las Vegas Land Grant, also complained that the *Gorras Blancas* had been recruited from the ignorant classes.⁵⁹

Negative comments by the *Optic* and Anglo members of the Knights about the "ignorant Mexicans" carried racial overtones and probably only exacerbated the hostility native *mexicanos* held for those outsiders who were taking over their lands. Although many of the natives had little or no formal education, their values and historical experience for

generations had centered on protecting their land from Indians and from outside encroachments after the arrival of the Santa Fe Trail. In these situations, the people knew that their property, survival and livelihood were threatened should they yield. They were well aware that the long history of encroachments and threats against them were life and death situations. They had never been submissive, much less ignorant.

Within two months after the *Caballeros de Labor* had successfully organized and established their order, the impetus of the "movimiento" was diverted to organizing a new political party for San Miguel County, *El Partido del Pueblo Unido*, or the United People's Party. Patterned after the national People's Party, *El Partido* made a feeble entry in 1886, but finally began to gain some momentum in San Miguel County in 1888. *El Partido del Pueblo Unido's* philosophy and objectives in 1890 were in complete harmony with those of the *Caballeros de Labor*. However, as a populist party *El Partido* included all concerned residents—regardless of party affiliation—who were seeking changes in county and territorial government.⁶⁰

As the party's official mouthpiece, the editors of *La Voz del Pueblo* introduced it to the community by stating that it was forming due to the cry of discontent which had engulfed San Miguel County, the land grant, and the many abuses committed against the people. Hoping to address the

wishes of the people, the organizing committee for the *Partido* was calling for one delegate from each of the County's sixty-three precincts to meet on September 8, 1890, to form a Central Committee. The Central Committee would then officially form the *Partido del Pueblo Unido* with each appointed precinct representative being a party delegate.⁶¹

The organizing committee which announced the coming of the new party was comprised of many influential residents and representatives from the settlements on the land grant. Prominent Anglos and merchants such as T. B. Mills, F. A. Blake, Lewis Lutz, and H. M. Loeb were also involved. The organizers mentioned that the new party would be composed of factions torn from the old, established Democratic and Republican parties. The new party would be represented by the working classes, laborers, farmers, mechanics and ranchmen. These were people who had decided to bring about a determined and radical change in the management of public offices and the many county affairs. They called on all, who were tired of the monopolistic regime of distributing public offices to challenge the politicians who had existed in the county for the benefit, gain, and ambition of a few privileged families.⁶²

La Voz stated that the people organized themselves to form the *Partido del Pueblo Unido*, steering their own political machine without the aid or counsel of any of the old parties. It continued that "*El Movimiento del Pueblo*"

or "The People's Movement" was assisted by many fair-minded and honorable citizens as an act of justice towards the masses of the people who were striving to overthrow peonage and servitude under political hacks and arrogant rich who believed that the people would be treated as simple tools to comply with their own wishes and demands.⁶³

On September 4, the organizers of the *Partido del Pueblo Unido* and the sixty-three precinct representatives met at the court house to form the Executive Central Committee. T. B. Mills was elected president and Nestor Montoya, secretary. Montoya was one of *La Voz'* editors. The other officers were Félix Martínez, businessman and owner of *La Voz*, Juan Gallegos, Enrique H. Salazar, also from *La Voz*, and Manuel Silva. The Central Committee then asked county residents to be present at the court house on the following Monday to attend the County Convention and select their public servants for the ensuing two years. They stated that it would do a free man's heart good to witness, for the first time in the history of the county, the absence of political bosses and tools in the selection of a county ticket.⁶⁴

When the day for the County Convention finally arrived, weary travelers came from all parts of the county. Some had traveled on horseback or buggy from as far as three hundred miles with one thing in mind—to carry out the defeat of the aristocrats. When the convention convened, there were over

fifteen hundred people seated and standing in the great judicial hall of the court house, with many more surrounding the park not being able to gain entrance.⁶⁵

T. B. Mills, Chairman of the *Partido del Pueblo Unido*, Executive Committee, and Nestor Montoya, Secretary, delivered speeches reinforcing the purpose of the new party asking the people to remain objective and dispassionate while choosing their ticket. Félix Martínez was chosen chairman of the convention and was ably assisted by Juan José, Nicanor and Pablo Herrera in consolidating the purpose and harmony of the party and coordinating the selection of the new county ticket.⁶⁶

The first county ticket nominated as the free choice of the *Partido del Pueblo Unido* was the following: Probate Judge, Dionicio Martínez; County Commissioners, John Shank, José Montoya and Antonio Montoya; Probate Clerk, Rox Hardy; Assessor, Nepomuceno Segura; Sheriff, José L. López, Lorenzo's son; Superintendent of Public Schools, Charles F. Rudolph; Treasurer, Jesús María Tafoya; Territorial Representatives, Félix García, Pablo Aragón, Pablo Herrera, Nestor Montoya; Territorial Councilmen, T. B. Mills, Hermerejildo Vigil; and Coroner, José Valdez.⁶⁷

The *Partido del Pueblo Unido* Platform was also quickly developed during the three-day convention. The platform echoed many of issues and concerns voiced by the White Caps and the Knights of Labor in their respective circulars and

platform. Among the stronger concerns expressed were their desire to demand that New Mexico's Territorial Delegate in Congress use all his means possible to get a law passed that would secure the settlement of land titles in the territory, in accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. They also demanded a uniform system of public schools that would require children to attend nine months out of the year. Additionally, they demanded a speedy settlement of the Las Vegas Land Grant issue and asked that it be resolved in accordance with the colonization laws of Mexico, under which law the grant was conceded.⁶⁸

One last point mentioned in their platform was the condemnation of the Legislature for refusing to enact legislation which would have secured an efficient public school system for the territory. They felt that defeat of a bill to establish such a school system at the last Legislature was a manifestation of hostility towards public education. The bill, which had been defeated, was the Perkins Bill, which in providing an educational school system for the children of the masses required the taxation of large land owners.⁶⁹

El Partido del Pueblo Unido needed to do little campaigning for November 7, 1890, since the "people's movement" had been fomenting for months and everyone in the county was anxiously awaiting election day. The primary movers of the new party had been primarily all Democrats,

and their ranks had been augmented by many frustrated Republicans who were leaving their party. Many complained that they were unable to tolerate the party bosses any longer. Numerous letters from former Republicans who were openly voicing their total lack of confidence in the Republican Party appeared in *La Voz*. Not surprisingly, they stated vigorously that they were willing and ready to support the new People's Party.⁷⁰

El Partido emerged a resounding victor in the 1890 November elections, and the new party would figure as a strong representative for San Miguel County residents for years to come. Following the newly-formed pattern of celebration and victory in county politics, the *Partido* gathered in another large public demonstration. Juan José Herrera and six marshals led five hundred men on horseback through town in another night-time procession. They wielded burning torches and flags and yelled as they rode through town, "*¡Que viva el Partido del Pueblo Unido en el Condado de San Miguel!*," "Long live the United People's Party in San Miguel County."⁷¹

Members of the victorious People's Party stressed that the people no longer had to worry about the devilish machinations of the bosses, or *amos*, of the Republican Party in San Miguel and other counties in the territory. Following the victory of the *Partido del Pueblo Unido*, newspapers throughout New Mexico associated them with the *Gorras*

Blancas and the *Caballeros de Labor*, usually stating that all three were one and the same. And every political situation in the county strongly alluded to that being the case. The Santa Fe *New Mexican* periodically connected the *Caballeros de Labor* and the *Gorras Blancas* as one group being controlled by Democratic Party scheming.⁷²

Another Republican newspaper and political rival of the *Gorras Blancas* and *Caballeros de Labor* was also convinced the three organizations and their membership formed one social and political movement. Just prior to the November election, one of the newspaper's editors stated, "I have come to the conclusion that the only issue is whether the law-abiding citizen will vote for the maintenance of the law or whether they will endorse lawlessness; for no one can deny that the so-called White Caps—alias Knights of Labor, alias People's Party—[are responsible] for the depredations that have been committed in this county this past year."⁷³

After the initial victory of *El Partido del Pueblo Unido* had passed, one newspaper reported that the ghost of the Republican Party was all that remained of the political battle. A political ally of *La Voz*, *The Albuquerque Democrat*, lauded the success of the *Partido del Pueblo Unido* in a strong, scathing statement leveled against the Republicans:

Out of all the surprises that were in store for the Republican Party, the

County of San Miguel was a paralyzer. For many years that County has been controlled by the political parasites who make their headquarters of operation in the capital of the Territory. The Republican ticket of San Miguel County which met with just defeat was under absolute control of the Republican land ring of Santa Fe. They owned and controlled the Republican leaders of San Miguel County.⁷⁴

The problems centering on the Las Vegas Grant and other grants in New Mexico created such a fierce agitation that the people in San Miguel County had no recourse but to organize themselves to protect their rights. The "People's Movement" had such a resounding impact that on March 3, 1891, Congress created a court known as the United States Court of Private Land Claims, for the purpose of determining and adjusting land claims in the territories which were acquired from Mexico. The United States was bound to recognize and confirm those land claims within the territories of Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Wyoming under the stipulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the treaty of 1853 known as the Gadsden Purchase. Those claims which could not be settled in the Court of Private Land Claims could be appealed to the United States Supreme

Court.⁷⁵

Much credit is due to the courage and determined efforts of the hundreds of San Miguel County citizens who joined ranks in a common cause while seeking justice. The different people's groups were all well organized, closely knit, and their large numbers presented such a menacing force that no one dared speak against them. Many of them were also affiliated with the secret religious order of *Penitentes*. This factor also contributed greatly to the difficulty of convicting any of the *Gorras Blancas*. In one situation, Severino Trujillo from Guadalupita wrote to Governor Prince directly blaming the *Penitentes* in his community for the damages and losses he suffered to attacks by the *Gorras Blancas*.⁷⁶ In many communities it was reported that the *Penitentes* were in political control, and due to their strength, it was impossible to gain convictions against their members. One critic of the *Penitentes* complained that the order found it easy to gain control of both the petit and grand juries in San Miguel County.⁷⁷

The mystery remains whether the *Movimiento del pueblo* was part of a master plan of Juan José Herrera and other Democratic leaders to organize the people of San Miguel County, or whether it unfolded and grew as a result of the collective efforts of various individuals who addressed different societal concerns. Others, of course, participated in the movement for political reasons, as they sought

to gain power and influence.

Juan José Herrera was the prime mover and organizer of the various protest, social, and labor organizations that constituted the People's Movement, but other individuals such as Félix Martínez and Sheriff Lorenzo López also played major roles in the movement of 1890 and in San Miguel County politics throughout the decade of the 1890s. A wealthy realtor and businessman, Martínez acquired ownership of *La Voz del Pueblo* and effectively used the newspaper to organize the people and address the multiple concerns they faced at the time. Later in the election of 1892, Martínez ran on the *Partido del Pueblo* ticket and was elected to serve on the Territorial Council.⁷⁸

Lorenzo López, on the other hand, wielded so much power and influence over the people that he was called *el amo de los pobres*, the poor people's lord or overseer. He was known for his kind generosity to the poor people in San Miguel County. Politically, Lorenzo was formidable and had been appointed and elected to various political posts since 1861 when he was named inspector general of New Mexico's Second Militia by Governor Henry Connelly.⁷⁹ During the political and social upheaval of 1890, his son, José L. was elected county sheriff, and in 1892, Don Lorenzo succeeded his son to serve as sheriff one more time. Early in 1907, one historian stated that

Lorenzo López, one of the shrewdest

native politicians did much to incite the ignorant classes to a show of rebellion against constituted authority. To further his ends he joined the *Penitentes*, hoping thereby to gain their inalienable support. Many of these he persuaded to commit depredations to annoy and excite the Americans and peaceable Mexicans.⁸⁰

After 1890, similar problems continued to affect the Hispano. It had been a turning point in the politics of San Miguel County, since the people were now seeking different recourse to dealing with their concerns by electing their own officials to County and legislative positions. Their success would still involve a long process of gradual accomplishments, however, because the Republican Party was still very powerful in the territory.

Most of the White Cap activities subsided as an organized movement by the end of 1891. It is important to note, however, that the occupants of the land grant had risen in a collective effort to address their many concerns and especially to protect the vast patrimony which had brought them to colonize that area many years earlier. Twelve years later in 1902, the people found themselves in yet another battle. This time they were seeking to gain legal control in managing the affairs of land grant for themselves and

succeeding generations.

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... p. 97.
... inhabitants living in

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ENDNOTES

CHAPTER IX

1. T. B. Mills, "San Miguel County: A County Big Enough for a State," *Mill's Investor's Review* 1 (October 1887), p. 1; *Revista Católica*, VIII (1882), pp. 414-415; Arellano, Vigil, *Las Vegas Grandes on the Gallinas*, p. 97. This census enumerates the number of inhabitants living in each of the voting precincts.

2. *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 15, 1890.

3. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1890.

4. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1890.

