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Samuel B. Watrous: New Mexico Pioneer

Alexia M. Kosmider

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March 28, 1984
SAMUEL B. WATROUS: NEW MEXICO PIONEER

BY

ALEXIA M. KOSMIDER

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in American Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 1983
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Watrous journeyed to New Mexico in 1835 and moved to the mining camp of Dolores, situated in the San Pedro Mountains south of Santa Fe. He lived there for a period of ten years. He married Tomacita Crespín and raised a large family. Samuel supported his family by selling goods and trading deerskins to the miners of Dolores.

By the year 1848 or 1849, Watrous had saved enough money to buy a portion of the John Scolly grant and built his home at the picturesque setting where the Sapello and Mora Rivers flow together, some twenty miles northeast of Las Vegas. Despite the incessant Indian attacks upon his ranch, the harshness of the climate, and the perils of living isolated from any major settlement, Samuel Watrous prospered by selling goods not only to the local residents, but also to the people traveling the Santa Fe Trail, and by farming and ranching. Shortly after moving to La Junta, as the settlement was commonly called, Watrous and his friend William Tipton started a business freighting goods back and forth along the Santa Fe Trail to Missouri.
By the end of the 1870s the Indians of the Plains had been subjugated and placed upon their respective reservations. And when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad roared by the Watrous ranch in 1879 on its way to the town of Las Vegas, New Mexico, Samuel Watrous, along with many New Mexicans, witnessed the passing of an era. The stagecoach line discontinued service from Gregg's Tavern in nearby La Junta. Samuel Watrous and other businessmen stopped freighting goods to Missouri. The small rural community of La Junta, renamed Watrous, New Mexico, contained several general stores, two churches, a saloon, new houses, and a bustling railroad station. Samuel Watrous, an aging affluent rancher, had helped make some of these changes possible. This thesis takes the fragmented pieces of Samuel Watrous' life and presents the reader with a historically accurate account while showing his major contributions to New Mexico's history.
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INTRODUCTION

On a chilly March morning in 1886, Samuel Watrous rose early, as was his custom, and softly closed his bedroom door. He fondled a revolver that lay next to his bedside table. Aiming at his head, he fired the gun, then fired a second time. The first shot ricocheted, lodging itself in the ceiling of the room. Yet the second shot pierced his skull, thus ending the life of a prominent pioneer of northern New Mexico. In his lifetime, Samuel Watrous had witnessed an incredible change in the landscape. No longer could an individual stand at his doorstep and watch thundering herds of buffalo, black and powerful, run silhouetted against the mountains, nor could one experience the euphoric sensation of treading a hidden path through the forest. Now, like obedient soldiers, telegraph poles marched off toward the flat horizon to an unknown destiny, and the shrill of a locomotive whistle beckoned in the distance. The placid community of Watrous, New Mexico, named after its founding father, Samuel B. Watrous, had been transformed into a thriving town in the span of Watrous' lifetime. Like many early
figures who helped tame the wilderness of New Mexico, Samuel Watrous was not a native but was raised in the eastern United States and journeyed to New Mexico to seek his fortune. Unlike many, he became an affluent yet tragic figure in his later years.

At the time of Samuel Watrous' arrival in New Mexico in 1835, few Americans had ventured out to this remote country under Mexican rule, where the people spoke Spanish, adhered to Mexican traditions and beliefs, and at times looked unfavorably upon the American entrepreneurs who came seeking furs in the mountains of Taos or who brought goods down the Santa Fe Trail to trade.

Samuel Watrous, then a young man, had severed himself from familial connections and friends and immersed himself in the Mexican culture. The excitement of the rustic backwood mining camp of Dolores, situated in the San Pedro Mountains south of Santa Fe, was much to his liking. He settled there, built himself a log cabin, and took a Mexican wife, Tomacita Crespín, and raised a large family. Samuel supported his family by selling goods and trading deerskins to the miners of Dolores.

By the year 1849 or 1849, Watrous had saved enough money to buy a portion of the John Scully grant and build his home at the picturesque setting where the Sapello and Mora Rivers flow together, some twenty miles
northeast of Las Vegas. This grant had been awarded in 1843 to a group of early Spanish-Anglo settlers when Manuel Armijo was the Mexican governor. Years later the grant was recognized by the American government when General Kearney became the American military governor of the territory in 1846.

Watrous and his family began cultivating the land and herding cattle upon the lush meadows of La Junta Valley, as the rural settlement was commonly called. However, like many of the settlers who had moved to this northern region, Samuel Watrous experienced the wrath of the Utes, Jicarilla Apaches, Comanches, and their allies, the Kiowas, who vehemently disapproved of settlers encroaching upon their hunting grounds. Indian-white relations, which had been deteriorating for two centuries, became one of Samuel Watrous' main concerns. For almost twenty years he wrote letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, to the territorial newspapers, and to various New Mexico politicians criticizing current Indian policies and offering his own suggestions for resolving the Indian problem.

Despite the incessant Indian raids upon his ranch, the severity of the climate, and the perils of living isolated from any major settlement, Samuel Watrous prospered by selling goods not only to the local people, but
also to those traveling the Santa Fe Trail, and by farming and ranching. Shortly after moving to La Junta, Watrous and his friend William Tipton started a business freighting goods back and forth along the Santa Fe Trail to Missouri. When the U.S. Army moved departmental headquarters to Fort Union in 1851, seven miles from the Watrous ranch, Samuel Watrous sold beef to this new military post. Never ceasing to be industrious, sometime after the Civil War Watrous and several other investors constructed a woolen factory, one of the first of its kind in the territory, near the Watrous ranch. The company manufactured a variety of woolen products, which they sold to the residents of New Mexico.

By the end of the 1870s the fierce raiders of the Plains had been subjugated and banished to their respective reservations. And when the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad roared by the Watrous ranch in 1879 on its way to the town of Las Vegas, New Mexico, Samuel Watrous, along with many New Mexicans, witnessed the passing of an era. The stagecoach line discontinued service from Gregg's Tavern, situated near La Junta. Samuel Watrous and other businessmen stopped freighting goods to Missouri. The small rural community of La Junta, renamed Watrous, New Mexico, contained several general stores, two churches, a saloon, new houses, and a bustling
railroad station. Samuel Watrous, an aging, wealthy New Mexican rancher, had helped make some of these changes possible.

While Samuel Watrous watched the dramatic transformation taking place around him, his later life was marred by sudden financial reversals and by the mysterious death of his favorite son, Samuel Junior. On the morning of March 25, 1886, the New Mexican reported that Samuel Watrous had committed suicide. However, Samuel Watrous' granddaughter, Belina Watrous Wildenstein, refuted the newspaper's account, claiming his death resulted from interfamilial strife. Unfortunately, neither the newspaper nor the family account concerning Samuel's death seems totally satisfactory, nor can either be verified without further documentation. The bizarre and untimely death of Samuel Watrous seems destined to remain a mystery. And either version is certainly an undignified ending for such an important New Mexican pioneer.

The biography of Samuel Watrous presents several problematic concerns for the researcher. Because of the abundance of material found in the Bureau of Indian Affairs records, the territorial newspapers, and the Fort Union National Loan Collection, the text tends to accentuate the political Samuel Watrous who spent the majority of his time fighting Bureau of Indian Affairs officials
and participating in New Mexican politics. However, it is probable that Watrous concerned himself mostly with supervising his various family-oriented businesses and interacting with family members and the local residents of La Junta Valley, where he lived. Unfortunately, however, the documentation is scant in these particular areas; consequently, the thesis emphasizes Samuel Watrous as a political man rather than as a business or family man.

Although Samuel Watrous was a prolific writer during the 1860s, very little personal correspondence from his later life has survived. Thus, much of this period is based upon short family histories written by his eldest son, Joseph, and taped interviews with his grandchildren, Johanna Guerin, Louisa MacNamara, and Carrie Roulet. As all researchers know, oral histories have their own peculiar problems and at times reflect historical inaccuracies or family biases. This researcher has attempted to take the fragmented pieces of Samuel Watrous' life and present the reader with a historically accurate account, and to show his major contributions to New Mexico's history.
CHAPTER 1

Information on the early life of Samuel Watrous is sketchy, but a story can be pieced together from the census data, tombstone markings, and a couple of accounts which do exist about Watrous' early years. The history starts with Erastus Watrous, the father of Samuel, described as a tranquil and judicious man, who was a hatter by trade, lived in Montpelier, Vermont, and married three times. His first wife, Sophia Worthington, died of dysentery in 1802, leaving behind three children: Charles, Sophia, and an idiot child. Needing a wife to attend to his young children, Erastus soon married Nancy Bowman. Samuel Watrous, born in the year 1809, appears to be the only child from this marriage. The records fail to indicate what happened to Nancy Bowman; however, in 1819, Erastus married Sophia Isham Foote. Two children, Daniel and Sarah, were born from this marriage. Then when the decrepit, sickly Erastus died in 1828, Samuel went to live with an uncle.

The Puritan ethic of arduous labor and frugal living permeated Samuel's new existence. The impetuous and
cantankerous uncle, prodding and scolding, would rouse the sleepy-eyed Samuel to attend to the farm chores long before the sun had streaked the horizon. In these formative years, Samuel escaped the rigors of this severe and regimented life by venturing west, a childhood fantasy of many youth. Not only for Walt Whitman, but for young Watrous, "the Atlantic seaboard represented the past shadows of Europe, cities of sophistication, a derivative and conventional life and literature." Shedding his past experiences, friends and relatives, and even his name, Watrous pushed westward, gambling everything upon the future. Joseph recounts that his father left the East because of his frail health. But perhaps more importantly, Samuel sought sanctuary from the constraining social customs and beliefs which were an issue that surfaced and grated upon his conscience when he was under his uncle's supervision. Whatever his reason for leaving New England, Samuel first stopped in Missouri to join a caravan of merchants bound for Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Samuel Watrous was originally named after his father, but the name Erastus had a jarring and disconcerting sound to the ears of young Watrous, causing him to shrug off all semblance of ancestry and to adopt the name of Samuel. As retold by Joseph, the eldest son of Samuel, his father's name resulted from a wager made with a companion named Samuel. In the braggadocio of the frontiersman, Watrous
boasted that he was a better shot than his friend. Betting his name of Erastus against his friend's name, Watrous won the wager and took his friend's name of Samuel, becoming a new man to venture into the foreign and alien land.8

In 1835, the year of Samuel's arrival in New Mexico, few Americans had ventured to this remote, mystical country still under the domain of the Mexican government. Reflecting their rich Spanish, Mexican, and Indian heritages, most of the people spoke a Spanish dialect, prayed in the Catholic churches, and adhered to the laws of the Mexican governor. The population was composed of individuals, some of whom purported to have been directly descended from Spanish conquistadors, their blood untainted by mixed marriages. Others, living in lonely isolation, had married into the Indian tribes, their proud Spanish features slowly coalescing with the features of the indigenous population. The third element was the Pueblo Indians, who a century earlier had become the allies of the conquerors. Linked to the United States by the Santa Fe Trail and to Old Mexico by the Camino Real, New Mexico at times seemed remote from the rest of the world. New Mexico wrestled with her own peculiar problems of exorbitant church taxes, corrupt Mexican officials, budding revolutions, and incessant Indian raids on the villages and ranches. Yet a reckless breed of rugged
individual entrepreneurs were lured to New Mexico, which was laden with opulent opportunities for trapping, mining, and trading.

Because Samuel Watrous apparently failed to write to his relatives living in the East, little is known about his early life in New Mexico. In 1837, two years after moving to New Mexico, Samuel's first child, Joseph, was born in Taos. The identity of Joseph's mother remains shrouded in mystery; some of Watrous' descendants contend that Joseph was the son of Tomacita Crespín, a woman of Spanish ancestry, whom Samuel married later in his life.

After arriving in New Mexico, Samuel obtained a job as a clerk in one of the trading stores in Taos. The young man waited on the Spanish women who came to choose from the beautiful textiles imported from the East: broadcloth, muslin, and calico. During slow times he swapped hunting stories and weather predictions with the grizzled trappers who wandered into Taos to replenish their supply of beef jerky, beans, flour, and gunpowder and to debauch and frolic with the Spanish señoritas. In 1828, news had trickled into this northern outpost that a shepherd, tending his flock, stumbled across gold in the Ortiz mountains, located some twenty or so miles south of Santa Fe. Since then people had frantically combed the vicinity, seeking new deposits of the precious metal. Disillusioned with his mundane occupation in Taos and enticed by the possibilities of making a large fortune,
Samuel and his small son, Joseph, set out in the year 1839 or 1840 for the mining camps in the Ortiz Mountains.

Although New Mexico's mining enterprises never reached the notoriety of California's gold rush, the flow of gold from New Mexico provided a cash income to an otherwise poor and agricultural region. Several travelers made note in their journals of the mining activity in New Mexico. Josiah Gregg, experienced trader on the Santa Fe Trail, estimated the value of gold extracted from the New Mexico mines peaked during the years 1832-1835 at between $60,000 to $80,000 per year, but subsided in the following years to $30,000 to $40,000 per year. Gregg surmised that the slowdown in production was due to the lack of energy and incentive and not to a depletion of gold. George Ruxton, a young Englishman who visited New Mexico in 1846, guessed that the Old Placer, as the Ortiz gold field became known, had produced some $20,000 worth of gold from the time of its discovery in 1828 until the outbreak of the Mexican War. Furthermore, a scientific investigation was made of northern Mexico and California by Frederick A. Wislizenus in the years 1846-1848. Although he did not tabulate gold production in the Old Placer, after analyzing the ore from the local mines, Wislizenus concluded that the area was extremely rich in gold.

The community which sprang up around the Old Placer was called Real de Dolores, a burgeoning town of 1500
when Samuel and Joseph arrived in 1839 or 1840. Less than ten years later, Real de Dolores dwindled to some 200 residents who lived in dwellings clinging precariously to the sides of a narrow valley.\textsuperscript{13} Lieutenant J. A. Abert, U.S. Army, in 1846 described the town as "the most miserable we have seen yet, and the inhabitants, the most abject picture of squalid poverty."\textsuperscript{14} Noting further that though around 5000 sheep grazed in the neighboring valleys, Abert believed that most of the people panned for gold or worked in the mines. Seeing the workers hunched over their pans sifting the loosened earth for valuable gold flakes, Abert remarked, "one cannot but feel pity for these miserable wretches and congratulate himself that he does not possess a gold mine. Even the life of the poor pastures is much preferable to that of these diggers of gold."\textsuperscript{15}

The mining camp, thus devoid of the conveniences by which Abert and most Americans gauged the standards of civilization, such as comfortable housing, stores, and adequate roads, reflected the marginality and somewhat transitory nature of the community's inhabitants. He noted that a few Americans, mostly Texans, had wandered into the region. Some had purchased mines while others operated stores to furnish the miners with essential supplies.
When Frederick Wislizenus came to Dolores, one such store owner was Samuel Watrous. After being graciously invited into Samuel's modest home, Wislizenus remarked that "some fresh skins of grizzly bear were spread out on scaffolds, the sure American rifle stood in the corner, and everything else bore the character of the backwoodsman; but by his [Samuel's] intelligent conversation he showed himself a man of very good sense and an astute observer."16

Although primarily a hunter and merchant, Watrous was knowledgeable about the mining activities in the surrounding countryside. Watrous handed Wislizenus several gold specimens that he had found in his rambles through the mountains to inspect.17 He then guided Wislizenus down to a creek which flowed through Dolores so that they could both watch the workers panning for gold. The stream was filled with a multitude of men arguing and vying for a position on the bank of the stream. Wislizenus, astounded at the earnest and somewhat boisterous activity, remarked to his companion that the commotion resembled the bickering of people claiming fashionable city lots.

Most of the men panning for gold were New Mexicans, and the most common method which they used to extract the gold was archaic, tedious, and indeed not very profitable. Wislizenus recounted that the men were positioned in a
creek, usually dry, scooping up the dirt and placing it in a spacious and somewhat flat wooden bowl, called a batea, to which they then added water. Removing the large coarse pieces of gravel by hand, the workers shook the batea until little remained, so that the visible gold particles could then be picked out. The supply of gold so obtained fluctuated with the changing of the seasons. Generally, more gold was found during the rainy months since the gold was washed down by the waters of the stream. Occasionally a worker would discover a significant piece of gold, making his day's work worthwhile, but mostly the amount of gold found was so miniscule that an entire day's labor would not render the worker more than a quarter or half a dollar.

Wislizenus also traveled to a gold mine located a couple of miles west of Dolores called the Santo Niño, which was owned by a Frenchman, Juan Tournier, and his Mexican partners. At the time of Wislizenus' inspection, the mine had been operating for about a year and revealed signs of success. Wislizenus noted that Tournier had sunk a mining shaft to the depth of 40 varas, and workmen carried the ore in bags to the surface of the mine, where they transferred the bags of ore onto the backs of mules, who transported them to the amalgamation mill located in Dolores. Production at Santo Nino remained meager, since approximately 750 pounds of ore a day was mined, which amounted to about $12 a day profit.
Watrous and other Americans puzzled over the Mexican laws regarding the ownership of mining claims. In their eyes the regulations reflected an ambiguity not found in the American legal system. When a Mexican desired to work land not claimed by another individual, he merely applied to the nearest alcalde and requested permission. The claimant paid a small sum of money in return for privileges; however, if he did not begin prospecting within a year, the government seized his title and denied his claim. The presence of Americans added a new dimension to land ownership. In 1833 Teodosio Quintana expressed his agreement with the members of the Santa Fe ajuntamiento that unnaturalized foreigners (i.e., Americans) should not be allowed to mine in the mountains. He also suggested that a report should be compiled every eight days listing the number of immigrants and what they were doing in New Mexico.  

Foreigners such as Tournier evaded the law by taking on Mexican partners in their mining enterprises. Unable to escape the intent of Mexican law, Samuel Watrous and an American companion, a man named Dallam, were summoned by the alcalde of Tuerto in April of 1845 concerning this very matter. The official stated that Governor Manuel Armijo had ordered Watrous and Dallam to apply immediately for Mexican citizenship. Watrous judiciously bowed to the authorities and sent a letter with a military officer to Chihuahua to obtain the
appropriate documentation. This move, Watrous felt, would sanction their right to remain in New Mexico. Watrous later wrote Manuel Alvarez, American counsel, that if circumstances deteriorated in the capitol and the governor persisted in his interrogation, then he, Samuel Watrous, would personally travel into Santa Fe and confront the proper officials and resolve the problem. Watrous yielded willingly to the requests of the Mexican officials. The records do not show whether Samuel actually did become a naturalized citizen, a process which many of the early American trappers and traders went through when they settled in New Mexico.

Samuel Watrous remained in Dolores for many years, living like the backwoodsman that Wislizenus characterized. During this period, Samuel began living with Tomacita Crespín, the purported mother of Joseph. The first officially reported child of Samuel and Tomacita, Mary Antonette, was born in 1841. Emeteria, Maria, Louisa, Belina, and Samuel Junior soon followed—all born before the year 1849.

Joseph, reminiscing about those early and difficult days, stated that his father, in order to provide for his large family, was involved in numerous enterprises in addition to his store. As an outgrowth of his interest in hunting, Samuel dressed and tanned deer hides. As the demand for these increased, Watrous hired a man to hunt
and a tailor to sew deerskins into suits which he then sold to the trappers and miners of the surrounding area. Joseph remembers that his father was fond of hunting and was an excellent marksman. He also recollected that his father's favorite hunting dog, a greyhound, cost Samuel over $100. According to Joseph, the dog saved Samuel's life on several occasions. When Samuel went hunting, he usually strapped the dog leash to his waist with a leather belt. One day as Samuel stalked through the underbrush, his dog lunged forward and attacked a bear, which was poised to attack the unsuspecting hunter. The dog's instinctive response to protect his master gave Samuel ample time to aim his gun and shoot the bear. Samuel then discovered two bear cubs sniffing the ground a short yet measured distance from their dead mother. Another time Samuel's dog rescued him from the grip of a panther. Although Samuel owned many canines, this faithful greyhound, which he kept by his side at all times, was his favorite. When the dog died many years later, Samuel carefully tied a ribbon around his neck before he placed the beloved dog in its grave.\(^{24}\)

Even though most of the miners eked out a meager existence during this time, Watrous successfully maintained his store. Every evening, the miners, exhausted from the grueling task of panning for gold, would be forced to spend their wages at the Watrous store, taking
provisions in exchange for gold at the rate of sixteen dollars per ounce. Since the average earnings of a miner were less than a dollar a day, he barely earned enough to feed himself and his family. William Long states in "The History of Mining in New Mexico During the Spanish and American Periods" that the argots, as they were called, subsisted "mainly on a diet of meat, bread, and a coarse cake called piloncillo." Besides furnishing the community with fresh and dried meat, hides, and clothing, the shelves in the Watrous store were also filled with hardware, ammunition, utensils, and a smattering of textiles, such as broadcloth, bleached and domestic woolens. One can surmise that often his customers found his shelves empty, since the roads to Taos and Santa Fe were not always accessible. Watrous often purchased his dry goods from Charles Bent, a trader and early American settler. In the year 1842, Watrous owed Bent over $300 for the goods Bent had purchased for the Watrous store, an exorbitant sum of money for that time. At these high prices, it is no wonder that the miners barely existed.

Despite the erratic interventions of the Mexican government and the harsh and uncivilized conditions of the mining camp, Samuel Watrous and his family spent over ten years in the mountains south of Santa Fe. His store and hunting business must have been profitable, for in 1849 he
purchased a portion of the John Scolly grant, situated in the vicinity of what is now Watrous, New Mexico.
Endnotes


5 Abram Foote, Foote Family Comprising the Genealogy and History of Nathaniel Foote of Wethersfield, Conn. (Rutland: Marble City Press, 1907), p. 94.

6 "Watrous Family History," Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.


8 Document in the possession of Louisa MacNamara, Las Vegas, New Mexico.


13 Wislizenus, "Tour to Northern Mexico," p. 29.


17 Ibid., p. 30.

18 Ibid., p. 31.


20 Ibid., p. 96.

21 E. B. Watrous to Manuel Alvarez, April 14, 1845, Manuel Alvarez Papers, New Mexico State Records and Archives, Santa Fe.

22 Tombstone of Mary Antonette, Watrous Family Cemetery, Watrous, New Mexico.

23 Affidavit, Samuel B. Watrous, December 22, 1885. Samuel Watrous Papers, Denver Public Library.

24 Document in possession of Louisa MacNamara, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

CHAPTER 2

While Samuel Watrous labored in the mining camps of Dolores, other rugged frontiersmen paved the way for Samuel's final move to the La Junta Valley, situated at the juncture of the Mora and Sapello Rivers north of Las Vegas. At the confluence of these rivers, wedged in between the flat plains to the east and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the west, were lush meadows and ponds, attracting a profusion of wildlife, such as antelope, deer, and abundant flocks of wild ducks. This area had been the traditional hunting grounds of the Utes, Jicarilla Apaches, and Comanches for many years. In the 1840s, Mexican and American pioneers seized the land, wresting it from the Indians, plowing the fertile soil, and grazing Merino sheep upon the meadows.

In March 1843, John Scolly, Gregorio Trujillo, Santiago Giddings, Austin Duran, Guillermo Smith, Gabriel Allen, George de Estes, Mateo Sandoval, Ygnacio Ortiz, Vicente Lopez, and Francis Romero petitioned Manuel Armijo, civil and military Governor of New Mexico, for ten square leagues of acreage, located in the La Junta Valley. On
the condition that the pastures and the watering places would be held in common and that they would cultivate the soil within eighteen months (otherwise the grantees would forfeit title to the land), Armijo signed the papers granting them ownership. Mainly because of the marauding Indians, the petitioners failed to comply with the grant stipulations. Fearing that their grant would be revoked, they asked Governor Mariano Martinez, who followed Armijo as governor, for a confirmation of the grant made by Armijo in 1843, or, should Martinez refuse to honor the former grant, that a new grant be made.

The early settlement of the Scolly grantees was situated largely in a triangle formed by the Sapello and Mora rivers. Joab Houghton, Santa Fe trader and judge, testified in 1857 that while visiting the area in 1843, he noted Gabriel Allen diligently at work turning the ground over in preparation for planting. Houghton further stated that he came upon a house on the Mora River occupied by James Bone (Boney), who obtained permission from Scolly to homestead a portion of the grant. Boney remained until the Indians finally drove him off sometime during the year 1849. A small dwelling and a garden, Houghton also recollected, had been built by William Smith and his helper, John Wells. Levi Keithly, a rancher and later Indian agent, wandered into the area during the same year as
Houghton's visit and described a dam approximately twelve feet high built upon the Sapello.

Hampered by incessant Indian attacks, the grantee's dream of establishing a thriving farming community vanished. No further action occurred until May 1846, when the original grantees, with the exception of Ignacio Ortiz, again petitioned Manuel Armijo (who had been reappointed governor) for an extension of time allotted for settlement and a reduction in the land grant size to five square leagues, instead of ten, as they initially requested. Governor Armijo again conceded to their wishes, permitting them an additional five years to establish residency. The alcalde of Mora and of Las Vegas, Jesus Maria Montoya, accompanied the grantees to a grove of cottonwood trees, "which is situate [sic] on the banks of the Sapeyo [sic], near the junction, as the centre..." Montoya measured two and one half leagues toward the north, doing the same towards the east and the west, establishing as the boundary of the first the foot of the Gallinas Mountain, on the south the cejita dulce, on the west the Cano La Jara requiring the grantees to erect mounds where the boundaries were established..." Thus, in Spanish agrarian fashion, the alcalde consecrated the land.