5. T. B. Mills, *San Miguel County: Health, Wealth, Resources and Advantages* (Las Vegas, New Mexico: J. A. Carruth, Printer and Binder, 1885), p. 32. Some of the real estate brokers like T. B. Mills also contributed to the problems of the county through their periodicals by encouraging outsiders to come in and settle. Besides the small book mentioned herein, Mills published a real estate periodical which had a circulation of 10,000. In it, Mills wrote that many of the farm lands along the streams were occupied by natives but that they were willing to sell their small holdings for reasonable amounts. Consequently, outsiders were able to secure tracts of land already under ditch at cheap rates; *Mill's Investor's Review*, October 20, 1887.

6. *Ibid.* p. 25.

7. "Philip Millhiser et. al. vs. José León Padilla et. al.," E. V. Long Papers, NMSRCAA. The complete court transcript to this case can be found in this collection.

8. *Las Vegas Democrat*, August 18, 1890. This issue of the newspaper contained a long article, "The Knights of Labor Send a Communication to Powderly," signed by José Valdez, Master Workman. The Knights became a major political force during this time, as will be related further on. Attacks on the Republican Party were especially pronounced in this article.

9. Victor Westphall, *Thomas Benton Catron and His Era* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1973), p. 71, 97. Thomas Catron owned or had an interest in thirty-four land grants. At one time or another, he owned over 3,000,000 acres of land contained within the grants.

10. *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, March 8, 1884.
11. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, March 7, 1884.
12. Miguel A. Otero, *My Life on the Frontier, 1882-1897*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939), II, p.229.
13. *Las Vegas Democrat*, August 18, 1890.
14. *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 9, 1890.
15. Personal Interview with Rosa Herrera de McAdams, October 29, 1980. While the media and politicians of the period pointed an accusing finger at Juan José Herrera for being the organizer and leader of the White Caps, he always denied it publically. In an interview with his daughter in 1980, the writer was assured that Juan José indeed organized the *Gorras Blancas*. Rosa Herrera de McAdams, who was 92 years old at the time, stated that her father had been the organizer and leader of the White Caps about a year after she was born. When she was young, she said, people called her Rosita *la Gorra Blanca*. See transcript of the interview in Anselmo F. Arellano, Julián Josué Vigil, *Las Vegas Grandes on the Gallinas: 1835-1985*, (Las Vegas: Editorial Telaraña, 1985), pp. 103-109. Rosa Herrera De McAdams passed away on August, 1981. See *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, August 16, 1981.
16. TANM, Reel No. 87, Frames 005-174. This reel contains reports on the campaign activities of the military companies commanded by General Manuel Herrera; 1838 Census, Plaza del Torreón, collected from MANM by Malcolm Ebright.
17. United States Census, San Miguel County, 1870. Juan José appears in his mother's household in 1870, and his occupation is listed as "freighter." His father Manuel was still alive and fifty eight years old in 1860. The family lived at El Salitre. See U.S. Census, San Miguel County, 1860. In 1866, Juan José left his wife Luisa Pinard, possibly daughter of Juan Casimiro Pinard and María Touvere who came from France and settled at La Cueva, Mora County prior to 1860. See Mora County Census, La Cueva Precinct, 1860. See also *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 9, 1890. The August 24, 1867, issue of the *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette* carried a short verse about Juan José that directly implies that he abandoned his wife. "*No te juntes con Herrera, Que avandonó a la Francesa, Porque es hombre muy cualquiera, Esta es la pura certeza.*" "Do not associate with Herrera, Because he abandoned the French lady, Because he is just an ordinary man, This is pure certainty." Again, on September 3, 1891, *El Sol de Mayo*, the newspaper established by Manuel

C. de Baca and Eugenio Romero to rival *La Voz del Pueblo*, Herrera and the *Gorras Blancas*, published another similar poem attacking him and alluding to his French wife. ";;;Al gran Capitán Herrera!!! No le aduléis con bajeza, Porque es el mismo cualquiera, Que abandonó a la Francesa." "To the Great Captain Herrera! Do not flatter him with such low regard, Because he is the same nobody, Who abandoned the French lady." Apparently, this verse and jocular criticism stayed with Herrera for a long time; Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Life on the Frontier: 1864-1882* (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, 1935), p. 223. Otero and others visited Juan José Herrera in 1880, while they were speculating for gold and other minerals near Mineral Hill and San Gerónimo. Otero referred to him as "...Juan José Herrera, a good friend..."

18. In 1891, Manuel C. de Baca and his first cousin, Eugenio Romero, founded a newspaper, *El Sol de Mayo*, in Las Vegas. Manuel was an attorney and highly literate writer, while Romero was a wealthy businessman, who probably provided the capital to initiate the newspaper. C. de Baca and Romero were also members of *Los Caballeros de Protección Mutua*, which was a counter organization to the White Caps and other groups organized by Herrera. On February 18, 1892, *El Sol de Mayo* commenced publishing a narrative on the *Gorras Blancas* in a series of articles. The narrative appears in prose and the author is never mentioned. However, it is evident that Manuel C. de Baca, as the principal editor, was also the author. Juan José Herrera is referred to as *El Gran Capitán* in the narrative; and some of Herrera's history and related activities are taken from it. Manuel C. de Baca is known for the book he published in 1896, *Vicente Silva, Sus Cuarenta Bandidos, Sus Crímenes y Retribuciones* (Las Vegas: Spanish American Printing Co., 1896). In 1886, support for a People's Party in San Miguel County was being promoted ardently by Louis Hommell, a German immigrant to the United States in 1848. Hommell had established the *Las Vegas Gazette* in 1872, and was now editor of *The Chronicle*. A colorful and interesting figure, Hommell had joined many patriotic and popular causes, including fighting the Seminole Indians in Florida in 1856, marching against the Mormons in 1858, joining the Union cause during the Civil War, and evening fighting in Benito Juárez' independence movement against the French in Mexico. In 1886 he fought what he considered to be were the abuses of the Santa Fe Ring and the Republican Party. See *The Chronicle* (Las Vegas), May 20, 1886.

19. *The Chronicle*, March 18, 1886.

20. *Ibid*, June 17, 1886.

21. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 3, 1889.

22. District Attorney Miguel Salazar to Governor L. Bradford Prince, August 3, 1889, Governor L. Bradford Prince Papers, NMSRCAA, Santa Fe. [Hereafter referred to as Prince Papers]; Several articles, papers, a dissertation and studies have covered the social and political movement which engulfed San Miguel County in 1889 and 1890. They all focus and highlight certain aspects of the White Caps, the Knights of Labor and the United People's Party, as they primarily involved and concerned the people of San Miguel County and, to a lesser extent, other citizens of New Mexico. Most of these studies appear during the 1970s. The writer first became interested in the White Caps as a student in 1968. See Anselmo F. Arellano, "The White Caps of San Miguel County," Student Research Paper, August 19, 1968, New Mexico Highlands University. The most comprehensive published work on the White Caps and protest movement appears in Robert J. Rosenbaum's book *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). Also, a related book which concentrates on the populist party politics during that era of the Territorial Period can be found in Robert W. Larson's book *New Mexico Populism: A Study of Radical Protest in a Western Territory* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1974). This chapter will portray the social protest movement which reached its apex among the residents of the land grant and county in 1890. It is presented from the primary sources of the time, as events and circumstances were expressed by the individuals who lived and forged that unique segment of New Mexico's colorful history.

23. José Luján to Governor L. Bradford Prince, July 25, 1890, Prince Papers.

24. Miguel A. Otero, Court Clerk to Governor L. Bradford Prince, August 9, 1890, Prince Papers.

25. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, November 2, 1889.

26. Lorenzo López to Governor L. Bradford Prince, December 11, 1889, Prince Papers.

27. *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 14, 1889.

28. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, November 25, 1889.

29. Ibid.

30. Miguel A. Otero, Clerk of the 4th Judicial District to Governor L. Bradford Prince, August 9, 1890.

31. *La Voz*, December 14, 1889.

32. Interview, Rosa Herrera de McAdams, October, 29, 1980. In her oral interview, Rosa revealed many of the familial affinities among the Herreras, Romeros, Delgados, Bacas, Ulibarri's and C. de Baca's. In addition to blood lines, much of the relationship included *compadrazgo* or godparents. When Sheriff López' daughters and son married, Juan José Herrera and his wife were among the honored guests. See *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 11 and 18, 1891. It is consequently easy to see the close relationship between López, Herrera, the Knights of Labor, and the subsequent *Partido del Pueblo Unido*, United People's Party.

33. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 26, 1890.

34. *El Sol de Mayo*, February 18, 1892, through March 17, 1892. The platform contained in this narrative is equal to the one they posted. See Prince Papers, NMSRCAA; Also, see *La Voz del Pueblo*, March 22, 1890.

35. *El Sol de Mayo*, February 18, 1892; District Attorney Miguel Salazar to Governor Prince, July 23, 1890.

36. *La Voz del Pueblo*, March 29, 1890.

37. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 20, 1890; District Attorney Miguel Salazar to Governor L. Bradford Prince, July 23, 1890, Prince Papers.

38. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, March 7, 1890; O. D. Barrett, "Report to General Butler," June 26, 1890, Prince Papers.

39. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 26, 1890.

40. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1890.

41. *Ibid.* For a review of the Knights of Labor read the following autobiography of their National Grand Master Workman: Terrance V. Powderly, *The Path I Trod*, Harry J. Carman, Henry David, and Paul N. Guthrie, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940).

42. *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 21, 1890.

43. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1890.

44. *Ibid.* July 12, 1890. Jesús María H. Alarid was a well known teacher and musician who helped organize the *Gorras Blancas* and Knights of Labor in the Santa Fe area. From Galisteo, he taught in different New Mexico communities

and was very active in the politics of Santa Fe and San Miguel Counties. Following the Civil War, he served as New Mexico Territorial Librarian under Governor Henry Connelly. See 1890 and 1891 issues of *El Nuevo Mexicano*, the *Santa Fe New Mexican's* Spanish counterpart.

45. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 12, 1890.

46. Ibid.; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, July 5, 1890.

47. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 12, 1890.

48. Ibid. August 30, 1890. The Herreras, Jesús Alarid, Sheriff Lorenzo López, and his son, José L. López, who became County Sheriff in 1891, were the most active organizers of the Knights of Labor through 1892. López and his son were especially active in the northern counties of Río Arriba and Taos, and Southern Colorado as well. See *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 23, February 13, 1892.

49. Ibid., August 9, 1890; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, August 12, 1890.

50. Ibid.

51. Governor L. Bradford Prince to Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble, August 20, 1890, Prince Papers.

52. *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 16, 23, 1890.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., August 8, 1890; *Las Vegas Democrat*, August 18, 1890. This Las Vegas newspaper printed the complete text of Master Workman José Valdez' letter to Terrance V. Powderly, National Grand Master Workman.

58. Frank C. Ogden and John K. Martin and J. B. Allen to Terrence V. Powderly, National Grand Master Workman, August 8, 1890, Prince Papers.

59. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, December 13, 1890.

60. *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 30, 1890.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., September 13, 1890.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. *La Cachiporrita del Condado de San Miguel*, October 18, 1890.

74. *The Albuquerque Democrat* as quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 22, 1890.

75. George Anderson, *History of New Mexico*, 3 vols. (Los Angeles: Pacific States Publishing Co., 1907), I:200; Also see Charles F. Coan, *A History of New Mexico*, 3 vols. (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1925), I, p. 476.

76. Severino Trujillo to Governor L. Bradford Prince, August 19, 1890. *Penitente* involvement in the People's Movement adds another dimension to the clandestine nature of the closely-knit group of residents who rose in protest. For additional information on *Penitente* activity during the People's Movement see Marta Weigle's book *Brothers of Light Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1976), pp. 86-90.

77. Anderson, *History of New Mexico*, I, pp. 521-522.

78. Anselmo F. Arellano, "Honorable Don Félix Martínez Made Highlands University Possible," *La Mecha*, New Mexico Highlands University Student Newspaper, January 24, January 31, 1977; Anselmo F. Arellano, "Father of the Normal University," *Southwest Wind: A Magazine of New Mexico Highlands University Arts*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter, 1977.

79. Anselmo F. Arellano, "Don Ezequiel C. de Baca and the Politics of San Miguel County," pp. 135-136.

80. Anderson, *History of New Mexico*, I, pp. 521-522.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ON THE LAS VEGAS
LAND GRANT, 1852-1907

The United States reached a final decision on the Las Vegas land grant in 1902 by stating that the land grant belonged to the "Town of Las Vegas." The United States also provided that all the inhabitants of the land grant, including the original grantees or their heirs, were now the legal owners of the land. The final decision of 1902 was not without controversy. In fact, controversy to the point of litigation between American and Mexican officials arose over the land grant. The land grant received the attention of the United States since for many decades there had been a certain uncertainty, and ambiguity, over the land grant. Notwithstanding the uncertainty, the beginning of a new political activity on the land grant—a struggle to determine the land grant and the subsequent political activity on the land grant—was the only political board.