At the end of the Mexican War of 1846, New Mexico, freed from the restrictive Mexican trade regulations, looked enticing to two American entrepreneurs, Alexander
Barclay and Joseph Doyle, who conceived a business venture of supplying the United States troops stationed in New Mexico. Barclay, the schemer, traveled to New Mexico and bought James Gidding's and William Smith's interests of the Scolly land grant, where he and his partner, Doyle, planned to build a fort and trading post. While Doyle and several companions purchased the sundry supplies which would be needed at their new residence in New Mexico, Barclay assumed the laborious responsibility of supervising the construction of the fort, which he appropriately christened Fort Barclay. By the early part of June 1848, Barclay roused twenty laborers from the nearby villages whom he employed making adobes, tilling the land, and building irrigation ditches. Pleased with the progress being made on the fort, Barclay wrote in his diary on June 11, "laid the first doby [sic] of the fort and fired cannon but could not hear it at Mora town." Rumors of Indian raiding in the surrounding countryside hastened construction on Fort Barclay, which was completed by the coming autumn.

Fort Barclay, a forty-room adobe fort designed in the form of a quadrangle, contained two bastions and port-holes for cannons as added protection. The fort's strategic location, close to where the Santa Fe Trail and the Cimarron route converged, made it a convenient place for travelers to rest, replenish their supplies, and gain
shelter from marauding Indians. W. W. Davis, who was appointed U.S. Attorney for the Territory of New Mexico, passed by Barclay's Fort and remarked:

it is a large adobe establishment, and like the immense caravansaries of the east, serves as an abode for men and animals. From the outside it presents a rather formidable as well as a neat appearance, being pierced with loop holes and ornamented with battlements. The rooms were damp and uncomfortable, and all the surroundings looked so gloomy, the hour being twilight, that it reminded me of some old state prison where the good and the bad of former times languish away their lives.  

Though Davis paints a sordid description of the interior of Barclay's Fort, it became a welcome sanction for the weary travelers facing the dangers of the wilderness.

Amidst the clamor and frenzied building of Fort Barclay, another frontiersman arrived to make the La Junta Valley his home: young Samuel Watrous, along with his brood of seven children, and Tomacita Crespin. Sometime between 1848 and 1849, Watrous purchased a section of the Scolly grant. Existing documents do not reveal Watrous' intentions for moving here. Perhaps he felt that a town filled with raucous miners was not an agreeable environment in which to rear his children. Or one can conjecture that, tired of the days spent pursuing game for food and hides, he desired a more pastoral lifestyle. Or perhaps Watrous simply became captivated by the beautiful valley of La Junta, as the place was commonly called, in his wanderings through New Mexico.
In the spring of 1849, before moving to La Junta, Watrous hired a couple of men, William Tipton and his brother, Enoch, miners and friends of Watrous, to clear the land in La Junta and plant crops. When the Tipton brothers finished harvesting Watrous' crops that autumn, they returned to Dolores and helped Watrous arrange all the family possessions onto wagons. Escorted by several other workmen and the Tipton brothers, the Watrous family finally set out for their new home in October 1849.

Venturing to a lonely frontier outpost inhabited by a mere handful of settlers must have been an exhilarating moment in the lives of Samuel Watrous and his family. Joseph, a robust and energetic lad of twelve, vividly recollected this move. In the chaos of shuffling baggage and comforting screaming children, he left his pet antelope hobbled to a rope in one of the corrals. Will Tipton comforted the lad, who had been whimpering down the road for miles, by telling Joseph about the abundance of wildlife he had seen on Samuel's land, especially the herds of antelope which he had watched crossing the meadow in La Junta.

As they rambled down the road, the family felt secure under the guardianship of the Tipton brothers and Watrous' hired workmen. Passing through several villages, they reached their destination without encountering any major difficulties. The creaking of the wagon wheels resounded
in the valley as the motley congregation of goats, sheep, adults, and children passed by Fort Barclay and halted about a mile from the fort, at the intersection of the Sapello and Mora rivers. Samuel consecrated his new homestead by, as William succinctly remarked, "marrying Tomcita right on the very spot." The marriage ceremony took place in the open prairie of La Junta in October of 1849.10

With winter fast approaching, the workmen plunged into the task of constructing Watrous' home. Built of adobe, the structure had a ceiling made of rough timber and vigas from the nearby woods. The house had a flat roof and also included an inner plaza, with a well sunk in the center. Sturdy wooden shutters covered the windows, and a heavy iron gate, spacious enough for covered wagons to pass through, swung open into the plaza and could also be secured in case of Indian attack. A self-contained establishment, the Watrous residence resembled the bastion-like appearance of Fort Barclay. Samuel's family lived in the front rooms of the house; the remaining portion contained servant quarters, numerous storage rooms, a blacksmith shop, and a merchandizing store. According to family accounts, the Indians never plundered the house. Instead, they visited the family, camping on the land around the home and bringing in trade goods to swap for woolen goods and groceries in the Watrous store. Sometimes
Watrous would even buy Indian captives, taking the young Indian boys and girls to raise with his own family.11

Besides farming, Watrous was also a rancher. His cattle dotted the countryside, spreading as far as the Purgatory River and Huerfano River in Colorado. William F. Arny, Indian agent, estimated that Watrous grazed over 800 head of cattle on his land. Alongside the irrigation ditches and the road leading up to his house, Watrous' workmen planted cottonwood trees and apple trees which in later years gave the Watrous ranch the reputation of being one of the finest orchards of the region. Although the Indians never accosted his home, this did not stop them from pillaging the Watrous livestock, which they ravaged from most ranches in northern New Mexico. Undoubtedly, then, Watrous and the people of Fort Barclay were probably relieved, though it did not resolve the problem of Indian attack, when they heard the news that Colonel Edwin Sumner, Military Commander, had made the decision to move the headquarters of the Ninth Military Department from the "sink of vice and extravagance," as Colonel Sumner characterized Santa Fe, to a new location—a site seven or so miles from the Watrous ranch. However, as one can imagine, Barclay and Doyle reacted differently to the change in military location. They had anticipated that eventually the U.S. Army would purchase their impenetrable fortress, which the government could then use as a base to patrol New Mexico's
northern frontier. Upon hearing about Colonel Sumner's plans, Doyle dejectedly left New Mexico and returned to his old occupation of trading on the Arkansas River, although he did not relinquish his share in the fort.

The presence of Fort Union gave the people of La Junta a new feeling of security. However, they were probably pleased to hear that William Carr Lane, governor of New Mexico, had devised a new plan in hopes of subjugating the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches. When Lane assumed governorship of New Mexico Territory in 1852, the Jicarilla Apaches and the Utes, nomadic hunters, roamed the northern frontier. The Jicarillas were estimated to number around 5000 to 6000, while the Utes numbered some 500. Governor Lane thought it best to placate the Indians by feeding them instead of fighting them. In April 1853, Lane promised several bands of the Jicarilla Apaches food if they would agree to settle on the land near Abiquiu. Lane hired farmers and common laborers to teach the Indians rudimentary agricultural skills. Approximately 1000 Indians migrated to the farms designated for their use.\textsuperscript{12} Utter disaster befell Lane's humanitarian endeavors, however, when David Meriwether assumed the governorship in the following year. He discovered that almost the entire amount of money appropriated for the Indian Affairs in all of New Mexico had been squandered to feed the Jicarilla Apaches. In addition, Lane's program had
amassed an outstanding debt amounting to about $10,000. The governor had issued provisions for between 500 and 1000 Indians, costing the federal government around $15,000 to $20,000.

Lane had also made the devastating mistake of implementing his plan before a formal treaty with the Apaches had been ratified and approved by Congress. This meant that Governor David Meriwether inherited the remnants of Lane's inept administration and also the painful task of informing the Jicarilla Apaches that the government, after promising food and shelter, must now discontinue their food rations. The Jicarillas, however, believing that the white man would take care of their wants, had not accumulated provisions for the winter months. Now, denied their rations, the Jicarillas were forced to steal or perish by starvation. When rations ceased being issued on the Abiquiu farms, Indian depredations escalated on the frontier. In 1853, livestock began disappearing from the Watrous ranch. Lieutenant David Bell pursued the Indians down to the Canadian River. Three days later, their guide found the trail of an Apache hunting party led by Chief Lobo Blanco, who denied that his warriors were responsible for the theft and told the lieutenant that Chico Velasquez, a Ute chief, had taken the cattle from the Watrous ranch.
The situation on the northern frontier became increasingly ominous, until the combined forces of Colonel Thomas Fauntelroy and Colonel Ceran St. Vrain crushed the Jicarillas and the Utes in the winter of 1854. The Indians, though defeated, lingered on the fringes of Taos and Abiquiu, bitterly complaining to Lorenzo Labadie, Indian agent, about their impoverished condition. In August 1855, the Jicarilla Apaches and the Utes consented to meet Governor Meriwether in Abiquiu, and a treaty was signed in September, but, unfortunately, it was never officially ratified by Congress. The Indians began collecting their meager rations from the Indian agents. The ravages of war and the humility of defeat left them in a demoralized state. Divorced from their traditional lifestyle of hunting and wandering freely over the land, they succumbed to the vices of becoming chronic drinkers and public nuisances. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs, James Collins, speculated that a third of the rations issued to the Jicarilla Apaches passed into the hands of the whisky dealers, the notorious brewers of Taos lightning. The journals of the Indian agents stationed in Taos cite numerous cases of Indian disturbances. Indian agent Kit Carson stated that drunken Indians were seen daily staggering around the plaza. He further described an Apache Indian on a drinking binge who was stabbed to death with a butcher knife by a member of his own tribe. In another
incident, a Jicarilla Apache murdered a Hispanic American in a quarrel over liquor.

As the Indians who had gathered around the settlements plagued the townspeople with their loutish and bellicose behavior, the Comanche Indians who remained roamed around the countryside causing settlers further aggravations. Samuel Watrous, especially, would later suffer from their pillaging expeditions.

Mainly because the Comanches were never assigned to a specific Indian agent in New Mexico, their number can only be approximated. Robert Simpson Neighbors, Texas Indian agent, estimated the population of the entire southern Comanches, sometimes referred to as the Penetekas, as containing somewhere in the neighborhood of 1000 to 1200 people. The Comanches did not maintain permanent villages, nor were they found in just one location. They roamed the countryside around the Arkansas River, in New Mexico, and in the northern provinces of Mexico. Also, at times they frequented the Llano and Brazos River area. Most of the bands engaged in trading and hunting expeditions into New Mexico and the borders of Mexico.

For over a hundred years the Spanish-speaking people of New Mexico and the Pueblo Indians had journeyed out to the Plains region to trade with the Comanches, and the Indians reciprocated by visiting the frontier
settlements. New Mexico officials, apparently not aware of the feeling of the Comanches and their allies, the Kiowas, about Anglo ranchers encroaching upon their hunting grounds, and also perhaps unaware that many of the Comanches were being forced out of the Texas region by settlers, felt confident that New Mexicans and the Comanches would continue their peaceful relations. John Greiner, Indian agent, was one of the people who maintained this viewpoint.

Because of the harassment and fighting with the settlers in Texas, the Comanches arrived on the scene, not as occasional traders of yesteryear, but as migrants who planned to stay in New Mexico. As the 1850s progressed and as more and more pioneers settled the eastern fringes of the Llano, the favorite hunting grounds of the Comanches, conflict between the two races seemed inevitable.

In May 1855, David Meriwether, governor of the Territory of New Mexico, stated that the Comanche bands of Sanaco and Pahanca had visited him the previous week and expressed the desire for peace. He further stated that since Indian-white relations had deteriorated, the Comanches wished to remain permanently in New Mexico. However, Meriwether did not consent to this and ordered the Comanches to leave at once.
But many of the Comanches did not heed the advice of the governor. In September 1855, a large encampment of Comanches was reported in the vicinity of San Miguel County. The Indians, however, had behaved themselves, except for rustling a few head of cattle and stealing some corn. Colonel John Garland, commander of the department of New Mexico, perturbed by the Comanches' presence, ordered an officer and a detachment of dragoons to roust them from the countryside. The troops were unable to accomplish their task, and the following month the band was sighted camped on the Pecos River, just above the town of Anton Chico. Troops from Fort Union were again sent out, finally frightening the Comanches to flee this site but not from the territory.

Among the first settlers into this region were James Giddings and Preston Beck, Anglo ranchers who built homes some twenty-five miles from the town of Anton Chico. They also had the distinction of being among the first settlers to be ransacked by the Comanche Indians. In May 1855, the combined bands of Sanaco and Pahanca came to their ranch to steal livestock. On the second visit the following month, the Indians, after seizing a number of cattle, proceeded to hold a "barbecue," Indian style, on the premises of the Giddings and Beck ranch.

In July, another band of Comanches descended upon the small settlement of Lucian Maxwell on the Rayado Creek.
The usual pillaging occurred, and, according to Maxwell, the Indians, after helping themselves to sundry ranch articles, a mule, and two hundred sheep, threatened to return again when the "corn was ripe." Interestingly enough, perhaps as a gesture of reconciliation with the Indians, Maxwell gave the Indians a certificate of good conduct, even after they had so thoroughly plundered his residence. Also, the newly established ranch of Alexander Hatch, located approximately thirty miles southeast of Las Vegas on the Gallinas River, received the "honor" of a visit from Comanche chief Esaguipa and his band in September of 1856. The Indians took his cattle and goats and helped themselves to his corn.

Besieged by requests from the settlers of San Miguel County for protection, the government established a post in November 1857 at Hatch's ranch. Captain W. Elliot of Company A Regiment of Mounted Rifles from Fort Union began erecting shelters for his men to stay in. The company's first recorded assignment was pursuing a band of Kiowas to Anton Chico and then north in the direction of present-day Tucumcari. Despite the impoverished condition of the garrison, the presence of troops deterred, temporarily, further Indian attacks on the frontier.

Even though the frontier contained many hostile Indians, La Junta Valley continued to witness the arrival of new families, and gradual change took place.
Unfortunately, when the government failed to purchase his fort, Barclay, surmounted by crippling debts, advertised the sale of his fort in the Santa Fe Gazette. But he died unexpectedly in December of 1855, leaving his estate to his partner, Joseph Doyle. Several years later, after several intricate business transactions, the fort and the land fell into the possession of William Kronig, who was a native of Germany who had migrated to the United States in the 1840s.

After holding a variety of diverse occupations, such as soldier, storekeeper, trader, and bootlegger, Kronig and his wife, Raphaela, and their two children moved into the dank and barren rooms of Fort Barclay, becoming the closest neighbors of the Watrous family. It is plausible that William Kronig witnessed both the burial of Tomcita Crespin Watrous, who died in 1857, and the marriage of Maria Antonette, Samuel's oldest daughter, to James Johnson in December of 1857. And perhaps at these intimate family gatherings, William Kronig and Samuel Watrous, both ambitious and enterprising men, speculated about the wealth of Fort Union, which employed numerous workers, and could serve as a vast source of revenue for men such as themselves.

In the early 1850s, both Samuel Watrous and William Kronig became involved in the cattle and freighting business. The firm of Watrous and Tipton (Samuel Watrous was
the senior partner and William Tipton the junior partner) was a large operation. Joseph Watrous later became business manager for the firm. The Army records indicate that in 1854 Samuel Watrous supplied Fort Union with beef and later, expanding their business, freighted goods to Kansas City, Missouri, until sometime after the Civil War. For many years, though, Watrous and Tipton's wagon trains were seen crossing the wide prairies bound for Missouri.

Amidst the cracking of bull whips and the whirling of dust, twenty prairie schooners, each harnessing six yoke of oxen, pulled out of the Watrous ranch every April destined for the eastern cities. Unlike the majority of freighters in the area, the company of Watrous and Tipton began their trek early in spring, chancing perilous weather conditions in order to have more time to complete two round trips to Missouri before the harsh winter snows stopped traffic on the Santa Fe Trail. Usually Joseph accompanied the wagons as far as Dodge City, where he would board a mail coach and travel ahead to purchase supplies in St. Louis. He would then meet his men back in Kansas City and make the return trip to New Mexico. Joseph recalled many harrowing adventures upon the trail, such as the presence of Indians bent on plundering the wagon trains, the abrupt change of weather conditions, and the danger of crossing swollen rivers. One particular incident which made an
impression on Joseph was when the Kiowas saved him from falling into the hands of the hostile Cheyenne Indians. Joseph, riding astride a horse while leading his wagon train across the prairies, saw in the distance three figures who appeared to be galloping toward him. Before he knew what to do, the Indians dismounted, and as the dust cleared Joseph observed the glimmer of silver from the medallion that each Indian wore, signifying the status of chief. Joseph and the three chiefs squatted in the shade of one of the prairie schooners, and a ceremonial pipe passed from one man to the next. Recording the fragmented English, which the elder chief used, Joseph gave this account:

Look here my friend, these were Cheyennes following your wagons, and they are at war with you Americans. Let me put several of my Indians to guard your cattle while you camp here and have the herders come in. I'm afraid those Cheyennes might sneak up and kill your herders, and we Kiowas would be blamed for it.22

Taking the shrewd advice of the Kiowa chief, Joseph passed the evening without the ferocious Cheyennes swooping down upon the wagon train. Several days later Joseph reached the safety of Kansas City.

This incident exemplifies the generally positive relationship of the Watrous family. Yet beneath this brief tranquility which seemed to have temporarily befallen New Mexico, the Comanches and the Kiowas were becoming increasingly resentful of the encroachments of the Anglo ranchers
upon their hunting grounds in eastern New Mexico. Samuel, though undoubtedly familiar with the noble intentions and notable inadequacies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in restraining the Indians from committing atrocities upon the frontier, witnessed the gradual and inevitable deterioration of relations between the two races. In 1858, misjudging the times, Samuel instructed his foreman, George Bunsham, to descend the Canadian River and establish a small ranch. The location, beyond the fringes of white inhabitation, was within the sacred hunting grounds of the Comanche Indians. Watrous, because he refused to acknowledge Indian ownership of this land, was taught an unforgettable lesson by the Indians. In November 1858, a band of Comanches galloped up to Bunsham's newly built cabin. Bunsham peered out of his cabin door and met the cold blinking stares of the savage Indians. The next day, the charred skeleton-like remnants of the dwelling and the cold corpse of Bunsham were the only remaining features of this lonely outpost. An anonymous scout brought word of Bunsham's death and a belligerent message from an Indian chief to government officials in Santa Fe. The message read, "I Tecube, Captain of the Comanches, say to the white man who is building a house on our land and that [sic] if you are offended at his death, and wish to fight, it is my wish also."23
Taking up the pen in lieu of the rifle, Watrous became the hunter. He roused public sentiment in an effort to stamp out the injustices and Indian atrocities experienced by the frontiersmen of New Mexico. He began by venting his grievances in a heated editorial submitted to the Santa Fe Gazette, one of the most prominent territorial papers of the times:

Shall our favorite grazing grounds be forfeited to the marauding Indians? Shall we placidly stand by while they ravage our herds, destroy our grains and murder our people? I have seen my stock driven off repeatedly and I have held my peace, but when I see my friend murdered and my demands for redress treated with coldness, indifference, and almost contempt, it is a drop too much and I bear it no longer in silence. Again I ask, shall the Red River [Canadian] be settled? Shall Mr. Bunsham's murder be avenged?24

General John Garland, commander of the military forces in the territory of New Mexico, remarked that the attack had been anticipated and Mr. Watrous in the future should choose a place closer to home for settlement. When Watrous pressed the commander for action, the general reluctantly sent a detachment of troops a month later to investigate the matter.

Building his house, clearing the land, planting the fields, and grazing his cattle kept Samuel Watrous busy in his early years at La Junta Valley. Not very long after Watrous had settled there, Fort Union was established seven miles from the Watrous homestead, creating a profitable business of supplying beef and freighting
supplies for Samuel Watrous and other settlers of the sur-
rounding area. As La Junta grew, Samuel Watrous, who
prided himself on living peacefully with the Indians,
watched the deterioration of relations upon the frontier.
The loss of his friend and foreman, George Bunsham, had
changed Samuel Watrous' attitude toward the Indian-Anglo
Mexican relations. Embittered and consumed by an irratio-
nal instinct for revenge, Samuel put a stop to the attacks
on and marauding of his domain and would prove to be hos-
tile to anyone who stood in his path, including the
current Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory
of New Mexico, James L. Collins.
Endnotes


2Ibid., p. 175.

3Ibid., p. 180.

4Ibid., p. 172.


7W. W. H. Davis, El Gringo or New Mexico and Her People (Santa Fe: Rydal Press, 1938) 33.

8Joseph Watrous interview, February 14, 1908, Far West Notebook VII, Cragin Papers, New Mexico State Records and Archives, Santa Fe.

9Document in possession of Louisa MacNamara, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

10Affidavit of Samuel B. Watrous, December 22, 1885, Samuel Watrous Papers, Denver Public Library.

11Personal interview with Johanna Gurein, July 22, 1982, Las Vegas, New Mexico.


13Lt. Colonel George Cooke to Lt. David Bell, March 1, 1854, Fort Union Files, Arrott Collection, Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

General John Garland to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, September 30, 1855, Fort Union Files, Arrott Collection, Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

General John Garland to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, October 31, 1855, Fort Union Files, Arrott Collection, Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.


Ibid.

Affidavit of Samuel B. Watrous, December 22, 1885, Samuel Watrous Papers, Denver Public Library.


Watrous Family History, Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.


Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, November 20, 1858.

Ibid.
"What a notable character is the mischief maker,"¹ wrote James Collins to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in reference to his adversary, Samuel Watrous. Time and events would prove the veracity of this statement. It would be difficult for Collins to perceive the similarities between himself and Samuel Watrous; yet each man, cloaked in the impetuous, inquisitive spirit of the American frontiersman, severed himself from familial connections and plunged into a world where wealth lurked precariously in the dark forests and mountain streams.

Watrous and the superintendent vehemently disagreed on the new location for the Ute and Jicarilla Apache agency at Maxwell's ranch on the Cimarron River. This relatively minor incident digressed into a controversy concerning Collins' "questioned" ability to administer the policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Watrous' crusade to remove the superintendent from office involved the major politicians of the territory, the Secretary of Interior, and ultimately the President of the United States.
Collins, an adventurous individual like Watrous, packed up his belongings and left Kentucky, forging across the plains in the 1820s to the hot desert of Chihuahua, where he tried his luck in the mercantile business. With the eruption of the Mexican War in 1846, Collins moved to Santa Fe, making the town his permanent residence.² Here, in the city of Holy Faith, the ancient Palace of the Governors still stood, its leaky roof in a perpetual state of disrepair—a crumbling monument to the proud Spanish Conquistadors of over two centuries ago. Collins stood and gazed down the trodden earth streets of the capital and heard the familiar sound of creaking wagons rumbling down the narrow, winding back streets, laden with American goods. The teamsters cursed the Mexican pedestrians who darted in front of the wagons, unable to contain their excitement about the arrival of the traders. Vibrant and alive, the city was emerging into a new era. Collins foresaw that his exploitative Yankee lifestyle could be superimposed over a more traditional Spanish civilization. Merchants scurrying through the streets, soldiers strolling around the plaza, pompous-looking government officials chatting with the local politicians—all people who would be interested in news of events in the East and news concerning the territory. In 1852 Collins established the Santa Fe Gazette, which became one of the most influential papers of the territory.³
Apparently, word of Collins' prestige and success in the territory found its way into the presidential office. In 1857, President James Buchanan appointed him as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, originally one of the functions of the territorial governor. Collins' appointment chartered his course, destining him to a tempestuous struggle ahead. Though Collins proved to be a competent Indian agent, this shifting of responsibilities from the hands of the governor to the hands of James Collins failed to arrest the Indian problem; instead, Indian relations degenerated until after the Civil War. The situation on the New Mexican frontier seemed futile in 1860 when the North Carolinian Abraham Rencher, territorial governor, despondently wrote a Washington official:

The Indian depredations in this country have become so frequent and so aggravated that the public excitement is very great. The mail route to the States has been in the hands of the Kiowas for the last six months; while the Navajos, having failed to comply with their treaty stipulations, are adding to the list of old wrongs, other depredations and murders, almost every day. This has resulted in an angry session of the Legislature, and has produced an unfortunate conflict of opinion as to the duty and extent of the powers of some of the departments of the territory. In a sincere attempt to stifle the outrageous behavior of the Indians, Governor Rencher raised an issue which had been lingering unresolved in the territory since Kearney's conquest in 1846. Whose responsibility was it to control the warring Indians—the civil governor's or
the military commander's? Now a third office, that of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, further complicated the problem. Meanwhile, the people of New Mexico, aggravated by the persistent Indian raids upon their villages and farms, took matters into their own hands.