CHAPTER X

PEOPLE VERSUS TRUSTEES: PROTEST ACTIVITY ON THE LAS VEGAS LAND GRANT, 1902-1907

The Supreme Court of the United States reached a final decision on the Las Vegas Land Grant in 1902 by stating that the vast patrimony belonged to the "Town of Las Vegas." The court's decree ultimately provided that all the inhabitants of the land grant, whether heirs of the original grantees or occupants who later settled on it, were now the legal holders of the property. The final decision of 1902 was not an abrupt one, for the issue of legal ownership to the grant had been debated in Mexican and American tribunals since its early history. The people living on the land grant received the decision with great enthusiasm since for many decades they had only known frustration, uncertainty, and embitterment while they struggled to retain it. Notwithstanding the court's decision, 1902 signaled the beginning of a new struggle affecting the people on the grant—a struggle to determine who would manage the land grant and the subsequent contest between its occupants and the court-appointed board of trustees.

As soon as the Supreme Court's decision was announced, a petition began to circulate in Las Vegas requesting that

Congress pass a special law authorizing the district court to name a board of trustees who would manage and administer the land grant for the benefit of its owners. The land grant residents heard about the proposition, and they quickly held a mass meeting of the land grant occupants on April 12, 1902. They planned to deliberate on the "propriety or impropriety" of the proposed request from Congress.¹

La Voz del Pueblo announced the meeting, and in its editorial columns presented strong opposition to the request that the district court appoint the trustees. *La Voz* stressed that the people should elect their own trustees as it favored a republican form of government. Another opinion expressed by the newspaper was that the system proposed by the petition was imperial and called for the centralization of power in one individual, the district judge. In a closing statement *La Voz* mentioned that the proposed system would usurp the powers of the community and establish a dangerous instrument to enrich lawyers and bleed the people of their land.²

Occupants of the land grant met in Old Town Las Vegas in April and formed a temporary board of directors headed by Eugenio Romero, a leading merchant and politician from the powerful Romero family, to deal with the future of their landed patrimony. Octaviano A. Larrazolo and Ezequiel C. de Baca were among the prominent citizens who deliberated on

the issue, and the majority spoke against the circulating petition, calling for the popular vote of the people to determine the trustees. Ezequiel C. de Baca also presented two resolutions supporting the consensus of the speakers: one called for the popular election of the board of trustees by the individuals who held legal rights to the land grant while the second asked for the abrogation of the petition which requested that the trustees be appointed by the district court. Both resolutions received the unanimous approval of those in attendance. It was also decided at the meeting that the interim commission would act as trustees until elections could be held. Additionally, the commission was requested to draft a legal management plan for the interests of the Las Vegas Land Grant and its legal occupants by the next meeting.³

The next meeting a month later drew attendance from all eighteen voting precincts and communities lying within the grant. Highlighting the second meeting was a discussion of the proposed management plan which had been prepared by the interim board. The plan covered the appointment of the trustees by the people and mentioned different types of capital which could be derived from land sale, leasing, and other feasible transactions. The commission members expressed that they were somewhat perplexed whether the trustees, once they were either officially elected or appointed, should have the authority to expend land grant funds on

street repairs, construction of public buildings, or the maintenance of other municipal concerns such as the police department. The commissioners maintained that if a court-appointed board of trustees possessed these powers, Congress and the territorial legislature would be establishing a municipal system exclusively for Las Vegas. Such a system was unheard of in the present form of government; consequently, in view of the apparent inconveniences, the interim board felt it would be highly impracticable and inadequate to manage the land grant through a board of trustees.⁴

The proposed management report maintained that the grant belonged to the community of Las Vegas and that its inhabitants should be the ones to manage it. To achieve this form of management, the report recommended that the Town of Las Vegas constitute itself in a legal, political entity through incorporation. The disadvantages of this proposal were also explained to the people since political factionalism could possibly result in interest groups electing officials who possessed neither the ability nor the impartiality to manage such a large community interest as the land grant. To eliminate the feared political entanglements, the commission decreed that once the proposed municipality was incorporated and a town council established, the elected officials, although disqualifying themselves, could appoint a land commission comprised of land grant residents. The land commission would be responsible for the management

and administration of the grant; it would also work closely with the town council, which would have ultimate authority in all matters affecting the land grant.⁵

The early meetings convened by the land grant inhabitants provided for the coalescence of all interested parties, regardless of their political affiliation. Eventually, some criticism was directed by opposing individuals who were circulating a petition to have the court appoint the trustees. By May 13, attorneys Veeder and Veeder and Charles Spiess registered this document in district court. The majority of the supporters of the petition were Republican politicians and merchants from East Las Vegas. Among them were Enrique H. Salazar, Frank Roy, Jefferson Reynolds and Patricio Gonzales, editor of *El Sol de Mayo*, a Republican-backed newspaper.

The petition presented a brief history of the land grant and contended that, due to the lack of a legal municipal system, the land grant concession to Las Vegas would be annulled if the court did not proceed to appoint the land grant trustees. The petition also requested that the court appoint a commission of five to take charge of the grant. In addition, the petitioners sought authority for the commission to borrow money to survey the land grant. Their proposal further stated that the trustees would be called upon to make arrangements with the people so that they would receive proper titles to their land. A final

recommendation stated that the remaining common lands should be sold or disposed of in a manner which would best carry out the land concession.⁶

To offset a court decision, the residents of the grant again met to determine the best means of protesting the petition. When they convened, Ezequiel C. de Baca explained the petition and reemphasized the need to have the people appoint their own trustees. A commission was authorized to file a counter petition in district court, and Octaviano A. Larrazolo was appointed legal counsel for the land grant occupants.⁷

The protest activity on the Las Vegas Grant subsided during the next few months while the district court reportedly deliberated a decision. However, 1902 was an election year, and a fusionist party ticket was established in the county through the merger of the Union Party, the Democrats, and the Independent Republican Party. In addition to several reform issues that this new party advocated, the collective platform strongly addressed the Las Vegas Grant issue in the spirit of the earlier citizens' meetings. It called for the passage of a law which would allow people living on community land grants, similar to those of (Las Vegas) and Tecolote, the authority to elect their own trustees.⁸

Santa Cruz?

The fusionist ticket was making the land grant issue a campaign concern, while the Republican Party, fearing a

Populist victory, addressed the issue of dissension, fearing that it would result in political suicide for the party in San Miguel County. They appealed to the two powerful Romero brothers, Eugenio and Margarito, to keep the dissident elements from breaking up the party.⁹ As the elections approached, the Republicans announced that the discord threatening to submerge them no longer prevailed, and they predicted a Republican victory.¹⁰

The Republican prediction was realized when only three fusionist candidates were elected to the Territorial House of Representatives: two in local county positions and Antonio Lucero, one of *La Voz del Pueblo's* editors. The Republicans were not completely satisfied with their victory, however, and they contested the election results. They charged that the Independent Republicans' party emblem, an angel holding a flag, was similar to the Republican emblem and that many loyal Republicans had mistaken that emblem and voted for it, causing the defeat of their candidates.¹¹

The two local Republicans failed to oust the fusionists—W. H. Coleman, who had lost to Antonio Lucero by eighty-five votes, took his complaint to the legislature. Although Lucero already occupied his seat in the legislative chambers, two committees were established to investigate the charges. The final recommendation was that the seat be adjudicated to Coleman, and the Republican majority in the

House sustained that recommendation by unseating Lucero.¹² Amazed at the unpopular ousting of Antonio Lucero, the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* reported that the partisan Republican legislature, which had unseated Lucero, demonstrated powerful evidence providing that New Mexico did not have the capacity to become a state.¹³

During the height of the political controversy revolving around the election results and the fusionist victors, the long-awaited decision affecting the future of the Las Vegas Land Grant was handed down by Territorial Supreme Court Justice William J. Mills, a Las Vegas resident who also presided over the district court. A Republican himself, Mills ruled in favor of the petitioners who had been led by attorney Charles Spiess. He appointed seven trustees to manage and administer the Las Vegas Grant: Jefferson Raynolds, a prominent Las Vegas banker; Charles Ilfeld, one of New Mexico's leading merchants; E. V. Long, attorney and former Territorial Supreme Court Justice; Eugenio Romero, the wealthy merchant and politician; F. H. Pierce, manager of the local water company; Felix Esquibel, a prominent rancher; and Isidoro Gallegos, a wealthy realtor and livestock contractor. Long was appointed the court's representative to examine and clear the claims of the actual home settlers within the grant.¹⁴

As an adjunct to Chief Justice Mills' decision to appoint the trustees, the San Miguel County delegation to

the 1903 legislature, headed by Charles Spiess, ensured the passage of a bill giving the district court in San Miguel County authority to appoint and supervise a board of trustees to manage the grant. The bill also gave the trustees authority to clear titles and issue deeds to the people having good titles on the land grant. Finally, the board was empowered to lease, mortgage, and sell any sections of the land grant at its discretion.¹⁵

The Board of Trustees met for the first time on December 22, 1903, whereupon Chief Justice Mills insisted the seven members take an oath to protect the rights and interests of the people living on the land grant. After committees were appointed to administer the affairs of the grant, the board moved to act on procuring the patent from the Department of the Interior. It also asserted that the widespread cutting of timber for ties and lumber on the grant had to cease to protect the forest reserves.¹⁶

The trustees then drafted a resolution prohibiting the cutting of timber for ties and lumber and all young trees under eight inches in diameter. Interested parties would have to contact the committee on timber before any more lumber could be removed from the grant. The trustees also borrowed \$24,000.00 to pay for the last survey of the land grant which had been conducted by F. M. Johnson. The final survey revealed that the land grant contained 431,653.65 acres.¹⁷ Once the survey was complete, the trustees peti-

tioned the Department of the Interior for a patent, and that document, assuring the people of final possession, was received in Las Vegas by August, 1903.¹⁸

Since first assuming their duties, the trustees had been petitioned by individuals to lease or purchase land; however, the trustees decided, at least for 1903, that all unoccupied lands on the grant would remain free for grazing to all persons living within its boundaries. The trustees then diverted much of their attention to making retribution to those who had assisted in procuring the patent for the Town of Las Vegas. One of the first to file for payment was Alfonso Hart, a Washington attorney who represented the county commissioners until the patent arrived. Hart initially requested \$40,000 or 40,000 acres of land for his services, but he eventually settled for 15,000 acres. Other land compensation was made to Lewis C. Fort, E. V. Long, John D. W. Veeder, and W. G. Hayden for services rendered in acquiring the patent. The total land payment to these individuals, including Hart, was 26,800 acres.¹⁹

As the trustees continued to parcel off the land grant, they noted that there was considerable doubt and anxiety among the people who were waiting for action on procuring titles to the small tracts of land where they lived and grew their crops. In October 1903, the board agreed to issue quit-claim deeds to families who had occupied their lands for at least ten years. The parcels could not exceed 160

acres. Other adjustments would be made in cases where individuals had occupied their lands less than ten years.²⁰

Despite this decision, the trustees waited until September, 1904 to announce that they would review applications from small land claimants. They might have waited longer if *La Voz del Pueblo* had not complained that the trustees were pernicious partisans using the land grant for personal aggrandizement. *La Voz* charged that if proper restitution was not going to be carried out for the people, the land grant residents should rise to challenge the issue. Apparently the trustees listened, for soon it was announced that Secretary Long would take petitions from the people and investigate their validity before the board would act on them. All approved claims would then be officially recorded and filed in the district court.²¹ Over the years, about 1,300 small parcels of land not exceeding the 160 acre limit were cleared by the trustees for the inhabitants throughout Las Vegas and the many small settlements and ranches on the land grant.²²

It took some of the land grant residents a while before they finally relinquished the thought that they could administer their own grant. Some of the adherents of the citizens' meetings of 1902 were willing to challenge the authority and actions of the trustees. Foremost among these were Margarito Romero, who engaged in "head-on" battles with the trustees, and Ezequiel C. de Baca, who repeatedly voiced his

dissatisfaction with the trustees' management at public meetings and through the editorial columns of *La Voz del Pueblo*. Both men felt that by incorporating the Town of Las Vegas into a legal municipality, control of the land grant could revert to the people as had been expressed in 1902.