In 1858 and again in 1860, the Legislative Assembly authorized the formation of several militia companies to conduct campaigns against the Indians independently of Colonel Thomas Fauntleroy, commander of the military forces in New Mexico. When the colonel heard about the move, he interpreted it as a blatant attack on his power as absolute military authority and adamantly refused to furnish the home troops with arms and ammunition. Fauntleroy further threatened to withdraw federal troops from the Navajo campaign (which was presently being planned and would soon be put into action) if Governor Rencher conceded to the legislative orders.

Despite the threats from Fauntleroy, several influential citizens of New Mexico, most notably James Collins, proposed to raise 1000 volunteers and also provide them with weapons and equipment. When Rencher received word that Fauntleroy's reinforcement had recently arrived from Utah, he pondered whether or not to sanction sending the militia off to war against the Navajos and further antagonizing Fauntleroy. Rencher decided to order the militia to disband. Disregarding the governor's
instructions, the volunteers organized and staged an attack against the Navajos. This conflict characterized the difficulties facing the citizens of New Mexico. The settlers desired an immediate end to the "Indian problem," yet nothing could be accomplished until the conflict between the civil and military authority was resolved.

Although the Legislative Assembly had taken a remarkably audacious stance against the military, the governor and the people suffered from a factionalized legislature which seldom agreed upon any political issues. The legislature was composed of a majority of Spanish members wielding political patronage and only a few Anglo delegates. Individuals sided with an influential or charismatic leader for the purpose of winning an election or gaining a personal favor. These shrewd and unscrupulous politicos sometimes coerced, abused and trampled others until they achieved their selfish goals, casting the wrecked vestiges of those whose services were no longer fertile as the wind blows and scatters tumbleweed upon a barren plain.

Two such groups, the Joab Houghton faction and the Kirby Benedict faction,\(^7\) vied for position during the period when Samuel Watrous vehemently criticized Collins' Indian policies. Miguel Otero, a Spanish American from Rio Abajo and a member of the Houghton group, exercised power through his office of Congressional Delegate, seated
in office in 1855, in 1857, and again in 1859. During the Congressional session of 1861-1863, John Watts, although a renowned Unionist, sided with the Houghton faction. Furthermore, James Collins, a Democrat, sympathized with the Houghton group, eventually becoming an efficacious leader and permitting this faction to voice its opinion in the *Santa Fe Gazette*. In opposition to the "Collins clique," as Watrous sardonically referred to the "Houghton boys," was the ring of Kirby Benedict, Chief Justice of the territory of New Mexico and a boss of unmatched resilience. A staunch Republican and friend of Abraham Lincoln, Benedict was part owner of the *New Mexican*, rival newspaper of the *Santa Fe Gazette*. The loner, Samuel Watrous, easily incensed by the injustices befalling the citizens of New Mexico, became an articulate critic of the political bosses and their complement of members. Though not yet politically aligned with either group, Watrous's disdain for Collins led to a personal crusade to replace him as administrative head of Indian Affairs.

Initially, Watrous persuaded Charles Clever, U.S. Marshal, to help him remove Collins from his position as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Interestingly enough, according to Kirby Benedict, Clever and Watrous had once been mortal enemies. The nature of their dispute is not clear, but Benedict knew that Watrous had railed against
Clever for a number of years while serving as the New Mexican correspondent for the *Missouri Democrat*. Evidently, in an effort to override Collins, the two gentlemen shrugged aside their differences sometime during the year 1860. Clever convinced the citizens of Taos to sign a petition condemning James Collins as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Alarmed by this bold maneuver, Kit Carson, Indian agent for the Ute and Jicarilla Apaches at the Taos agency, cautioned Collins to be on his guard against Clever.\textsuperscript{12} Collins was temporarily ruffled by Clever's action, but nothing came of it. Watrous, disappointed, continued to vent his repugnance for Collins and exclaimed that "either he or Collins must go down, and from now on he would work more systematically than before to achieve this end."\textsuperscript{13}

Samuel Watrous, ever ready to embarrass the operations of the superintendent and his subordinates, wrote to Collins describing several incidents of pillaging committed on his land in the summer of 1861. According to the rancher, the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches stole several head of cattle from his grazing grounds. In order to avoid further mishaps, Watrous drove his herd into the country around the Purgatory River. Undaunted, the Indians repeated their pilfering. On the following day, the same band of Indians returned the cattle to Watrous' hired hands and demanded gifts for their virtuous act. Fearing for
their lives, the herders accommodated the wishes of the Indians. The very next day, Watrous continued, the Indians galloped off with another nine head of cattle, which they devoured back at their campsite. Naturally, the Utes pointed their finger at the Jicarilla Apaches, while the latter blamed the theft on the former.14 Watrous, though, was not the only rancher on the northern frontier suffering from Indian depredations. In the same month, another resident of San Miguel County, Juan Baca, lost fifty head of sheep to the marauding Indians.

Several months later, Watrous reported the disappearance of forty-five horses to the commander of Fort Union. The culprits, Watrous stated, were the Indians again. Lieutenant Thompson pursued the Indians to Cañon Largo, approximately forty miles from Fort Barclay. The next morning, his troops captured one of Watrous' horses and rescued a young boy whom the Indians had kidnapped during this recent escapade. The soldiers continued in pursuit, their horses foaming and frothing. They could not, however, keep up with the swift Indian ponies and were forced to return to the forty empty-handed.15 Complaints about the Indians continued on the northern frontier. When the Indians were not rustling steers, they were found in the towns of Taos and Abiquiu, loitering in the plazas, drunk and bellicose, harassing the settlers, stealing chickens and goats, and coercing their friends
from Taos Pueblo into buying them bottles of "Taos lightning," the notorious drink of the north.

Viewing relocation as a suitable means of both protecting the citizens from further Indian disturbances and improving the condition of the Indians, William F. Arny, who replaced Kit Carson as Indian agent, was assigned the task of finding a temporary location for the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches until a permanent reservation could be arranged. Arny was no ordinary Indian agent; his appointment by President Lincoln temporarily influenced the fate of his Indian wards, and later he acted as one of the main figures to help coalesce the power of the Republican Party in the territory of New Mexico. A devout Republican, he was well known in Kansas and Illinois, as well as in Washington.

Arny accepted his job with enthusiasm and set upon the task of developing a new program to pacify and civilize the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches who had been disturbing the people of northern New Mexico. The Interior Department ordered the agency moved eastward from Taos some forty miles to the land of Lucien Maxwell's homestead. In fact, in the estimation of the Interior Department, a better location could not have been arranged. Maxwell, a wealthy rancher (he was reported to own 20,000 sheep, 1500 cattle, and 200 horses) and a hospitable friend to the settler and the Indian alike, was
an important figure of New Mexico. His grist mill, a wel-
come landmark for all, ground flour for the people of the
Cimarron Valley, where approximately fifteen Anglo families
and about eighty to one hundred Hispanic families eked out
a modest living by farming or herding sheep or cattle.17

It soon became apparent that his relocation would not
resolve the problem of Indian depredations in northern New
Mexico. Watrous wrote that Arny's statement that whisky
was more easily procured at Taos was a "transparent hum-
bug." Watrous contended that the Indians could obtain
liquor at Maxwell's, insisting that there was even more
manufactured at the new location. And besides, Watrous
continued, any Indian who wanted to get drunk and had the
money with which to buy alcohol could find a Mexican to
provide it no matter where he lived.18 Arny retorted that
Kit Carson had recommended the Indians' removal. However,
the infamous Indian scout insisted that he had never sug-
gested the new site for the Indian agency. Arny also
insisted that several leading citizens in Taos had
endorsed the Interior Department's decision. Watrous then
presented the signatures of sixteen members of the terri-
torial legislature requesting the removal of the Cimarron
agency. If the agency remained where it was, Watrous con-
tended, the citizens would suffer disastrous consequences.
He claimed that the responsibility would rest with Arny
and the superintendency which "fastened this scourge upon us, and sustained their actions by the aid of forgery and lies." 19

Arny decided to plead his case before his superiors and left for Washington in December 1861. It seems that Arny's appearance caused a commotion. When President Lincoln opened the White House for a New Year's Day reception, Arny appeared dressed in an elaborate frontiersman's garb. Having beady eyes and a full black beard and decked out in a fringed buckskin jacket, leather leggings, a beaver hat, and carrying a fancy bow with a beaded quiver fastened to his back, he must have looked as though he had spent many seasons living with the wild nomadic Indians of New Mexico. One can imagine how unsettling such a sight was for the ladies and gentlemen who attended the Washington reception. Arny, who undoubtedly relished the sensation he caused, had his photograph taken in his Wild West attire, sending a complimentary copy to Frank Leslie's Monthly. The March issue published an etching of the Indian agent and a story about his agency in New Mexico. 20

Besides promenading around the capital, Arny also met with Commissioner William Dole, Interior Secretary Caleb Smith, and other officials to explain his program to make the Ute and the Jicarilla Apache self-sufficient farmers and his plans to begin a school at the agency to further educate the Indians in the ways of the white man. 21 Arny
believed that with enough appropriations and under his expert supervision, the friction between the Anglo-Americans, Mexicans, and Indians would soon be eradicated. Government officials tentatively approved his plan, and by March 1862, Arny returned to the New Mexico agency intent to work out the details of his reservation program.

In March 1862, Arny contracted to lease from Maxwell a portion of land consisting of some 1280 acres, running alongside the Ponial Creek, near the settlement of Cimarron. Arny immediately began building his Indian agency in the beautiful Cimarron Valley. On the east side of Ponial Creek, he constructed a council house and a schoolroom, an office for the use of the Indian agent, a kitchen and dining room, sleeping quarters, and corrals for the horses and cattle. Arny tried to make the agency pay for itself by designating five acres for garden crops and another twenty acres for the growing of wheat and corn. As the Cimarron agency neared completion, Collins, unfortunately, decided to shift the Jicarilla Apaches, who had been receiving their rations at the Abiquiu agency, to Arny's care, swelling the number of Indians residing there to over 1500. Distraught, Arny watched his provisions dwindle. Soon his Indians would again commence scrounging food by their own means and further annoy the settlers on the frontier.
As conditions at the Cimarron agency slowly deteriorated, the Confederate invasion of the territory further disrupted life in New Mexico. In the same month that Arny wrestled with the lack of supplies at the Cimarron agency, General Henry Sibley, Commander of the Confederate forces, marched in from the south to seize the capital of Santa Fe. In response to the Confederate move, the commanding officer at Fort Marcy, Major James Donaldson, hastily packed the Union supplies in wagons and evacuated his troops to the safety of Fort Union. The presiding governor, Henry Connelly, a Democrat and supporter of the Union cause, not losing a moment, followed suit and fled from Santa Fe, establishing a government in exile in the city of Las Vegas. From the secure confines of the Exchange Hotel in Old Town, Connelly sent a message to the Governor of Colorado pleading for military assistance. Fortunately for the New Mexicans, a regiment of rowdy and cocky volunteers, commanded by Colonel John Slough, rallied to the New Mexican call and headed south to meet the Confederate troops of Sibley.

Meanwhile, Samuel Watrous, upon hearing about the disastrous events which had befallen Santa Fe, expeditiously flung a few things into a bag, called his driver to bring forth his carriage, and headed down the road bound for Raton. Watrous' intended place of retreat was his ranch on the Huertano River (which he had never visited
before), far beyond the smoky guns of the Confederate troops. Watrous encountered Slough's raggedy regiment of volunteers in the mountains of Raton, but, believing that Fort Union had already fallen into the hands of Sibley's men, Watrous continued onward to Colorado. The Santa Fe Gazette later taunted Watrous for his cowardly actions. Watrous wrote back that at the time of the invasion he had just finished reading a letter from a trusted friend who informed him that his wagon train, loaded with governmental freight, had been intercepted by the Confederates. Watrous' friend also encouraged him to flee at once, since the men who seized his goods were looking for him.

In contrast to Watrous' role in the war, Collins expounded on his bravery during the Civil War in the Santa Fe Gazette. When word rang out that the Confederates were advancing on Fort Craig, Collins joined Colonel E. R. S. Canby, Fauntleroy's successor, as a volunteer and fought in the battle of Valverde in February 1862. Then Collins, serving as a guide and an interpreter, accompanied Major John Chivington's regiment of volunteers and participated in the battle of Pigeon's Ranch in Glorieta. The Union troops reported that Chivington's men saved the day by crossing over Rowe Mesa, swooping down upon the unsuspecting Confederate soldiers, burning their supply train, and forcing them to retreat to El Paso. Collins boasted in the Santa Fe Gazette that it was he who set the Confederate
wagons on fire. Chivington did praise him for his bravery in the battle.25

Watrous continued to puzzle over Collins' motive for bringing up the Civil War issue. In the eyes of the rancher, his activity during the Confederate invasion had no bearing upon the escalating Indian problem on the northern frontier. Collins' persistent harping about his patriotic feats during the fleeting encounter with the Southern forces seemed to be an endeavor to clear his political reputation. The *Santa Fe Gazette*, in which Collins, of course, had a vested interest, denounced every action undertaken by the Republican Party and was especially fond of reprehending the war effort. These views did not pass unnoticed. Charles Leib, a partner and part owner of the *New Mexican*, disliked Collins' unpatriotic pronouncements and, in reference to Collins, told the Secretary of the Interior that "I do not ask that we may have men here whose every move will defend the administration that appoints them."26 Leib also informed the secretary that Collins had confided to a certain Captain James Hubbel of the New Mexico Volunteers that he would not support anyone who was in favor of the present administration. As a Democrat and rumored Southern sympathizer and anti-Lincoln supporter, Collins indeed had a dubious and tainted political reputation. Perhaps he thought that by writing about his own outstanding deeds in the Civil War
and by exposing the non-valorous actions of Watrous, his standing as a public figure would be upgraded.