The issue of joint-municipal incorporation for Las Vegas had resulted in a long-standing rivalry between East and West Las Vegas dating back to 1879. The same issue was revived in May, 1903, by a group which called itself the League of Citizens. The group called for joint incorporation of East Las Vegas, which had an Anglo population majority, and West Las Vegas, which had a Hispano majority. Public meetings were held on the issue, and Ezequiel C. de Baca and Margarito Romero took leading roles in fighting for the separate incorporation of Old Town. C. de Baca argued that by incorporating Old Town, the people could have a government working for the welfare of the community as a municipality.²³

Romero echoed C. de Baca's words as he urged separate incorporation for Old Town so that the people could regain control of their land grant. He also charged that the people of East Las Vegas with support from some people in Old Town, had a clique that wanted to control everything within the grant. Eusebio Chacón, another attorney and translator for the U. S. Land Grant Claims Court, criticized the legislature for having enacted the law reinforcing the

authority of the board of trustees in handling the land grant; however, he was optimistic that the people would eventually acquire its management. Other speakers such as John D. W. Veeder and Octaviano A. Larrazolo called for a unified community, but in the end, the movement for separate incorporation of Old Town prevailed.²⁴

The people of Old Town held a general convention for incorporation on August 2, 1903. The consensus of the electorate was to form one ballot of good men regardless of party affiliation, and as a result, a lone Citizen's Ticket was nominated. Voting turnout for the election was very small due to the single ticket headed by Margarito Romero. Romero was subsequently elected the first mayor of Old Town.²⁵

The following year, while serving as mayor, Margarito Romero requested that the Las Vegas Land Grant Board turn the patent over to the Town of Las Vegas, contending that the "town" had the only legal authority to manage it. The trustees refused, and in another public meeting held on August 25, 1904, Romero condemned the trustees for violating the Supreme Court's decision, which had confirmed the grant to the Town of Las Vegas. The *Las Vegas Daily Optic* entered the battle accusing Romero of anarchy and of attempting to become the dictator of the land grant.²⁶

Mr. Romero supported his argument against the trustees by stating that five-hundred people representing the dif-

ferent precincts on the grant attended the meeting and confronted the board.²⁷ Romero said that the Las Vegas Grant was the property of the Town of Las Vegas as had been declared by the Supreme Court, and since the town council was now a lawful constituted body, it was the only one which held authority to manage it. He cited three similar cases: the Santa Fe Grant, controlled by the city council, and the Tecolote and Santa Cruz grants, both managed by trustees elected by the people. Romero argued that if the district court judge had the legal right to appoint the trustees, the other grants were consequently contrary to law. However, he maintained that the other community grants were administered correctly and that the Las Vegas Grant was not.²⁸

Margarito Romero also brought out the race issue and stated that some adherents of the court-appointed board felt it was better to work outside the law instead of risking the management of the grant to trustees who were chosen because of their nationality rather than ability. He defended the "*hispano-americano*" by saying that they were capable of managing the land grant and that they were the most generous people in the world as was many times reflected in their actions. In closing he stated, "If the higher courts decide that the act of the legislature is constitutional, and that the action of this court is legal..., I will have no more to say on the subject save I will continue to represent the poor people on the grant, in my humble capacity, to see that

their rights are respected and that there is no undue advantage taken of them."²⁹

The conflict between the concerned land grant occupants and the trustees temporarily quieted after 1904. Residents of the grant diverted their priorities to clearing titles to their small tracts of land. The trustees worked to assist them in their quests and attended to other concerns of the grant. Simultaneously, the trustees began to engage in land transactions with different individuals for the purpose of colonizing the grant with outsiders. As expected, the land sales were unpopular, and most of them led to land speculations. Again the people rose to challenge the trustees and their legal right to administer the affairs of the grant.

One of the largest land transactions occurred in 1906 when A. W. Thompson purchased 50,000 acres of unoccupied lands for the purpose of bringing settlers from the "middle west." Arrangements were carried out with the Santa Fe railroad to provide cheap transportation for the new colonists. Thompson's proposal followed a settlement pattern which had been highly successful in eastern New Mexico and different areas of Texas. It was proposed that the Santa Fe Railroad would make two weekly excursions from Chicago and Kansas City. The *Optic* expressed great enthusiasm with the plan when it reported: "Imagine what it will mean to Las Vegas itself to unload three or four hundred colonists in this town every Wednesday and Saturday morning."³⁰

As the trustees engaged in these highly questionable land transactions, the people again became alarmed. They were aware of their lack of authority in the grant's matters, but by the summer of 1907, their concern for the diminishing land grant intensified. They now decided to seek some form of legal action against the trustees. This was a final recourse as far as they were concerned. The abuses by the board could no longer be tolerated.³¹

During the first week in August, an estimated five hundred people met at the Barber Opera House to discuss the litigation and attempt to save as much of the remaining land as possible. They drafted protest resolutions which conveyed the sentiments of those concerned with the future of the land grant:

We favor the perpetual retention of the lands by the people of the Las Vegas Grant as a source of perennial rent for the benefit, not only of the present generation, but for all posterity; Be it resolved by this meeting that we emphatically protest against the sale or disposition of one more acre of the Las Vegas Grant by the present trustees, and we especially protest against the last contract made for the sale of 50,000 acres to Fred W. Browne.³²

The concerned citizens argued that the trustees be instructed, while making arrangements with attorneys, that in cases where legal fees had to be paid with land, timbered lands be excluded. This included three-mile stretches of land surrounding any community or group of people within the grant and all irrigated lands as well.³³

Attorney H. B. Fergusson was employed to present the people's court case. The attorney's initial cash fee of \$600.00 was collected from all the precincts falling within the grant boundaries. The case reached the district court on December 17, 1907, with Fergusson and Summers Burkhard of Albuquerque representing the people of the land grant and John D. W. Veeder, Charles Spiess, and S. B. Davis serving as the court-appointed attorneys for the trustees. Fergusson presented the court with a demurrer in an attempt to disqualify the trustees. The demurrer charged that the court did not have the right to name the trustees, nor did the trustees have the legal right to administer the grant and sell its land.³⁴

Fergusson severely censured the district court and the legislature for taking a judicial and legislative position on the issue since in his opinion neither one had any jurisdiction on the matter. He further criticized the trustees for selling the people's property to outsiders while, at the same time, the legal occupants of the land were being deprived of its use and enjoyment. Judge William

J. Mills, who presided over the case, was also the one who had appointed the trustees; nobody was surprised when he disqualified the litigation.³⁵

After the court case and a few other futile attempts to regain the land for the people, the protest activity surrounding the Las Vegas Land Grant almost completely subsided. The so-called trustees continued to dispose the people's lands, and even *La Voz del Pueblo* was ready to admit defeat when it maintained in 1909:

We have fought hard against the matter and the way it has been handled, and because of that, we have been ridiculed and even censured, being called in many situations obstructionists. Our only purpose now is to continue our positive attitude proving our sincerity and solidity of our humble but honest protest.³⁶

The Las Vegas Land Grant controversy at the turn of the century demonstrated how political "bossism" and manipulation worked towards the detriment of the people. It was very difficult to oppose the political party in power, particularly one which carried its control into the legislative and judicial chambers of government. It was unfortunate for the descendants of the early settlers of the land grant that unscrupulous attorneys and scheming politicians joined to-

gether, using the colonists as pawns in a game that dispossessed them of much of their inheritance and birthright.

Despite the disheartening results of the Las Vegas Grant issue, it is worthy of mention that leaders such as Ezequiel C. de Baca, Margarito Romero, and others rose to champion the rights of their fellow citizens. Margarito dropped out of the controversy following the litigation against the trustees, but his cousin Ezequiel continued to challenge them until his death in 1917 when he served as New Mexico's second governor. At one time during his controversial involvement with the trustees, C. de Baca stated that the people would favorably remember his attitude "when there is nothing but smoke left of this valuable patrimony of the people."³⁷

By this time at the turn of the century, the people in Las Vegas also became actively involved in a new thrust for statehood. Many other New Mexicans also continued to complain about the territorial status New Mexico had been relegated to for over fifty years. A major issue which challenged New Mexicans and their right to achieve statehood status began in 1898 during the Spanish American War. During this formative year, Las Vegans and the native citizens of New Mexico spent much of their time defending charges of disloyalty, lack of patriotism, and other charges that accused them as being unworthy of statehood status and the full rights of citizenship.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER X

1. *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 5, 1902.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., April 19, 1902.
4. Ibid., May 3, 1902. The precincts on the Las Vegas Grant at this time were: Old Town, New Town, and the rural precincts of Las Despensas, Sapelló, Agua Sarca, Las Gallinas, Plaza de Arriba (San Antonio), Los Vigiles, Los Alamos, El Emplazado, Guadalupe, Romeroville, San Gerónimo, San Pablo, Ojitos Fríos, San Patricio, La Liendre, and Valles de San Agustín.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., May 17, 1902.
7. Ibid., May 31, June 7, 1902.
8. Ibid., November 1, 1902.
9. *El Independiente*, September 25, 1902.
10. Ibid., October 23, 1902.
11. *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 22, 1902.
12. *El Independiente*, January 29, 1903; *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 24, 1903; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 21, 1903.
13. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 22, 1903.
14. Perrigo, *La Reunión: The Consolidation of Las Vegas*, p. 5; *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 13, 1902.
15. New Mexico, 1903 Acts of the Territorial Assembly of New Mexico: Thirty-Fifth Session (Santa Fe: New Mexico Printing Co., 1903), Chapter 47, pp. 72-74.
16. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 3, 1903; Records of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Las Vegas Land Grant, December 22, 1902. Found in the E. V. Long Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives. Hereafter referred to as Board Minutes.

17. Board Minutes, January 31, 1903.
18. Ibid., January 3, 1903 through August 15, 1903; *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 10, 1903; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, January 9, 1903.
19. *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 31, 1903; April 25, July 3, August 21, November 6, 1905; January 4, March 5, April 28, May 7, September 3, 1906.
20. Ibid., October 10, 1903; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, December 15, 1903. For a complete study on the incorporation of Las Vegas see Lynn I. Perrigo's *La Reunión: The Consolidation of Las Vegas*.
21. *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 23, 1904.
22. Interview with Lynn I. Perrigo, Las Vegas, New Mexico, May 14, 1974.
23. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 9, 1903; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 6, 1903.
24. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 9, 11, 23, 1903; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 11, 18, 1903.
25. *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 1, 13, 1903.
26. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 29, August 26, 1904.
27. "El Honorable Margarito Romero Contesta al 'Optic'," September, Public Proclamation, E. V. Long Papers; *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 3, 1904.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 10, 1906.
31. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 27, 1907.
32. Ibid., August 10, 1907.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., December 21, 1907.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., December 18, 1909.

37. E. C. de Baca Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.

CHAPTER XI

LAS VEGAS AND NEW MEXICO HISPANOS DURING THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR OF 1898: DEFENSIVE TRENCHES ON THE HOME FRONT

Following the sinking of the *Maine* and rumors of impending war with Spain, Territorial Governor Miguel Antonio Otero wrote to Secretary of War R. A. Alger offering a "full regiment of cavalry, 95 per cent Spanish-speaking who will respond immediately on first call,..." Otero also said he could send more if they were needed.¹ Soon, Hispanos from Las Vegas and New Mexico were caught in the middle of another controversy which directly challenged their patriotism, loyalty, and fealty as citizens of the United States.

Since 1895, American citizens throughout the country had been sympathetic towards the Cubans and their revolt against Spain. Some New Mexico Hispanos shared in that sympathy toward Cuba while others favored a neutral or nonintervention position. *La Voz del Pueblo* stated in an editorial early in February 1898—before the *Maine* was sunk:

We sincerely believe that this government has not had, nor does it now have, the right to intervene in the Cuban question. We also believe that

the Cubans who are rebelling, with few exceptions, belong to the common class, and if they were to win their independence, the island will have a worse government than the one they now complain about.²

La Voz further emphasized that the United States should pursue prudence and diplomacy before taking arms in any international question, especially because the country the United States was contending with was much weaker. However, the newspaper also stated that if a conflict indeed developed between Spain and the United States, Hispanos would "not vacillate for a moment to pick up a rifle and go to the defense of our glorious flag."³

After the Maine was sunk on February 14, 1898, but before the official declaration of war was announced, *La Voz* defended its previous position and right to freedom of expression through the press. The editors again emphasized that the United States was the only country Hispanos had ever known and they would be loyal to Old Glory. They also agreed with New Mexico Congressional Delegate H. B. Fergusson, who stated in Congress that Uncle Sam would have a hard time finding more loyal soldiers than the "Spanish-American" citizens of New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. *La Voz* also cited New Mexican Stephen B. Elkins, who had served as the territory's congressional delegate in 1873. Elkins

stated the United States had no reason to engage in war and Spain was only doing what it had to do in an effort to keep what belonged to her for more than a century. The United States had done the same during the Civil War.⁴

As the issue of potential war continued to foment, informal debate and patriotic meetings were held in different parts of New Mexico. Civil War veterans in Las Vegas held a patriotic meeting on February 23, in which they delivered speeches and adopted resolutions urging Congress to recognize the Cuban people's struggle for freedom. It appears, however, that the only notable Hispano who attended this meeting was *El Capitán* Juan José Herrera.⁵

In April 1898, when President William McKinley finally declared war and issued a proclamation calling for 125,000 volunteers, Secretary of War Alger sent Governor Otero a telegram asking New Mexico's aid in recruiting a regiment of western cowboys to be commanded by Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. New Mexico's initial quota for the military campaigns was 340 men.⁶

Again, *La Voz* pulled out its patriotic, editorial banner. This time it supported Cuban independence from Spain's despotism. It lauded the great American form of government which had been maintained by greats such as Presidents Jefferson, Jackson, Grant, Lincoln, and Harrison. The same type of democracy was being maintained in our neighboring sister republic by Porfirio Diaz, the newspaper declared.

New Mexicans were now being admonished to support the integrity and dignity of the United States by demonstrating their loyalty, love of country, and patriotism. «¡Viva Cuba y Viva la Libertad!» it proclaimed, and if war comes, "the rest of the states of this nation should know that if all New Mexicans are needed, we are ready to respond to the call of our government."⁷

Governor Otero quickly responded to Alger's request for volunteers. He went to work and organized the First Regiment of the United States Volunteer Cavalry which was soon dubbed "Roosevelt's Rough Riders." Roosevelt, himself, preferred that his troops be called "mounted riflemen."⁸ Otero also appointed and commissioned four captains who would recruit and organize four companies for the regiment. Among them was one Hispano who came from a prominent New Mexico family, Captain Maximiliano Luna. Luna's father, Tranquilino Luna, had served as congressional delegate for New Mexico from 1881-1883.⁹

Hispanos from throughout New Mexico volunteered for military duty. As the war feeling grew, Taos County sent Otero a letter that 500 volunteers—natives and of Spanish descent would be available if necessary.¹⁰ From Socorro, Ignacio Gutiérrez wrote to the governor, declaring he was ready to go in the first call under any rank. Jasper F. Ortíz, the United States Deputy Surveyor at Santa Fe, also proposed to join one of the companies of mounted riflemen.

Pedro Sánchez of Santa Fe, although 67 years of age, also wrote to the governor offering his services. Sánchez had served as a lieutenant during the Civil War. Amado Chaves, son of the great Indian fighter and Civil War soldier, Manuel Chaves, also volunteered to serve.¹¹ These were but a few of the many letters and offers that arrived at Governor Otero's desk.

Another big patriotic meeting was held at Las Vegas. Among those who spoke were the Hon. R. E. Twitchell, Hon. A. A. Jones, and Antonio Lucero, one of *La Voz*' editors. They were told that area of the territory only had to send twenty men, but they were reminded that all volunteers should be excellent horsemen and marksmen. Those who spoke expressed their opinion that the first to volunteer should be men without families.¹² Chief Justice Mills from Las Vegas stated that the citizens of that town, regardless of politics or their place of birth, were truly loyal and patriotic and determined to serve and provide their full portion of volunteers.¹³ The Las Vegas area quickly met its quota of twenty men and surpassed it by one.¹⁴

A "rousing mass meeting" to address the war was also held at the court house in Santa Fe. Many capital city prominents were present. Among them were Governor Otero, Chief Justice Mills, A. L. Morrison, Benjamin Read, Hon. T. B. Catron, Amado Chaves and others. Amid the many patriotic speeches delivered, a committee of eight individuals was

appointed to draft resolutions in support of the war cause. All of them were Hispanics.¹⁵

The *Santa Fe New Mexican* mentioned many of the Hispanic officers who served during the Civil War. Many of those who survived, even in their advanced age, offered to tender their services to the governor. The newspaper reported that the governor was receiving "numerous offers for active service from many of the native-born citizens of this territory and specially (sic) from what are called the strong Mexican counties."¹⁶

Despite these outpourings of offers from New Mexico's Hispanics, few were picked to form the first four companies of volunteers. Besides Captain Maximiliano Luna, only six other enlisted men were selected during the first call.¹⁷ Although the National Guard in New Mexico itself was not activated into service, members of the different units were told they would have first chance at volunteering. Various members of the Las Vegas unit called the "Otero Guard" joined along with members from other guard units in New Mexico.¹⁸

As soon as it was evident that only a handful of native Hispanos had enlisted in the regiment of Rough Riders, rumors began to circulate throughout New Mexico charging them with disloyalty and lack of patriotism. Other attacks on Hispanos were published in English-language newspapers. Much of the reproach centered on the biased opinion that

Hispanos did not want to fight against their mother country Spain.

One of the most popular rumors to circulate at the beginning of the war was that the Catholic clergy was asking New Mexicans not to bear arms against Spain. It was reported that Father John Roux of Santa Cruz and his parish were openly supportive of the Spanish cause. One of the newspapers reported that the priest was flying the Spanish flag at the parish and that he was having parishioners march in a procession carrying the Spanish standard. Father Roux vehemently denied the allegations, stating that he and his parish were not supporting Spain and that they were all one hundred per cent American.¹⁹

A newspaper, *The Silver City Enterprise*, stated that "Spanish-Americans" in New Mexico proved through their actions to be friends of a foreign country and enemy engaged in war with the United States. The newspaper felt that the "reason for this deplorable state is the link the people have with the language which has prompted an allegiance with their Spanish ancestors." The newspaper disclosed that fifty years had passed since Hispanos were given the privilege and protection conceded to Americans as citizens under the stars and stripes; and nevertheless, after two generations, they were as foreign as they had been before the conquest and defeat of Mexico in 1846.²⁰

In addition, District Attorney John D. Bryan of Las

Cruces complained about New Mexico Hispanos and bitterly stated that Congress should be petitioned to remove the voting franchise from Hispanos who could not read or write English. He also felt that certain educational standards should be met by all territorial residents who wanted the privilege of voting in elections or before they could serve on juries. They should be able to read and write English, and above all, he recommended that Spanish textbooks should be excluded from the schools. These critics felt that if all these things were accomplished, New Mexico could be admitted as a state, but not before.²¹

Many more abuses and insults were hurled at native New Mexicans from several sources, including out-of-state newspapers such as the *Rocky Mountain News*, *New York Times*, and *St. Louis Republic* in Missouri. Native New Mexicans did not sit back and ignore the attacks. They responded with lengthy editorials, letters to the newspapers, and in some cases, public rallies where they defended their loyalty and true patriotism as American citizens.²²

The Spanish Press in New Mexico adamantly supported the United States' position since war with Spain had become apparent, and once the war was officially declared, Spanish newspapers throughout the territory sought to rally *nuevo-mexicanos*, encouraging them to volunteer for military service. Now, after this new course of events developed, the Spanish-language media became preoccupied with refuting

inflammatory criticism and charges that were being made about New Mexicans. Many of these newspapers were highly partisan in party politics, but they all stood firmly behind the native *nuevomexicano* on the issue of patriotism. *La Voz del Pueblo* led the charge, and as it had done in various situations before, it became the most poignant in defending New Mexicans.

In response to *The Silver City Enterprise*, *La Voz* stated: "Poor New Mexico! After the government did not fulfill its promises it made when it was annexed to the United States [alleging statehood], its people has (sic) to endure damaging insults from the ungrateful, who after the good reception we gave them and after eating our bread, pay us with such reproachful insults."²³ The newspaper continued its defense by stating that it had never taken sides in favor of or against Cuba or Spain but that it supported any country that was fighting for freedom. The editors, Ezequiel C. de Baca and Antonio Lucero, also stated that Hispanics had no reason to be ashamed of their ancestry and the "Spanish blood" that ran in their veins.²⁴

La Voz' editors were almost apologetic when they indicated they loved the original mother Spain to a certain extent, but Hispanos loved America more and, that, without limit. The people of New Mexico would defend this land with great sacrifice as they always had in the past since the "sons of New Mexico" were "true Americans" in every sense of

the word.²⁵

El Independiente, the other Spanish newspaper in Las Vegas, also denied that Hispanics were sympathetic to Spain or that they were cowardly. The editors expressed the feeling that people here did not have the personal connections needed for entry into the service, which was necessary because of New Mexico's low quota for soldiers. The newspaper further stated that very few Hispanics in the Territory were cowboys and that most lacked the equestrian and other skills required for enlistment in the Rough Riders.²⁶

Captain Maximiliano Luna and the six other enlisted men represented the first group of Hispanos to enlist in the Rough Riders. It was stressed that the small number of *nativos* was not due to a lack of patriotism as some people had indicated. *La Voz* mentioned it was certainly fortunate the war had not reached a stage where a large army was required to combat the enemy. Those first few who had enlisted were young men who did not face financial hardship or moral sacrifice. The Spanish press also reacted to the fact that there were few Hispanos who could speak English proficiently. By 1898, a large percentage of New Mexico's population was well educated, but primarily in the Spanish language. Many people blamed the government because the proper means to educate New Mexico's youth had not been provided.²⁷

Nuevomexicanos were anxious to educate their youth in

the English language, but they were too poor to pay tuition and related expenses in private schools. Public schools were still considered inadequate because they did not receive enough funding and the school term was too short. It was generally felt that if the Legislature would provide good teachers who could instruct for ten months in the rural districts, all youth in New Mexico would master the English language within ten years.²⁸

At Santa Fe, Governor Otero stated that he was tired of hearing that New Mexicans were not loyal to the stars and stripes. "What do we care about Spain," he exclaimed. He felt that many allegations were related to political interference that wanted easterners prejudiced against New Mexico. Judge A. L. Morrison echoed Otero and stated that if people "back East" ever got the idea that New Mexicans were against the United States, the peoples' dream for statehood would all but end.²⁹

Other Hispanos from throughout New Mexico wrote letters to newspapers expressing their personal views on issues which revolved around the war and that directly addressed them and their alleged poor patriotism. One individual, Julián Trujillo, defended New Mexico's *nativos* stating that during the Civil War, 90% of the territory's army was comprised of Hispanos. Trujillo mentioned individuals such as Colonel José Francisco Chávez, Colonel Santiago Abreu, and many others who had patriotically served as Union

officers during the conflict.³⁰

Civil War veterans from the Las Vegas area also wrote letters espousing their loyalty and patriotic fervor. Two of them, Jesús María Tafoya and Filomeno Gonzales, wrote a letter to Congressional Delegate H. B. Fergusson. In it, they stated, "Please tell this country's President that during the Civil War we fought to preserve the integrity of this nation. Today, although we are old, we feel the same patriotic spirit to do the same, and we are requesting to be called to duty."³¹

El Capitán Juan José Herrera, who had rallied the people of the Las Vegas Land Grant and other New Mexico settlements during "*El movimiento del pueblo*," also reacted in a series of letters defending New Mexicans. He offered explanations for limited Hispano involvement in the war. Juan José was sixty-two years old in 1898, but he was still respected and regarded as a leader among the people of Las Vegas and San Miguel County. Everyone still addressed him as *El Capitán*.

Herrera commenced his defense by stating that he was very sad to read the numerous articles which continued to attack Hispanos on the war issue with Spain. He made reference to the Civil War campaigns in New Mexico and stated that in proportion to its population at the time, the territory had provided more soldiers to defend the country than any other state or territory in the American Union. *El*

Capitán's biggest argument, however, was that the poverty of most *nativos* prevented them from volunteering for military service. Some of the people of New Mexico were so impoverished they were destitute. He said some were so poor that if they did not work today, they would not eat tomorrow; furthermore, Hispanos not only had the responsibility of providing for their wives and children but also for their parents.³²

Juan José Herrera also spoke about the Civil War days when almost everyone, although not rich, was fairly well accommodated with the amenities of life. He opined that during that conflict it was much easier for almost any man to recruit and organize a military company. New Mexico had not yet been invaded by leeches and political bosses who were to blame for the bad conditions in 1898, he continued. Some people had been "bled" to their last penny.³³

Another rumor that circulated in Santa Fe was that apparently government officials in New Mexico's capital were sending telegrams to the president and other officials in Washington, informing them that New Mexicans were openly sympathetic to Spain and totally disloyal to the United States. Fearing an open revolt in Santa Fe, these individuals were allegedly requesting federal troops for New Mexico. In response to this, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* also alluded to the Civil War when thousands of New Mexicans joined the Union Army. New Mexicans had abandoned their

families to go fight, leaving their families exposed to death or captivity at the hands of marauding Indians.³⁴

Non-Hispanics also responded and came to the defense of Hispanos as the issue of their involvement in the war continued. Delegate H. B. Fergusson spoke about New Mexico natives even as Congress appropriated \$50 million for the war coffers. He said that New Mexicans rose in large numbers to defend the United States in 1861, only fifteen years after they had been granted American citizenship. Now, thirty years later, the people of New Mexico could still be depended upon to fight in the front lines of the powerful American army.³⁵

William Lynch, an English immigrant who resided in Hatch, New Mexico, wrote to Juan José Herrera praising and supporting him for his stand and views on the issue. Lynch said that he fully realized Hispanos in New Mexico did not have as much sympathy for Spain as some people speculated. On the other hand, he said New Mexicans did not have that much to be thankful for because Uncle Sam had not been too generous with them. In support of his statements, he provided the following:

1. Year by year, the value of the products they [Hispanos] produce and harvest continues to decline.
2. Some merchants have the custom of paying people whatever price they

- want for their products.
3. Organized bands of thieves have taken their livestock, and the law has done nothing to help and protect them.
 4. They have seen that through politics one can rise to power, and they know that to gain political power they need a pocketful of money, free use of alcohol, and a flexible conscience.
 5. Because of their ignorance in law and land matters, they have lost the lands they inherited from their ancestors.

Lynch continued by stating that Hispanos had lost their homes and welfare, with the majority being relegated to a state of peonage. They had very little to subsist on except for the miserable wages they received from their employers. He was amazed that after suffering so many abuses *nuevo-mexicanos* were still able to profess so much loyalty to their country.³⁶

The *Las Vegas Daily Optic* reported in April that some of the leading "Spanish-Americans" in the community stated that very few people sympathized with Spain in the impending war. Most of the residents favored some type of peaceful

diplomacy and resolve between both countries.³⁷ Two months later, the *Optic* commented on the rumors that native citizens were sympathetic to the enemy and traitors to their own country. The editors were unwilling to believe such abhorrent attacks, and they were satisfied any charges against the Mexican people of New Mexico were "false and slanderous." But, in another editorial breath, the *Optic* "confessed" that there were indeed a few traitors in Las Vegas who openly favored Spain in the war against the United States.³⁸

This latter charge by the newspaper was quite serious because it reinforced negative opinions from Silver City and others whose opinions made their way into the newspapers. The nature of this opposition and attacks on the United States, if they were true, are almost unimaginable since the support for New Mexicans in this matter was overwhelming. The *Optic* stated that these local individuals had been "chronic office seekers and office holders" for many years. This inference suggests a certain level of political displeasure and attack on the part of the *Optic*.³⁹

It is doubtful that New Mexicans felt any kind of close affinity to Spain after such a long separation of almost three hundred years. Many of the older citizens of New Mexico certainly still felt some emotional ties and respect to Mexico, but any close connection to Spain sounds almost totally inconceivable. Also, because no one was charged

with any kind of traitorous conduct towards the United States during the war, most comments were eventually written off as rumors.