While the Confederate troops retreated southward and Governor Connelly moved his government back to the old familiar rooms of the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe (April 1862), Arny concentrated his efforts on perfecting his program to civilize the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches at the Cimarron agency. Yet Arny had very little time to get his project underway. In August 1862, President Lincoln appointed him the New Mexico Territorial Secretary. Arny packed up his family and immediately moved to Santa Fe, soon becoming oblivious to the cause of the Indians. By the time Arny had reached Santa Fe, Governor Connelly, a Democrat, had transferred the real power of his office to James Collins and to General James H. Carleton, who had replaced General Canby as commander of the military forces in the territory. From the first, Secretary Arny sought to carve out political power for his Republican Party. Arny was blessed with the opportunity for such maneuverings. Within weeks of Secretary Arny's appointment, Connelly became ill and left the capitol for treatment in the East, automatically elevating Arny to the post of acting governor. Arny moved quickly to place Republicans in office in the territory. Unknowingly, perhaps, Watrous gained an important ally in his personal mission to destroy the career of the Superintendent of Indian
Affairs. It was not in Arny's interest to obstruct the investigation of Collins, the anti-Republican leader.

Once the territory had assumed some semblance of normalcy after the brief Confederate attacks, Watrous, also, continued criticizing the placement of the Jicarilla Apaches and the Utes at the Cimarron agency and grumbling about the usual Indian atrocities committed on the frontier. Collaborating with his neighbors in San Miguel County, the "pen and ink" rancher wrote a petition protesting the location of the Cimarron agency. Watrous and the other citizens objected to the following: (1) the Cimarron agency was not an ideal location since there were not enough people in the vicinity to protect the livestock from the marauding Indians; (2) the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches forayed into the Plains region, stealing cattle and horses, and then later returning with their spoils, usually taken from the Plains Indians, leaving the settlers at the mercy of the angry and exasperated Plains Indians; and (3) the Superintendent's reluctance to reprimand the Indians for participating in these ransacking adventures. The petition concluded on the note that the entire affair had evolved into a "ridiculous mockery," lacking punishment for the Indians or redress for the settlers' losses.28

Tension and discontent began to be expressed in the northern county of San Miguel as more and more people
besides Watrous chastised the Superintendent for his ludicrous policies. Five other petitions circulated, with a total of 365 signatures avidly endorsing Watrous' stance. Next, Watrous sought to enlist the Colorado Congressional Delegate, H. P. Bennet, and assist William Walton, a member of the New Mexico Legislature, in his campaign to remove Collins. Reflecting the sentiments of the petitioners and that of Watrous, both gentlemen wrote to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Dole protesting the establishment of the Ute and Jicarilla Apache agency at Maxwell's ranch. Walton, who had been an acquaintance of Watrous for a number of years, stated that he had more confidence in Watrous than in any other man in New Mexico.29

Watrous then wrote Bennet and urged him to use his influence to obtain a relocation of the Ute and Jicarilla Apache agency, but he cautioned the congressman not to consult with John Watts, the New Mexican delegate to Congress, because the latter only represented his own interest and that of the "Collins clique."30

Watrous' protest diminished into a general disapproval of Collins' ineptness in furnishing protection for the settlers of the frontier. Watrous pointed out that if an Indian stole livestock, then the Indian should be punished, not given gifts to appease him. Collins, on the other hand, asserted that this was a virtually impossible undertaking because the military lacked enough manpower to
patrol the vast northern countryside. Furthermore, Collins contended that the United States only accepted responsibility for crimes committed by the tribes with whom they had signed a formal treaty. Since the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches did not fall into this category, there was no redress for the crimes which they continued to perpetrate against the settlers. "By nature," Collins commented, "they [Jicarilla and Utes] are thieves and will appropriate for their own use property of others, and if the whites persist in locating their ranches and grazing their stock in the vicinity of the Indians, they must be prepared to defend themselves from Indian invasion."31

Resolving the Indian problem was not an easy task, and it is evident that Superintendent Collins received the brunt of the criticism for the inadequacies of the federal government in dealing with the Indians. However, Collins' interpretations of federal Indian policies became increasingly irrational and emotional. He rebuked Watrous for grazing his cattle away from his ranch and trusting his herds to the supervision of the Mexicans. This lowly breed of men, Collins asserted, would not think twice about pillaging cattle for their own use and blaming the Indians for the disappearance of livestock. Grasping for another means to mar Watrous' reputation, Collins proclaimed that Watrous was in collusion with John Taylor, a notorious cattle rustler of northern New Mexico. Collins,
noting that the two ranchers lived in the same general locale, asserted in a letter addressed to Samuel, "why have you no ink, to appropriate for Mr. Taylor's benefit? Did a tender region for a bosom friend who was an unmitigated scoundrel and an admitted thief dry up a pen that is ever ready to abuse men who have at least some claim to honesty and respectability?" \(^{32}\)

Watrous, fuming with indignation, requested several eminent citizens of New Mexico, including Joab Houghton, ringleader of the "Collins clique," to disavow Collins' assertions. At this time, Houghton, who was register of the Land Office, explained that Taylor resided in Mora County, near the town of Chaparito, and that he had never known of the alleged association of Watrous with Taylor. Furthermore, Houghton stressed that he had known Watrous for over nineteen years, and he characterized Watrous as an upstanding individual and a man of integrity. \(^{33}\) Charles Blummer, U.S. Collector for the Territory of New Mexico, who had been acquainted with Watrous even longer than Houghton, knew of no collaboration between Watrous and the cattle thief Taylor. Finally, John Greiner, Indian agent, reiterated the opinions of Blummer and Houghton.

Watrous temporarily countered Collins' slanderous accusations, but Collins' next move was to dispute the cattle losses reported by Watrous. Much of the thievery committed in the countryside, Collins contended, was the
work of professional cattle rustlers, not the Indians. "Just the other day," Collins continued, "he had talked to a respectable gentleman from Las Vegas [Collins does not mention the man's name] who felt that many of the Indian depredations reported in the area were caused by white men." 34 Collins then cited a case reported by Captain Stenedon of Fort Stanton that two Mexicans pillaged a herd of cattle owned by Chief Cadete of the Mescalero Apaches. William B. Stapp, the Indian agent stationed at Fort Stanton, noted a similar incident of a white man stealing livestock. Finally, Collins could not refrain from adding the vile comment about Watrous, "But your brain is so completely distorted and muddied by malice that it is impossible to reach it with an honest idea." 35

In another instance, when Watrous reported that a herd of his horses had been pilfered by the Indians, Collins taunted him by writing that perhaps Watrous might purchase some horses which were recently stolen from the Indians' corral. Collins also informed James Giddings, a local rancher, that the only redress for his loss was to place a claim before Congress. Many of the ranchers, and especially Samuel Watrous, began writing to the commissioner of Indian Affairs complaining about the unjust treatment that the settlers were receiving. Collins, in turn, wrote to the commissioner explaining his conflict with Samuel Watrous. Collins said to the commissioner that he
did not mean to imply that Watrous lied about the depredations he experienced at Fort Barclay, but merely that the rancher's demands were unreasonable and his losses often exaggerated. Watrous wrote the commissioner proclaiming, "It seems very hard if a citizen cannot demand his rights without subjecting himself to insult and calumny. If just complaints cannot be entered without serious danger of the complainer being involved in a personal quarrel, such officer certainly cannot be complying with the views of the government and should be made to give place to a better man."³⁶

Watrous' grumbling and complaining about James Collins served as a catalyst for an investigation of the superintendent's official conduct. On January 10, 1863, the Territorial House of Representatives issued a resolution rebuking Collins, and three members from both the upper and lower house were appointed to conduct the investigation. Collins, who was employed and appointed by the federal government, asserted that the legislature had stepped outside of its jurisdiction and had no right to scrutinize his conduct. The Legislative Assembly contended that the rights of the citizens of New Mexico had been violated; therefore, they had the prerogative to inquire about such issues. Collins angrily declared that the investigation was instigated by a handful of men from within the
legislature and a few outside the assembly and did not accurately reflect the opinions of the majority of the people of New Mexico. Collins, who must have felt that he was at a Salem witch trial, chose to cooperate with the politicians. He consented to their investigation on the condition that the committee would grant him three requests: that he could furnish a number of his own witnesses, his attorney would be entitled to cross-examine the witnesses, and lastly, that the witnesses would first be sworn in under oath before testifying before the investigational committee.

The committee convened on January 17, 1863. Merrill Ashurst and Richard Tompkins, Attorneys at Law, attended in Collins' behalf and presented the committee members with a list of witnesses that Collins had requested. A slight disagreement ensued concerning the witnesses who resided outside of the city of Santa Fe. When one of the committee members asked if the witnesses living outside of town should be summoned to appear before the investigational committee, the member was silenced by a motion to adjourn, and his question remained unanswered. The committee conferred with Ashurst the following day and told him that his counsel would not longer be needed since the investigation had been terminated.

Collins had inadvertently squashed the power of the investigational committee. When Collins requested that
his witnesses testify under oath, he had unknowingly created an obstacle in the investigation. New Mexico lacked the appropriate law which sanctified the administration of oaths to witnesses testifying before a committee of the Legislative Assembly. Temporarily at an impasse, the legislature enacted a bill authorizing the proper procedure for the administration of oaths. However, W. F. Arny, now raised to the position of acting governor, vetoed the bill, asserting his absolute power as governor and effectively dissolving the investigational committee.

Dissatisfied with the turn in events, the Legislative Assembly defied Arny by condemning James Collins as superintendent of Indian Affairs on the basis of the following charges: (1) Collins had not carried out the laws of the government as superintendent. Because of his inept management, the people of New Mexico had suffered unjustly, (2) Collins deceived the government by erecting an expensive house for the use of the superintendency, charging the government an exorbitant amount of rent for the agency's use of the dwelling, (3) Collins deposited a note instead of the designated amount of money with the receiver of the Land Office, (4) Collins secured vouchers and blank receipts for the Indian money without making any purchases, and (5) Collins had permitted his grandson to sell government cloth.
Collins made one last attempt to save his reputation. He pleaded with the legislative delegates, "I cannot suppose that your Honorable Body will permit this great act of injustice to be consumated against me without taking some steps to ascertain whether the charges made by Watrous are true."\textsuperscript{38} But time had run out for the superintendent. John Watts was the only individual who rallied to the defense of Collins. Writing to Commissioner Dole, he stated that it was not Collins' fault that the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches had recently become so troublesome. Concerning the accusations about the rental property, Watts asserted that Collins had built the house using his own funds, and the amount of rent that Collins charged the Indian agency was comparable to current rental prices in Santa Fe. Watts further stated that if the commissioner were to consult his Superintendent files, he would see that the other charges cited against Collins such as the discrepancy concerning the deposit of vouchers and notes were unfounded accusations, made up only to discredit Collins as a competent federal employee.

It is not clear why Arny obstructed the investigation of Collins, especially considering the fact that he had written to President Lincoln asking to be appointed to the position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Another individual who also vied for Collins' position, Michael Steck, Indian agent for the Mescalero Apaches, wrote to
Commissioner Dole and emphasized his nine years of good service as an Indian agent in the territory of New Mexico. Speaking fluent Spanish as well, Steck felt that he had the best qualifications for the job.\textsuperscript{39}

In the meantime, Commissioner Dole wrote to the Secretary of the Interior, J. P. Usher, stating that he had just finished examining the evidence presented against Collins and felt that an investigation was crucial in determining if Collins had abused his post as Superintendent of Indian Affairs unless Secretary Usher believed it would be too difficult to conduct a thorough examination since New Mexico was so far removed from Washington. Dole then suggested that the people of New Mexico would benefit more if the President simply appointed a competent individual to replaced Collins. Three days later, the Secretary of the Interior concurred and stated that Commissioner Dole should recommend to the President someone to succeed Superintendent Collins. President Lincoln, apparently satisfied with Steck's service in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, made the decision in May 1863 to remove Collins from his office and appointed Michael Steck as superintendent. Victory resounded bittersweet in the ears of Samuel Watrous. He had succeeded in displacing James Collins from his prestigious political office, yet the Jicarilla Apache and the Ute agency remained at the
Cimarron agency until their final removal to reservations in September of 1876.