In its May 5 issue, *El Independiente* charged F. A. Blake of Las Vegas with the responsibility for many of the rumors that were circulating about the disloyalty of *nuevo-mexicanos*. The newspaper alleged that Blake was organizing a body of men to protect the residents of East Las Vegas against the unpatriotic, disloyal *vegueños*. Blake, a former newspaper editor who was involved with the United People's Party in San Miguel County during the early 1890s, wrote a letter to the *Optic* disclaiming any such activity on his part. He stated he had merely signed a roll as a member of the National Volunteer Reserve and had brought the attention of the organization to others who might be interested in joining. Blake concluded by stating he had "never heard a native New Mexican speak a disloyal word against the United States and [I] have always deprecated rumors to that effect."⁴⁰

While New Mexicans were embroiled in the issue surrounding their loyalty to the country, the famous unit of Rough Riders finally left Las Vegas to join the other American soldiers who were fighting in the Cuban campaign. Teddy Roosevelt's cavalry unit of mounted riflemen were among the first to see battle. Various historical accounts have criticized the American army for being poorly organized

and ill-prepared for the Spanish American War,⁴¹ and justly so. When the Rough Riders disembarked from Florida for Cuba, poor shipping conditions compelled them to leave their horses behind. Consequently, although the highly skilled mounted cavalry went on to gain fame in several battles, they had to fight as infantry.

José Marcelo Baca, a young, Las Vegas Hispano who joined Roosevelt's Rough Riders, frequently wrote to his family and friends from Cuba. Most of his letters were published in local newspapers. Baca consequently became Las Vegas' first Hispano to engage in a global war and recount his experiences in writing. He participated in the first Battle of La Quasina in Cuba and provided vivid descriptions of that and other engagements. In a letter to a friend, he mentioned that Spanish bullets were apparently "afraid of him" because he had emerged unscathed from three battles. He boasted a bit by saying, "I have done a good job, for the Spaniard I have shot has not remained standing."⁴²

Baca reported that he had gained much distinction when he shot and killed a Spanish General in the presence of the Colonel of his regiment. For that accomplishment he was appointed to a squad of sharp shooters who searched for Spanish sentries and spies. He also wrote about the misery, hunger, and suffering he witnessed among American and Spanish soldiers as well as the Cuban citizens. Sometimes American soldiers went six days while eating only horse meat

and crackers—a ration they received once every twenty-four hours. Only that kept them from dying of hunger.⁴³

Baca felt that the Spanish army finally surrendered because the soldiers were dying of starvation and thirst. The biggest casualties the American army suffered during the war in 1898 were due to malaria, yellow fever and related causes. Out of 5,462 casualties, only 379 fell in battle.⁴⁴

Marcelo Baca spent about four months in Cuba and contracted malaria while on the island. Later, when he arrived at New York, he was confined to bed with dysentery and came close to dying. He finally arrived in Las Vegas on a thirty day leave and said he felt much better. People remarked that he was very skinny and looked yellow. His illness became worse, and soon after returning to Las Vegas, he was again confined to bed for twenty-nine days.⁴⁵ Baca's father became very ill while his son was away on the war campaign. Reportedly, his illness was due to his advanced age and painful worry about his son's safety in battle. The older Baca died in September, a few days after his son returned. Marcelo was still sick and remained in Las Vegas in late December 1898.⁴⁶

Even Captain Maximiliano Luna, the only commissioned Hispanic officer of the war, became the victim of offensive criticism. Rumors circulated that he had shown cowardice during the Battle of La Quasina and that he had been killed. It was also speculated he separated from his company and hid

until the battle was over.⁴⁷ Captain George Curry read the rumors in newspapers and quickly wrote from Tampa, Florida. He defended Luna and the American troops by stating that there were "no better fighters alive than the officers and men who came from New Mexico."⁴⁸

The *Santa Fe New Mexican* and *La Voz del Pueblo* also responded to the scandalous stories which had circulated about Luna by "back-biters" in Las Vegas and other communities. The Santa Fe newspaper reported that Luna's conduct throughout the terrible battle of La Quasina was of heroic character and honor. The newspapers then printed Luna's own vivid account of the victorious battle which had engaged the Rough Riders against 4,000 Spaniards. Luna praised all his men for their courage and heroism.⁴⁹

On July 22, General Leonard Wood sent a telegram from Santiago, Cuba hoping to dispel the rumors about Luna. He stated the Captain's conduct had been "gallant and praiseworthy" throughout the campaign.⁵⁰ And again, after the Spanish army surrendered in Santiago, General Wood commended Captain Luna for his leadership in various battles and the final charge up San Juan heights. In recognition Luna's valiant services, Wood transferred him to his immediate staff and appointed him to a special commission to examine the condition of Spanish prisons in Cuba.⁵¹

New Mexico's total quota for the Spanish American War ultimately amounted to one thousand men. Other Hispanics

continued to volunteer after the Rough Riders left for Cuba, but the total number selected amounted to only fifty men or about five percent of New Mexico's total.⁵² Hispanics in New Mexico were caught in an uncomfortable position when the charges of disloyalty surfaced against them, but they did an admirable job of defending themselves and their dignity. The majority of the volunteers who were selected for military service came from the wealthier and better educated class of Hispanics who spoke both Spanish and English. Many who volunteered were not selected, and those who did not were surely patriotic but did not consider the war a priority during the early going. And many *nuevomexicanos* who lived in the scattered villages and communities of rural New Mexico probably remained indifferent to the war.

The damaging speculation and rumors about New Mexicans in 1898 reached the eastern states. The *New York Times* responded by publishing another scathing article charging that "semi-traitorous" New Mexicans had demonstrated a deep hostility to American ideas and policies by giving all their sympathy to Spain. The newspaper maintained that these actions were the reason for New Mexican attitudes of "non-assimilation" and "pseudo-allegiance" to the United States. The schools were also blamed for using public monies to teach everything in Spanish. The *Times* concluded by indicating that the citizens from Silver City were planning to petition Congress "at its next session to disenfranchise

every New Mexican who cannot speak, read, and write the English language."⁵³

The Spanish American War was a brief military encounter, but for the very first time native New Mexicans were called to service in an international conflict involving their country and Spain. Instead of basking in glory and filling the ranks of the military in great numbers, New Mexicans found themselves defending their position as citizens of the United States. They were able to fend off adversity and the humiliation and criticism of 1898, and they persisted in claiming their loyalty and duty to their country.

New Mexicans also continued to favor statehood which had evaded them for fifty years. Many of the attacks on Hispanics centered on their insistence on speaking and preserving their native language and the fact that many did not yet speak English. *La Voz del Pueblo* and other Spanish newspapers in New Mexico consistently encouraged the people to retain their language, but also praised the importance of learning English. In response to the many attacks on the Spanish language and New Mexicans in 1898, *La Voz* affirmed that it favored passage of a law that required a rigid education in English in all schools. The editors wanted all children to read, speak, and write English and to learn their country's Constitution from memory. But, they concluded, "this is much different to the despotic barbarism which

threatens to disenfranchise thousands of individuals who because of many circumstances have not yet learned their country's language."⁵⁴

Public schools were already teaching both English and Spanish, but apparently some of rural schools were placing more emphasis on the Spanish language. This issue continued to fester during the first decade of the 20th Century, but by 1910, it no longer seemed to threaten New Mexicans as a reason for keeping them from statehood. That year, Congress finally passed an act placing the New Mexico Territory on its final course to becoming a state.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER XI

1. Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1940), pp. 38.

2. *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 12, 1898.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., March 19, 1898.

5. Ibid., February 26, 1898.

6. Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, p.39; *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 30, 1898; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 23, 1898.

7. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 23, 1898. This issue of the *Optic* carried a translated copy of the article which appeared in *La Voz del Pueblo*.

8. Clifford P. Westermeier, "Teddy's Terrors: The New Mexican Volunteers of 1898," *NMHR*, XXVII(1952), p. 117.

9. *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 30, 1898; Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, p. 42; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 9, 1898.

10. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 22, 1898; See also Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, p. 38.

11. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 25, 26, 1898.

12. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 26, 1898.

13. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 26, 1898.

14. *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 30, 1898; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 9, 1898.

15. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 27, 1898.

16. Ibid., April 26, 1898.

17. *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 30, 1898; The six other Hispanos who enlisted during the first call were José Marcelo Baca, J. T. Sandoval, José L. Durán, José Brito, Abel B. Durán, and George W. Armijo. Of these, it appears

that only Baca was from Las Vegas. Armijo, who was from Albuquerque, was former Congressional Delegate José Francisco Chávez' grandson. His father, Mariano Armijo, was editor of an Albuquerque newspaper, *El Nuevo Mundo* (*The New World*). See *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 9, 1898, for a complete list of all the soldiers who were mustered into the first four companies of New Mexico volunteers.

18. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 13, 1898.

19. *The Silver City Enterprise*, August 5, 1898, quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 13, 1898. Father John Roux was born in France and had not been in New Mexico very long. He had, however, taken out full naturalization papers as an American citizen three weeks before the war issue had begun. See the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 21, 1898.

20. *The Silver City Enterprise* is quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 16, 1898.

21. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 30, 1898.

22. Ibid., April 30, July 23, 1898.

23. Ibid., July 23, 1898.

24. Ibid., April 2, 1898.

25. Ibid.

26. *El Independiente*, May 12, 1898.

27. *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 4, 1898.

28. Ibid., August 13, 1898.

29. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 27, 1898.

30. *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 14, 1898.

31. Ibid., May 7, 1898.

32. Ibid., July 9, July 23, 1898. Herrera also submitted this letter to the *Las Vegas Daily Optic*.

33. Ibid., July 16, 1898.

34. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 26, 1898.

35. Ibid., March 19, 1898.

36. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 30, 1898. Lynch wrote a letter to Juan José Herrera after he read Herrera's defense of Hispanos in the *Las Vegas Daily Optic*. The contents of Lynch's letter were reprinted in *La Voz del Pueblo*.

37. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 19, 1898.

38. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1898.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *El Independiente*, May 5, 1898; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 6, 1898.

41. Commanger, *The American Destiny*, XI, pp. 34-40.

42. *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 6, 1898.

43. *Ibid.*, June 23, August 6, 1898.

44. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1898.

45. *Ibid.*, September 3, 1898.

46. *Ibid.*, September 10, December 17, 1898.

47. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1898.

48. *Ibid.*, August 11, 1898.

49. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 12, 1898; *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 16, 1898.

50. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 23, 1898.

51. *The New Mexican Review*, November 3, 1898.

52. *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 19, 1898. *La Voz* quotes this number as being provided to the *Ohio State Journal*, October 20, 1898, by A. L. Morrison from Santa Fe, while he was visiting there.

53. *New York Times*, August 24, 1898.

54. *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 23, 1898.

CHAPTER XII

STATEHOOD AND EMERGENCE INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

The issue of drafting an acceptable constitution which would open the door to New Mexico statehood was revived again in 1910 when Congress passed an Enabling Act allowing New Mexico to adopt a constitution and prepare for admission. Generations had passed since the first attempt to join the Union in 1848 failed, and many *nuevomexicanos* thought that 1910 would bring a repetition of all the other fruitless attempts. The patriotic fervor to join the Union, however, still remained in the hearts of many New Mexicans.