Samuel Watrous' actions reflect a man sincerely concerned about the Indian raids befalling his own ranch and those of his fellow countrymen. Since he had settled in the La Junta Valley, he had witnessed the changing relationships with the surrounding tribes of the Comanches, Utes, and Jicarilla Apaches. The latter two tribes had finally been subdued and placed on a reservation on the Cimarron River. But depredations persisted. Watrous blamed the Department of the Interior for appointing agents bent on serving their own ambitious ends, ignorant and indifferent to the needs of their wards. During the investigation of James Collins, Watrous was not directly collaborating with members of the Republican Party, which was gaining prominence under the leadership of William Arny and Kirby Benedict. His role in the removal of James Collins from the Superintendency of Indian Affairs was his own way of dealing with the deterioration of Indian relations upon the northern frontier and became a personal crusade against James Collins. However, Watrous sympathized with Arny's cause, and during the following years he actively campaigned on behalf of the Republican Party, endorsing the Republican candidate for Congress, Francisco Chavez.
Endnotes

1 Collins to Watrous, December 19, 1861, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1862-63 U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereinafter LRO IA; BIA), Special Collections, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.


3 For historical sketch on the Santa Fe Gazette, see Jackson E. Towne, "Printing in New Mexico Beyond Santa Fe 1848-1875," New Mexico Historical Review, 35, 109-17.


5 William Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico 1846-1868, p. 102.


10 Robert Larson, New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, p. 63.
11 Lamar, The Far Southwest, p. 128.
12 Carson to Collins, September 4, 1860, LROIA: BIA.
13 Santa Fe Gazette, August 12, 1865.
14 Watrous to Collins, June 7, 1861; LROIA: BIA.
15 Lieutenant Thompson to Commander of Fort Union, November 6, 1861, Fort Union Files, Arrott Collection, Rodgers Library, Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.
16 The New Mexican, April 23, 1864.
17 Arny to Dole, January 6, 1862, LROIA: BIA.
19 Murphy, Frontier Crusader William F. Arny, p. 111.
20 Murphy, Frontier Crusader William F. Arny, p. 111.
21 Murphy, Frontier Crusader William F. Arny, p. 109.
22 March 10, 1862, LROIA: BIA.
23 Collins to Dole, October 10, 1862, Annual Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1862.
24 Santa Fe Gazette, August 19, 1865.
25 Santa Fe Gazette, August 19, 1865; William Waldrip, "New Mexico During the Civil War," MA thesis, University of New Mexico, 1950, p. 44.
26 Leib to Usher, February 22, 1863, LROIA, BIA.
27 Murphy, Frontier Crusader, p. 115.
28 Petition to Commissioner Dole, LROIA, BIA.
29 Walton to Dole, April 14, 1862, LROIA, BIA.
30 Collins to Watrous, October 26, 1861, LROIA, BIA.
31 Collins to Watrous, October 26, 1861, LROIA, BIA.
32 Collins to Watrous, October 26, 1861, LROIA, BIA.
33 Affadavit, January 21, 1863, LROIA, BIA.
34 Collins to Watrous, December 14, 1861, LROIA, BIA.
35 Collins to Watrous, December 19, 1861, LROIA, BIA.
36 Watrous to Dole, June 30, 1863, LROIA, BIA.
37 Memorial to the President of the United States, LROIA, BIA.
38 Collins to Legislative Assembly, January 24, 1863, LROIA, BIA.
39 Steck to Dole, April 30, 1863, Michael Steck Collection, Special Collections, University of New Mexico.
CHAPTER 4

General James H. Carleton, a seasoned Indian fighter, veteran of the Mexican War, and post commander of Fort Union during the 1850s, seemed well suited for the office of military commander of the Territory of New Mexico. However, his task of subjugating the nomadic tribes of New Mexico proved to be an arduous and costly endeavor, touching all the citizens of New Mexico. Carleton, serving as absolute leader, eventually alienated a segment of the population under his rule and inspired a heated political struggle which lasted four long years. Samuel Watrous continued to become aggravated with the contemporary Indian policy. The irate rancher had joined forces with several prominent Republican New Mexican leaders, including William F. Arny, Secretary of the Territory, Michael Steck, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and other influential Republicans. After much lobbying in New Mexico and Washington and a hotly contested election, Watrous and his allies became the dominant political party in New Mexico. Much of the political debate between the two factions began with the
Indian problems, which had escalated since the outbreak of the Civil War.

Carleton's first move as military commander was to punish the Mescalero Apaches who had taken advantage of the Confederate invasion, swept into the settlements, confiscated sheep and cattle, and killed many inhabitants. Carleton ordered five companies of First New Mexico Volunteers under the leadership of Kit Carson into the field in October 1862.¹ In a relatively successful campaign, Carson accomplished his mission by January 1863. The defeated Mescalero Apaches consented to live at Fort Sumner in the Bosque Redondo region, situated some one hundred miles southeast of Las Vegas. The land contained tall, majestic cottonwood trees scattered along the banks of the Pecos River, an ideal location, Carleton contended, for the wild Indians to be taught the rudiments of farming and Christian virtues. Disregarding the report compiled by his subordinate officers that the Bosque Redondo site was "altogether unfit for a post,"² Carleton began implementing his plan, moving the Mescalero to the Bosque. By February 1863 approximately 350 Apaches were camped at Fort Sumner and drawing rations from the army.

In a matter of months Carson's troops had rounded up the defeated Mescalero Apaches. The territorial papers hailed General Carleton as the deliverer of New Mexico, and the citizens responded with renewed respect and trust.
Carleton, with added incentive, unleashed Carson and his men on the Navajos. They penetrated deep into the remote canyons and mountain ranges of northwestern New Mexico and Arizona. Their constant pressure gradually debilitated the Navajos. In a decisive move, Carson simultaneously struck the eastern and western entrances of Canyon de Chelly, the ancient Navajo stronghold, and some 200 Navajos surrendered on January 7, 1864.3

Large numbers of Navajos, ragged and starving, straggled into Forts Wingate and Canby, posts established in Navajo country during Carson's campaign. Less than a month after their surrender, hundreds of Navajos waited to be escorted to Fort Sumner. Carleton had decided to move them there in spite of their old enmity for the Mescalero Apaches. Here, Carleton believed, "the Navajo would be treated kindly, the children taught to read and write, the old Indians would die off, and the younger ones would take their place."4

While Carleton made the final arrangements for the relocation of the Navajos, he became painfully aware that Michael Steck, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, disapproved of his decision. In June 1864, Steck informed Charles Mix, acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

It is to be regretted that General Carleton removed his prisoners [the Navajos] from their own country as operations on a grand scale might have been commenced there with some prospect of its permanent success. Removed to the Pecos
they have no resources of their own. In their own country they have maintained themselves. They have sheep and horses and are farmers in their own primitive way. . . . They could be made self sustaining if placed upon a reservation properly selected in their own country.\(^5\)

Steck also told the commissioner that the citizens of New Mexico objected to placing the Navajos at the Bosque, contending that since most of the Indians resided in northeastern Arizona, it was the latter territory's responsibility to find a suitable reservation. Furthermore, many of the people did not want the Pecos Valley, a favorite grazing ground of New Mexican ranchers, to become an Indian reservation.

In the same month that Steck expressed his distaste with Carleton's reservation policy, he informed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William Dole, about the inability of the military to feed their prisoners.\(^6\) Steck told the commissioner that the military commander of Fort Sumner had reduced the Indian rations. The Indians accepted this change for a few days, and then, becoming increasingly indignant, surrounded the headquarters, forcing the commander to reinstate their accustomed portion of beef and flour. Steck reported that the Navajos also planted crops, but he thought that the corn would be eaten before it was ripe because of the malnourished condition of the reservation Indians.
In order to examine the Bosque Redondo operation in a more thorough manner, Steck visited the reservation in November 1864. He found the Mescaleros and the Navajos existing under inhumane conditions. He informed Commissioner Dole that all the healthy Mescaleros, in violation of military orders, had returned to their homeland in the Sacramento Mountains, where they were thriving by following the traditional ways of their people. The Navajos, on the other hand, suffered from inadequate provisions and disease. Steck concluded that if present conditions persisted, there would not be a single Navajos left alive who could tell about life at the Bosque Redondo.

Meanwhile, Carleton, anticipating that soon over 1300 more Navajos would make the long trek to the Bosque and swell their total number to over 2500, worked at a feverish pace to find food and supplies for the new arrivals. Ill-prepared, the military ran a series of advertisements in the local newspapers requesting residents to place bids for supplies needed for the Bosque. Since government freighting still played a vital role in New Mexico's economy, merchants and freighters competed for these important contracts. The unusual demand for foodstuffs drained the local market, inflating prices and causing New Mexican residents to complain bitterly about the conditions in the territory's agricultural market.
Interestingly enough, the firm of Watrous and Tipton joined the military bandwagon, reaping an impressive $12,163.80 for a shipment of corn sent to the Bosque in the summer of 1864.9 Also, later that same year, the Watrous firm freighted 12,532 pounds of Indian goods from Santa Fe to Fort Union.10 While not one of the main contractors for the Bosque, the firm of Watrous and Tipton did manage to obtain a slice of the government pie. But the awarding of these contracts caused Carleton to be placed in a critical position with Superintendent Steck and the rest of the world.

"It is a fact that General Carleton and Collins," wrote Steck to Colonel Puleston of Santa Fe, "are opposers of Mr. Lincoln's administration. Four-fifths of the money paid out for supplies goes into the hands of enemies of the administration."11 Not only had Steck, an avid Republican, accused Carleton of mishandling his office, but in February the New World and the Journal of Commerce charged the general with favoritism in allocating governmental contracts. Carleton, whose standing as an Indian hero had waned during the recent year, and whose reputation with President Lincoln could have looked dubious since the general proclaimed himself a Democrat, was defended by his allies, Governor Connelly, James Collins, Joab Houghton, and various prominent merchants and freighters in the territory. On February 21, the Carleton supporters
convened in Santa Fe and wrote a resolution published in the Santa Fe Gazette and the New Mexican which refuted the charges made by the New World and the Journal of Commerce.  

Superintendent Steck also disagreed with Carleton's solution to the problematic relations with the Comanches and Kiowas. Like many of the Plains Indians, the Comanches and the Kiowas had become incensed over white encroachment into their hunting grounds. The shortage of American troops upon the frontier as a result of the Civil War had also encouraged some of them to take the warpath. The Comanches and Kiowas joined the Cheyennes in raiding the freight trains and settlers traveling on the Santa Fe Trail. These incidents caused the New Mexican officials little concern until the Indians attacked a small train near the lower Cimarron spring, brutally killing five American teamsters.  

When Carleton heard what the Comanches had done, he declared the Comanches and Kiowas to be enemies of the American government and began instigating a plan of reprisals against them.

Steck, believing that it would be easier to mend relations than to implement a full-scale war against the powerful Comanches and Kiowas, informed the general that he had talked with various citizens of San Miguel County, and the consensus was that Comanche relations had not deteriorated. He claimed that despite the frequent hostilities unleashed upon the northern settlements by
the Comanche Indians, the people had managed to maintain, although at times rather precariously, good relations with the Comanches. Since time immemorial, the comancheros, Mexican-American traders, traveled the wide llano estado especially to trade with the Plains Indians, while the Comanches themselves often camped on the fringes of the New Mexico villages exchanging horses, mules, and buffalo hides for Mexican goods. The superintendent also told the general that he believed that many of the raids cited upon the Santa Fe Trail were not committed by the Comanches, but were the work of the Kiowas.

Refusing to heed the superintendent's advice, Carleton launched an expedition against the Comanches. First, the general instructed Governor Connelly to call out a portion of the territorial militia for his campaign, but the governor refused to cooperate, because he felt that the Comanches were "at peace with the people of New Mexico, and that it was impolitic to stir up this powerful tribe without cause."15 Left with a small force with which to implement his revenge upon the Comanches, Carleton placed Kit Carson in charge of 321 California and New Mexican Volunteers and some Utes and Jicarilla Apaches (traditional enemies of the Plains Indians) who resided near the Cimarron agency.16

Carson's men and his Indian scouts left Fort Bascom in November 1864 and headed east along the Canadian River. At Adobe Walls, site of an old trading post, they attacked
an Indian encampment consisting of 150 Kiowa lodges. The Kiowas, when they saw the troops approaching, fled from their camp. Carson reported that he was then assailed by some 1000 warriors consisting of Comanches, Arapahoes, and Kiowas. Despite the onslaught of this overwhelming gathering of Indians, Carson stated that he lost only three men, as compared to 60 Indian warriors of the opposing side.\footnote{17} The Adobe Wall incident, however, did nothing to alleviate the Indian attacks. Now, more than ever, settlers feared the possibility of a Comanche reprisal.