Article IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which had been ratified in February 1848, allowed for admission of New Mexico into the American Union. It stated that Mexicans who remained in those acquired territories "shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States..."¹ In October of the same year, the first convention was held in Santa Fe to discuss statehood and annexation into the Union.²

From that first meeting until 1911, the struggle to obtain fulfillment of the statehood promise had been

repeated continuously and fruitlessly. Throughout that long period, New Mexico had many supporters who favored statehood, but those who opposed it always prevailed. To a large extent, the continuous defeat of statehood was due to much ignorance and prejudice concerning the native Mexicans of the new territory. John C. Calhoun, who held outstanding influence among Southern Democrats, felt the Mexican War was immoral and unconstitutional from the beginning. He was especially wary of the outcome and opposed to the acquisition of a great deal of the Mexican territory by the United States.³ Early in 1848, following the end of the war, Calhoun spoke in Congress about race and incorporating the new acquisition:

I know further, sir, that we have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race—the free white race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of the kind, of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are Indians, and the other is composed chiefly of mixed tribes. I protest against such a union as that! Ours, sir, is the Government of a white race...And yet it is professed, and, talked about to erect these Mexicans

into a Territorial Government, and place them on an equality with the people of the United States.⁴

Attitudes on racial superiority such as those expressed by Calhoun made lasting impressions on other Americans, and those perceptions persisted throughout New Mexico's Territorial Period. Of the territorial governors who served through 1893, L. Bradford Prince was the only one who continuously advocated statehood for New Mexico, and only three of the twelve congressional delegates gave any support to that effort. During the Fortieth Congress, Delegate José Francisco Chávez made a vigorous speech in favor of New Mexico's admission as a State. Almost forty years later, in 1901, Chaves was honored as the "father of the statehood movement."⁵

For a long time business interests and large land holders in the territory were opposed to statehood. The Fiftieth Congress reviewed New Mexico's official requests for statehood in 1889 and 1890, but the only one ordered printed by Congress was a non-official petition titled "Protest of the Citizens of New Mexico Against the Admission of that territory into the Union of States." These individuals, who represented the business interests of New Mexico, declared that the Territory was unfit for statehood responsibilities. They preferred federal control from Washington to local rule by unscrupulous politicians. Two

other arguments they presented were that claims to Mexican and Spanish grants should be settled and that English should become the official language of the courts and public schools before statehood was granted.⁶

Two individuals who stood out in favor of the statehood movement at the turn of the century were Delegate Harvey B. Fergusson, who succeeded Thomas Catron in Congress, and Governor Miguel Antonio Otero. Fergusson was regarded as a champion of the people and a believer in education. In 1898, he convinced Congress to pass the Fergusson Act which gave millions of acres of land to New Mexico to be placed in trust for public schools, colleges and universities. The act provided a solid foundation for the improvement of public schools, and it made a substantial contribution in preparing New Mexicans "for admission to the full privileges of American citizens twelve years later."⁷

When Otero first entered New Mexico politics in 1885, he was opposed to statehood. He felt that the people were too poor to assume the responsibilities of a state and that higher taxation would also impose an extreme hardship on them.⁸ Later, as territorial governor of New Mexico, Otero used his annual reports to the Secretary of the Interior to plead and petition for statehood. In his comprehensive reports, he gradually dispelled much of the eastern ignorance regarding the resources and people of New Mexico.⁹

After 1900, the struggle for statehood acquired new

vigor and gradually grew to larger proportions. Governor Otero, in his 1901 report to the Secretary of the Interior, reported that before the railroad's arrival and the introduction and maintenance of a viable public school system, New Mexico was not prepared for statehood. By 1901, however, the railroad had improved communications with the outside world, thousands of people had immigrated to the territory, and literacy had grown substantially. This was reflected in five daily and fifty-eight weekly newspapers in the Territory.¹⁰

When Congress convened in December 1902, Senator Albert J. Beveridge, Chairman on the Committee on Territories, read from the majority report and recommended that statehood for Arizona and New Mexico be withheld indefinitely. He stated that these territories did not have sufficient population to become states and complained that the majority of the people in New Mexico were Spanish. In addition, a majority of the people spoke only Spanish, necessitating the use of interpreters in most court proceedings. Illiteracy was high at 33.2 per cent, and the extreme arid conditions of the Southwest prevented the expansion of agriculture.¹¹

Beveridge's majority report contrasted with Governor Otero's report which had been submitted to Washington only five months earlier. Otero said that only 18 per cent of the people in New Mexico were illiterate. He also applauded the development of agriculture and irrigation claiming that

more than 3,000 miles of irrigation ditches were in full operation. The livestock industry was also doing very well.¹²

One of the committee members, Matthew S. Quay from Pennsylvania, disagreed with Beveridge and claimed that it was unfair to say that New Mexico's population was insufficient for statehood. Quay's support, in part, was due to his friendship with William H. Andrews, who soon after served as New Mexico's last delegate to Congress (1905-1911). Quay argued that population had played no part in the admission of other territories to the Union. And in defense of the Spanish-speaking residents of the territory, Quay said that all of them, except for the very oldest, were born on American soil, entitling them to the full rights and privileges of American citizens. The committee member also complimented the great strides New Mexico had made in education. In support of New Mexico and the comments Quay had made, Delegate Bernard S. Rodey sent a letter to the Senate denying that New Mexico could no longer expand its irrigation capabilities. He further stated that the people of New Mexico strongly resented being referred to as "Mexicans" and "Foreigners."¹³

Other New Mexicans and supporters in Congress continued the argument and quest for statehood throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Territorial newspapers grew in influence and gradually advocated for statehood

during this period. Max Frost of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* is credited with being the most influential newspaperman of New Mexico during the statehood drive. His paper was constantly defending the political and civil rights of Hispanos and promoting their educational growth. R. E. Twitchell gave Frost credit for molding public opinion through the columns of his newspaper stating that he was unsurpassed by any journalist in the Southwest.¹⁴

Although the Spanish press normally receives little credit for this statehood drive, many Spanish newspapers pushed the issue for years. Preeminent among them was *La Voz del Pueblo* from Las Vegas. As shown earlier, it was founded in Santa Fe by Enrique H. Salazar as a strong voice of the Democratic Party in supporting statehood. That effort failed again in Congress, and the newspaper was moved to Las Vegas by the middle of 1890.¹⁵ In Las Vegas, *La Voz* established an aggressive position and reputation as a defender of the rights of *nuevomexicanos*. Although it no longer focused on statehood, *La Voz* periodically addressed that issue whenever it surfaced.

El Independiente, *La Voz'* Republican counterpart, was also an active supporter of Hispano civil rights and promoter of statehood for New Mexico. These two newspapers, and other Spanish newspapers throughout New Mexico, continued to advocate statehood and other societal concerns affecting Hispanos until the territory was admitted into the

Union. The Spanish press had a large circulation throughout New Mexico, and it is probable that the readership was much greater than that of the English newspapers at the close of the Territorial Period. In 1899, *La Voz* claimed to have a circulation of three thousand copies—more than any other newspaper in the territory, daily or weekly, Spanish or English. The newspaper reported that its circulation reached all of New Mexico, parts of Texas, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, California, and Northern Mexico.¹⁶

During the Spanish American War, the controversial issue of Hispanic disloyalty had brought many charges that native New Mexicans were not deserving of statehood. That year, Manuel C. de Baca, a Las Vegas attorney, was appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction by Governor Otero. He was appointed to replace Plácido Sandoval who had resigned from the position.¹⁷ A strong supporter of education and the rights of Hispanics, one of C. de Baca's first mandates as New Mexico's head of instruction was to see that both Spanish and English text books were used in public schools where the majority of the children were of Spanish-speaking descent.¹⁸ This drew the ire of people in parts of the territory, especially in Albuquerque and Silver City. The *Silver City Enterprise* quickly concluded that this action proved that the people of New Mexico sympathized with Spain and that they were apathetic in volunteering to fight in the war. It continued that

a law should be adopted where all those persons who claim those privileges should be required to read and write English, and Spanish textbooks should be excluded from the schools. If this were to happen, the Territory could be admitted as a State, but now, it should not be admitted, notwithstanding that it has been two generations under the American flag.¹⁹

Although similar arguments claimed that their obstinate determination to retain Spanish was keeping them from statehood, New Mexicans continued to praise their language and argue the advantages of preserving it for posterity. In 1889, Jesús María H. Alarid had written a poem "*El idioma español*" where he recognized the importance of learning the "national language," English. However, Alarid also extolled the importance of retaining Spanish. His final strophe concluded it was important "That English and Castilian together govern the American soil."²⁰ In 1902, editors from another Spanish-language newspaper from Wagon Mound provided a strong defense for *nuevomexicanos*, their intellectual and educational attainments, and the need to preserve the Spanish language in New Mexico. *El Combate* stated proudly:

Ignorance in literature, which existed among our people during a remote period,

has disappeared forever, and in its place we find a youthful generation which is growing in education, culture, and intellectual development. We believe that the palpitating question on the Castilian language should not be an obstacle, whether it be in form of a pretext, which might impede our right to statehood, although it is certain that the United States government through the present epoch has accepted the use of the Castilian language. Our beautiful language originated in Castile, and our natural dialect has been used in New Mexico before and after these lands were acquired by the American government, and each day it becomes more necessary and important to use it among ourselves; and to make it disappear from the American continent shall be a major obstacle.²¹

The *Las Vegas Daily Optic* occasionally favored statehood, but it cautioned that the new constitution should contain certain safeguards. In 1901, it proclaimed that the constitution should contain a limit on taxation; and it called for compulsory education and the Australian ballot law that would allow people to vote in secret. It also

asked that the lands given to New Mexico for public instruction should not be sold or leased for a period of over twenty years.²²

The walls of prejudice that had kept New Mexico from statehood gradually crumbled as attitudes and the politics of Congress shifted favorably towards admission. The two Spanish newspapers in Las Vegas, *La Voz del Pueblo* and *El Independiente*, continued to address the critical issue of statehood and the future of Hispanos throughout the first decade of the century. *The Las Vegas Advertiser* and the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* also remained abreast of those issues that leaned towards statehood.

Polemics on the issue still focused on education and the native language of Hispanics. One Las Vegas minister, a Mr. Skinner, provoked heated rebuttals from Hispanics when he complained that not ten percent of the people in New Mexico were educated. The people argued that statements such as these contributed greatly to the "ignorance of the cultured East" and the biases against New Mexico and statehood.²³

In 1910, *El Independiente* went so far as to blame much of New Mexico's misfortune on Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*. They called the book the "gospel precursor to slander" and blamed it as the major source of the negative images easterners held about New Mexico and its people. The editors also said that John Bigelow had written the book as

a ghost writer.²⁴ New Mexico had developed a bad name in the eastern states because of the false information being provided by individuals who lived here. These ungrateful individuals, who bit the hand that fed them, held a deep hostility towards New Mexico, the newspaper concluded.²⁵

In 1910, when elections were being held to elect the Constitutional Convention in the territory, Populist Republicans who broke away from the main Republican Party joined ranks with Democrats. Together they formed "citizens' ballots" and a "fusionist" effort throughout New Mexico. They were optimistic that through the merger they could gain control of the Territorial Constitutional Convention. They failed, however, and all of the delegates to the convention were Republicans.²⁶

The San Miguel County delegation to the convention included five prominent Hispanos. Brothers Margarito and Eugenio Romero were among them. Charles A. Spiess, an eminent lawyer from Las Vegas, was chosen to chair the proceedings at the convention.²⁷

Once the Republican-dominated convention finished drafting the proposed constitution, Democrat Ezequiel C. de Baca, through his editorial columns in *La Voz del Pueblo*, argued that the people wanted a state, but not at any cost. He stated that many had been arguing for the "initiative" and "referendum" and a direct primary nominating system in the constitution, but the Republican delegates had omitted

them from the new constitution. *La Voz* stated that through this action Republicans were implying that New Mexicans had not reached a level of political sophistication where people could make good use of their electoral prerogatives and that it would be too dangerous to place all those faculties in the hands of the voting populace.²⁸

By 1910, Ezequiel C. de Baca was a highly respected resident of San Miguel County and president of the county's Democratic Central Commission. He called a public meeting to discuss the proposed State Constitution. In addition, the primary purpose of the meeting was to carry recommendations of either rejection or adoption of the constitution to the Territorial Democratic Convention which would meet in Santa Fe on December 17, 1910. As Democrats reviewed the constitution at the county meeting, a few deficiencies were noted. C. de Baca was appointed the county representative to convey these concerns to the Territorial Convention.²⁹

The Democrats argued that the sentiment of some San Miguel County representatives who went to Santa Fe was one of opposition to the constitution for certain flaws they felt it contained. Among those flaws were that the constitution was very hard to amend; it called for a spendthrift judicial system which imposed unnecessary tax burdens on the people; proposed salaries for public officials were too high, imposing an additional burden on the people; and the constitution did not propose any method for approving an

efficient and honest law on elections or one calling for stiff penalties for those committing fraud at elections. The Territorial Democratic Convention strongly recommended rejection of the proposed constitution on the tenet that it would be against the best interests of the people of New Mexico. It urged everyone to vote against the constitution at the January 21, 1911 referendum.³⁰

Ezequiel C. de Baca argued strenuously that the new constitution did not adequately protect the rights of *mexicano* children in relation to their education. That section of the proposed constitution stated:

Children of Spanish descent will not be refused admission into any public school or any other educational institution within the State, nor will there be any separate schools for children of that descent, instead, they will be allowed to attend the schools attended by other children, regardless of their nationality, and the legislature will punish anyone violating this section. This section will not be amended except through the popular vote, in an election where at least three-quarters of the voters in the State and at least two-thirds of the county voters have voted

for the amendment.³¹

C. de Baca argued that this section was very weak because there was no enforcement provision guaranteeing punishment of the violators would be carried out. He felt Hispano delegates should have demanded that the clause be revised to read that violators would be subject to severe punishment, naming the consequences in the constitution. He also felt the law could not be amended unless there was a unanimous vote in the Senate. Ezequiel C. de Baca expressed his opinion that the constitutional delegates appeared to only care about protecting the present generation and leaving future ones exposed to the possibility of losing their rights. He further editorialized that the Constitutional Convention had an opportunity to prove its sincerity to the Hispano community, but it had expressed its bad faith instead.³²

Democrats and Populists earnestly petitioned New Mexico voters to cast their ballots against the proposed constitution, which they felt was designed to favor the Republican Party and its continuing reign over the political destiny of New Mexico. But despite their concerns and objections, a great majority voted for adoption of the constitution at the January election in 1911.³³

The national elections of November 1910 had given the Democrats a working majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. This eventually benefitted New Mexico in her

statehood quest. Congressman Flood from Virginia was the new chairman of the House Committee on Territories. His presence enabled the New Mexico Democratic leaders to obtain a Congressional proviso in the enabling act which injected a proposed amendment to New Mexico's constitution. The proposed amendment reflected what the Democrats had failed to obtain in New Mexico's Constitutional Convention. The Flood amendment passed Congress and was to be submitted to the people of New Mexico for approval at their first election. It would be known as the "blue ballot" amendment at the forthcoming election.³⁴

On August 21, 1911, President William Howard Taft signed the resolution admitting New Mexico and Arizona into the Union. Taft then informed Territorial Governor William J. Mills to issue a proclamation calling for an election of state and county officers, members of the legislature, and two United States representatives. The people were also called to vote on the "blue ballot" amendment which would make the constitution easier to amend.³⁵

As the 1911 election approached, the chances for Republican victory in New Mexico appeared encouraging because they still maintained political control in most of the counties. Many Republicans wanted to nominate Secundino Romero, Eugenio's son, for governor, but H. O. Bursum was nominated instead. This brought opposition from many Republicans who were trying to keep him from running.³⁶

Secundino Romero, one of Ezequiel C. de Baca's cousins and affiliate of *El Independiente*, received the nomination to run for Secretary of State against Antonio Lucero.³⁷

The Republican Party felt Bursum was a weak candidate because he had been a poor administrator while he held the position of Superintendent of the Territorial Penitentiary and had subsequently been forced to resign. Disgruntled Republicans who opposed Bursum consequently turned their support to the Democrats. Due to the laxity Bursum had displayed as administrator of the penitentiary, many of the Republicans who were anxious to see a successful new state government felt it safer in the hands of the Democrats.³⁸

The first State Democratic Convention met in Santa Fe on October 5, 1911. More than five hundred delegates were present from the twenty-six counties. Highlights of the convention were a lengthy discussion on the anticipated support from the Progressive Republicans and a strong recommendation to New Mexican voters to vote for the passage of the "blue ballot" amendment. The Convention nominations for the public officials to head the new state government were W. C. McDonald for Governor, Ezequiel C. de Baca for Lieutenant Governor, and Antonio Lucero for Secretary of State.³⁹

C. de Baca and Lucero had been editors of *La Voz del Pueblo* for almost twenty years. By now they jointly owned fifty percent of the newspaper. Ezequiel C. de Baca was the

only one who had never served as an elected official before, but he surfaced as the most popular candidate for lieutenant governor due to his outstanding public record in territorial and Democratic Party politics for the past twenty years.

As the political campaign progressed, *El Independiente*, *La Voz'* Republican counterpart and rival since 1894, characterized C. de Baca and Lucero as a "yoke" of the Democratic Party. In response to the opposing newspaper, *La Voz* pointed out that both C. de Baca and Lucero had been nominated spontaneously and unanimously by the more than five hundred delegates at the Democratic Convention in Santa Fe, despite the fact that neither one had campaigned for a nomination.⁴⁰

La Voz del Pueblo went so far as to declare the political campaign as a cause parallel to the Mexican Revolution which had just deposed Porfirio Díaz from his despotic control of the people and government in Mexico. In the same manner, the editors of *La Voz* felt that the Republican Party in New Mexico had been in power for many years creating a political oligarchy.⁴¹

The eve of the elections in Las Vegas was highlighted by the arrest of many Democrats in the Old Town and Ojos Calientes precincts by County Sheriff Secundino Romero, candidate for Secretary of State, and his deputies. Most of the jailed Democrats were supposed to work for the party on election day. The arrests not only kept them from working

the polls but also made it impossible for them to vote. Adolfo C. de Baca, Ezequiel's oldest son, was among those arrested. Félix Valdez, Democratic candidate for State Representative, was also arrested in what *La Voz* termed an "intimidation and harassment affront." Sheriff Romero refused to release anyone on bond. Former Judge E. V. Long, who was then a practicing attorney, approached Romero to post bail for some of the arrested Democrats, and a heated exchange of words developed between Long and the Sheriff. Long was struck on the side of the head by Romero, and as a result, he lost the hearing of one ear.⁴²

W. C. McDonald, Ezequiel C. de Baca, and Antonio Lucero were eventually elected to head New Mexico's first state government. The schism which developed among the Republicans in nominating Bursum over Romero for governor probably aided the Democratic victory for the higher elected positions in state government. The Republican Party, however, still managed to elect a majority to the first State Legislature which was the key to the maintenance and control of state politics.⁴³

The Constitution of New Mexico provided that the first state officers would hold office until January 1, 1917. The special five-year term that began on January 1, 1912 had been entered due to the uncertainty of when the first state election would be held, whether it would be November, 1911 or November, 1912. Later, on November 3, 1914, a consti-

tutional amendment was passed changing the term of office to two years.⁴⁴ The "blue ballot" amendment, making the Constitution of New Mexico easier to amend, also passed overwhelmingly by a 12,066 majority.⁴⁵

Following the state election, the President of the United States signed the proclamation officially admitting New Mexico into the Union on January 5, 1912.⁴⁶ Lieutenant Governor Ezequiel C. de Baca and Secretary of State Antonio Lucero consequently became Las Vegas and San Miguel County's first native sons to serve in two of the state's highest elected positions. They entered a five-year term which would allow them to work for the best interests of the people of New Mexico under the new state form of government.

New Mexico's admission into the Union in 1912 closed the final door on a long and arduous struggle which lasted sixty years. Citizens from Las Vegas and San Miguel County had long been involved in this effort in which they rose above adversity to achieve a more meaningful status as citizens of the United States. Since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, and after New Mexico achieved territorial status, the *hispano-mexicanos* who settled the Las Vegas Land Grant had been relegated to a second-class citizenship status.

Easterners and other displeased Americans spoke against New Mexico using different arguments to keep the territory

from reaching statehood. Some argued that the population was too small, while others complained that the territory's resources and productivity were deficient. However, foremost of the reasons that kept New Mexico submerged in the abyss of territorial status was the preponderance in population of a racially and culturally different people. Published books, personal narratives, government reports, and American newspapers penned by easterners continually placed *nuevomexicanos* in the negative limelight of racial prejudice. It was difficult for the "mixed bloods" and "inferior culture" of New Mexico to escape the quill of insensitive and inflammatory frameworks.

The obstinate persistence of New Mexicans to preserve a different language and religion also served to engender feelings against them—feelings and attitudes that kept these ill-fated sons of New Mexico fighting the undercurrents of bias and dominance. But they prevailed. The people of New Mexico—many times led by the aggressive leadership of Las Vegas and San Miguel County residents—maintained their determined fight until 1912 when Congress bestowed them with statehood and the accompanying status of full-fledged citizenship.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER XII

1. Ellis, *New Mexico Historic Documents*, p. 14; Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, p. 614.
2. Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846-1912* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968), pp. 14-15; Read, *Illustrated History of New Mexico*, p. 614.
3. Fredrick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 152-153.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 162. Merk quotes Calhoun's speech from the Cong. Globe, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., 98 (January 4, 1848).
5. Marion Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood, 1895-1912," *NMHR*, XIV(1939), p. 6.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
8. Otero, *My Life on the Frontier*, II, p. 188.
9. Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood," p. 25.
10. *The Report of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 23; Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood," p. 121-122.
11. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood*, p. 215.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
14. Porter A. Stratton, *The Territorial Press of New Mexico, 1834-1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), pp. 202-203; Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood," p. 131.
15. *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 8, 1890.
16. *Ibid.*, January 7, 1899.

17. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 7, 1898. Manuel C. de Baca was a prominent Las Vegas attorney and journalist. He had published *El Sol de Mayo* in the early 1890s and also worked with *El Independiente*, both in company with his cousins, the affluent and politically powerful Romeros. C. de Baca was great-grandson of Luis María, first colonizer of the Las Vegas Grant in 1821. One of his political rivals was Ezequiel, his younger brother. Ezequiel was a Democrat and editor of *La Voz del Pueblo*.

18. *The Silver City Enterprise*, as quoted in the *Raton Range*, July 14, 1898.

19. *The Silver City Enterprise*, as quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 16, 1898.

20. Arellano, *Los pobladores nuevo mexicanos y su poesía*, p. 38.

21. *El Combate*, December 6, 1902; Also see Arellano, *Los pobladores nuevo mexicanos y su poesía*, p. 6.

22. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, October 15, 1901.

23. *The Las Vegas Advertiser*, May 15, 29, 1904.

24. *El Independiente*, April 28, 1910.

25. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1905.

26. *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 10, 1910.

27. Perrigo, *Gateway to the Gallinas*, p. 90.

28. *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 19, 1910.

29. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1910.

30. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1910.

31. Proposed New Mexico Constitution, Section 10, as quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 24, 1910.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1911.

34. George Curry, *George Curry, 1861-1947*, H. B. Hening, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958), p. 257.

35. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, II, p. 594.
36. Perrigo, *Gateway to the Gallinas*, p. 90.
37. *La Voz del Pueblo*, October 28, 1911.
38. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, II, p. 599.
39. *La Voz del Pueblo*, October 7, 1911.
40. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1911.
41. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1911. This assessment of Díaz was in contrast to the support and praise *La Voz* gave him during the Spanish American War.
42. *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 11, 1911.
43. Coan, *A History of New Mexico*, II, pp. 496-497.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, II, pp. 602-603.
46. *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The people who left San Miguel del Bado to settle Las Vegas Grandes were typical colonists of the late Spanish and early Mexican Periods. They had an established reputation for persevering in the harsh environments of Mexico's northern frontier. Their early societal encounters included continuous clashes and conflict with the mountain and plains Indians. And being preoccupied daily with survival and maintenance of their economic systems, they had little time to establish complex social or economic institutions. They lacked affluence and their life-style was unsophisticated, but they held steadfastly to the culture and traditions which they brought when they first trekked north from Mexico's interior provinces.

The arrival of the first Americans and other foreign travelers to the Las Vegas area via the Santa Fe Trail brought these New Mexicans in contact with new cultures. They began to experience cultural and economic infusions from the American east, and their material culture was enhanced with new goods and novelties brought across the prairies. Following the Mexican War and Kearny's occupation of New Mexico, the new political and social order brought to the territory continued to expose the native people to other

material and non-material cultural and social experiences.

The culture and self-sufficient pastoral-agrarian society of the Las Vegas Land Grant colonists continued to undergo new transformations throughout the Territorial Period. During the Civil War and numerous campaigns against the Indians, they volunteered for military service. They readily adjusted to the demands that were placed on them by the dominant American socio-political and economic systems.

This period during early American rule also allowed Las Vegas to emerge as a leading ranching community and trade center. Better protection against the Indians prompted the expansion of new settlements on the land grant and on public domain extending into the eastern plains. Once the Indians were finally subjugated, the people continued to enjoy new prosperity and status. That prosperity allowed the people of Las Vegas to become a territorial leader in establishing public schools and sectarian education during the 1870s.

Soon after, the arrival of the railroad in 1879 and the emergence of Las Vegas as a boom town caused a major cultural collision between Las Vegas, other land grant occupants, and the tide of new immigrants to New Mexico. The people continued to adopt new technological innovations and economic institutions brought to New Mexico. Las Vegas accommodated rapidly and adjusted to these pressures of Americanization, while the rural occupants on the land grant adjusted at a slower pace. *Mexicanos* soon assumed new

societal roles as educators, civic leaders, politicians and members of an emerging working class. A visible, middle class of Hispanos also continued to grow.

Las Vegans addressed their intellectual growth and development by establishing literary and other mutual benefit societies during the 1880s. This movement was widespread and reached many other New Mexicans. The people gradually developed an ethnic consciousness as they became fully aware of their role in American society. In addition, through various mediums of expression, they responded to local and territorial issues which had a direct effect on them.

In 1890, the poorer class of *mexicanos* on the Las Vegas Grant rose in a protest movement against encroachments on their lands. Simultaneously, they voiced their concerns about educational, political, and social issues of the time. Later in 1902, they engaged in another demonstration and protest to protect their landed interests. They pursued legal channels and were able to achieve partial success by acquiring clear titles to their agricultural plots and home sites.

As the Nineteenth Century came to a close, the citizens of Las Vegas and New Mexico found themselves embroiled in controversy over their loyalty and patriotism during the Spanish American War. Again, they persevered and held their ground in refuting charges and proving their loyalty to the

United States. Finally, as they entered the Twentieth Century, the lingering issue of statehood was successfully resolved, and two Hispanics from the progressive community of Las Vegas were elected to two of the highest positions in New Mexico's first state government.

During the course of a century, the people who settled San Miguel del Bado and later the Las Vegas Land Grant emerged as societal leaders among New Mexicans. They survived the ravages of time and adversity to emerge as a progressive community by the early 1900s. By the time New Mexico acquired statehood in 1912, the descendants of those who had colonized Las Vegas and the land grant were well prepared and on their way to confronting the emerging challenges of the Twentieth Century.

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