The Superintendent, believing that Carleton was truly insensible to the Indians and settlers alike, traveled to Washington to plead his case with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William Dole. Steck concentrated on persuading the official that the Navajos should be returned to their homeland. The government was not entirely apathetic to Steck's proposal; however, the Commissioner was reluctant to interfere in New Mexico Indian affairs, especially since he knew that President Lincoln and other influential Republican leaders favored the reservation system.

A more powerful influence on Dole was James Collins, who was also in Washington lobbying for additional appropriations for the Navajo tribe. He convinced the Commissioner that the Indians were being taught to be self-sufficient and that the commissioner should not interfere with
Carleton's project. Dole recommended a $100,000 appropriation for the Navajos with the understanding that the military would continue allocating food rations.\(^{18}\) And, finally, Dole suggested to the Secretary of the Interior that Carleton's policy should be endorsed and given a chance to succeed.

Superintendent Steck was not the only individual who had become perturbed over Carleton's role as director of the Navajo project. Criticism had spread throughout the countryside. Samuel Watrous who had remained relatively aloof from the loud wrangling of the politicians since his personal confrontation with the former Superintendent of Indian Affairs, James Collins, joined the chorus of Carleton dissenters. The "pen and ink" rancher endorsed Michael Steck in the *New Mexican*, praising him for his integrity and prudence as a government office holder. Watrous stated, though, that "the present [Indian] policy has brought our territory to the verge of ruin, and any changes would be for the better."\(^ {19}\) Steck told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that he had enclosed a copy of Watrous' letter in his official report in hopes that the commissioner would realize the grave situation that awaited New Mexico unless there was a change in the current administration.\(^ {20}\)

Miguel Romero y Baca, Probate Judge of San Miguel County, also wrote a detailed and convincing letter in the
New Mexican stressing the necessity of resolving the Indian depredations which the people of his county endured year after year. He pointed out that from its inception the citizens had objected to the policy of locating the Navajos at Fort Sumner. While the fort was crucial for protection from the marauding Indians, most people thought that it was an atrocity to confine the starving Navajos there, since they persisted in escaping from the reservation and raiding the surrounding settlements.

According to Baca, a Navajo had recently ridden into the Las Vegas plaza boldly proclaiming to the bewildered bystanders his recent escape from the Bosque. And last August, Baca recalled, a band of Mescalero Apache descended upon the ranch of Jose Feliz Ulibarri, a local rico, murdering two workers and driving off his cattle. The judge concluded on the sobering note that Jose Inocensio Arcanes, Jose Rafael Lobato, and the pasture boy of Miguel Antonio Lobato, all residents of San Miguel County, died at the hands of renegade Navajos or Mescalero Apaches. Judge Miguel Romero y Baca's testimony indicated that the northern countryside continued to have problems with the hostile Indians.

The Republicans, who had suffered from political impotence during Carleton's reign, gathered new allies and determined to drive him from his office as governing head of New Mexico. William Arny and Chief Justice Kirby
Benedict, previously a Carleton supporter, become Carleton’s most adverse critics. Both men believed that the Bosque Redondo site had been poorly selected. They also pointed out the failure of the farming experiment and the depraved state of affairs regarding the Indians residing at the Bosque. Also, the Republican leaders raised the question of whose care the Navajos should be under, since the Bureau of Indian Affairs refused to take care of the Navajos. They suggested that Superintendent Steck and his Indian agents, not General Carleton, should supervise the care of the Indians.

As these powerful figures in the territory aligned themselves against the Carleton-Collins-Watts faction, Congressional delegate Francisco Perea used his influence in Washington to protect the interests of the Carletonians. The general, fearing that the numerous complaints about the Bosque might reach Washington, wrote Perea suggesting that the delegate might help him prevent Steck and others from interfering with his Indian policy. Perea took the advice of Carleton and conferred with President Lincoln in December 1864. He denounced Michael Steck, William Arny, and John Greiner, another Republican and receiver at the United States Depository in Santa Fe, suggesting that men of the Carleton-Collins persuasion be appointed in their places. Then, writing to Secretary of State William H. Seward, Perea stated, "Mr. Arny has a peculiar aptitude
of making mischief, and his career in New Mexico has been strongly marked by that characteristic." In the "name of the United States" and so "peace may be restored in the territory," Perea pleaded with the Secretary that Arny be removed from his office as Territorial Secretary. 23

While delegate Perea lobbied in Washington against the Republican leaders, imputations surface in New Mexico questioning Benedict's capacity as Chief Justice. The Carletonians, moving with marked swiftness, concentrated their attention on this ally of Arny. Judge Juan Hubbell wrote to the U.S. Attorney General that Benedict had been "so drunk when he took the seat on the bench" one day that "he could hardly sit at his chair" and only with great difficulty had he been able to speak at all. 24 James Collins, editor of the Santa Fe Gazette, could not refrain from adding fuel to the fire by saying that Benedict "must dabble, dabble in the dirty pool of politics." And, Collins continued, the judge constantly "bespatters himself with mire." 25 It is evident that New Mexican politics were highly partisan and that these vituperative attacks represented the opposing factions and not necessarily public opinion. However, the truth is difficult to discover. It is known, though, that Judge Benedict did have a weakness for drinking and gambling; these vices made him vulnerable to criticism. On the other hand, the New Mexican consistently defended the judge, maintaining that
he attended "strictly to his duties as judge" and concluded that Benedict's removal would be a great loss to the territory.

Washington received word of Benedict's judicial abuses in a series of charges made by delegate Perea and a number of eminent officers in the army. After reviewing the report, President Lincoln made the comment that:

Well, gentlemen, I know Benedict. We have been friends for over thirty years. He may imbebe to excess, but Benedict drunk knows more law than all the others on the bench in New Mexico sober. I shall not disturb him.²⁶

Arny, though, believed it imperative that he journey to Washington to defend himself and his Republican coworkers. He was able to save his position along with those of John Greiner and Kirby Benedict.²⁷

Samuel Watrous, beginning to side with Arny, contended that New Mexico's Indian policy had sorely beleaguered the territory, and, not to be outdone, he made the long trek to the capitol, convinced that his visit would effect an immediate change in the current Indian policy.²⁸ Arriving in January 1864, Watrous called upon delegate Perea, and in his typical dogmatic manner urged Perea to institute a change in the Indian administration. Watrous wanted Perea to use his power to persuade Congress to remove the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches from their present location at the Cimarron agency, even though the latter had been relatively peaceful in the last few years. He also wanted Perea to ask
Congress to place troops along the Santa Fe Trail to protect the settlers and travelers from the Plains Indians. However, Watrous reported Perea's lack of sympathy. Perea said that "it was useless to do anything in that direction." A furious Watrous, who had his own interest in mind, reported that "every citizen of this territory must admit that these things are of the first importance to our interests yet their representative, while admitting the same, folds his hands supinely and refuses to act himself or assist others because he feels that he could not do anything if he tried." 29

Samuel Watrous remained in Washington for several months observing the movements of Perea and meeting with other governmental officials. The rancher felt that Perea had become the political puppet of the Carleton-Collins-Watts faction, making the comment that Perea:

Clung to them [Collins and Watts] like their shadows flew with them from department to department, giving his official endorsements to all their statements and hesitating at nothing which could aid in carrying out the plans of those Honorable Gentlemen who elected him. Everyone who knows Watts and Collins and the objects they have in view, is aware that their interests are diametrically opposed to each other, so that so far he [Perea] is true to their interests, he is false to those of the people. 30

When Samuel Watrous returned to New Mexico, the territory was diligently preparing for the Congressional Delegate Election of 1865, which evolved into a test of strength between the two respective parties. The Democrats were
led by Collins, and the Republicans by Benedict and Arny. The latter ran Francisco Chavez, a popular New Mexican legislator, while the Collins Democratic faction chose to nominate Francisco Perea for re-election. The main issues focused upon Indian policy and the resultant "cronyism." Samuel Watrous consolidated with Chavez in criticizing Perea's ineptness at effecting a change in conditions upon the frontier, a change that the rancher contended was pertinent to the lives of New Mexican citizens. Watrous proclaimed that Perea "must be true to the clique [Collins] or he would not be re-elected." Continuing in the same vein, Watrous stated in the New Mexican:

Are our people satisfied with the present Indian policy? Do they desire no change? If they do, then Perea is not the man for whom their vote must be cast. . . . Colonel Chavez is the man to expose them [Carleton-Collins] and as the Gazette admits [Santa Fe Gazette] that his election [Chavez] will upset all their fine air castles. . . . Let the people elect him who can bring so desirable a result.

On September 4, Francisco Chavez swept the polls, taking the counties of Taos, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Santa Anna, Valencia, Socorro, and Donna Anna. This, more than anything, demonstrated that Carleton's Indian policy had lost favor with the majority of the people of New Mexico.

Watrous added an intriguing anecdote about the September 4th election. Even though Watrous' observations about what he witnessed at the Las Golondrinas polls may have been colored by his partisan beliefs, his comments are nevertheless interesting and reflect the antagonism
which existed between the two vying parties. For some unknown reason, he traveled to Las Golondrinas, New Mexico, to watch the tallying of the votes in this particular precinct. As he approached the house designated for the collection of votes, the rancher noticed several soldiers standing around where the officials collected the votes through a window. Watrous also noted that some individuals entered the house by a side entrance. Somehow the curious rancher managed to worm his way into the confines of the house, where he witnessed "selective" voting being performed by Perea's men. He reported that a fight almost erupted when some of Chavez's men entered the room; however, the soldiers bolted into the room, escorting all the people out, including the inquisitive rancher. Watrous estimated that 400 illegal votes had been collected at Las Golondrinas.34

Watrous' boisterous denunciation of delegate Perea and his incessant harping about various Indian problems caused people to wonder whether the "pen and ink" rancher was contemplating running for a political office. With tongue in cheek, Watrous replied in the New Mexican, "This I presume, grew out of the fact that I once stated my willingness to accept the office of scalp hunter in order to settle the moot question as to how many Indians are disposed of by cold lead and how many are inhumanly slaughtered by the dash of the pen in official reports."34 Samuel also admitted that he would not object to being
assigned to the committee that was examining the charges brought against former superintendent James Collins, who was still under investigation. These, the rancher professed, "are all my aspirations in the direction of office seeking." 35

Samuel Watrous, who certainly cannot be characterized as a diffident or modest individual, did not consider himself qualified to run for public office. He was educated, an astute observer, and a man talented at writing flamboyant soliloquies; he undoubtedly could have been a successful politician in New Mexico. Perhaps, though, his fight with James Collins had left the rancher bitter, steering him away from politics forever. It seems, too, that sometime during the Congressional Delegate election, Watrous insulted Kirby Benedict, the Republican boss. The Chief Justice described Watrous as a "growling, grumbling, snarling discontented man," unhappy with "himself and everybody else." 36

Watrous let politics go by and turned to the practical concerns of "growling and grumbling" about Indian atrocities in his part of the country. Northern New Mexico had become inundated with renegade Navajos and Mescalero Apaches in the spring and summer of 1866. In the June 8 publication of the New Mexican, Watrous wrote that a runaway Navajo Indian had killed Don Esteban Coruna, mayordomo of J. D. Tipton, resident of La Junta. 37 Tipton, like Watrous, had been a minor contractor supplying the Bosque
with beef. Coruna, Watrous reported, had ridden alone into the Plains to round up a stray ox. A couple of days passed, and there was no sign of the herder. Coruna’s coworkers, worried that some catastrophe had befallen their friend, went looking for him. His companions found the tattered remains of a bloody shirt clinging to a mesquite bush, and an empty powder horn which they identified as belonging to Coruna. It was not long before they stumbled upon the mutilated body of the herder.

Watrous, who had previously supported the Bosque Redondo reservation with the stipulation that it should be "conducted in the right manner," changed his mind after this disturbing incident. Now he strongly believed that Carleton was mismanaging the Bosque Redondo project as well as the other Indian controversies. He condemned the military for keeping the Indians "on half rations ... revolvers in their belts and passports in their pockets ostensibly to hunt, but in reality to rob and murder our citizens at pleasure." He believed that anyone who permitted such conduct must either be "grossly ignorant of the Indian character or entirely indifferent to the welfare and safety of our citizens." He ended on the doleful note that the Indian situation in northern New Mexico "cannot end otherwise but disastrously."38

The New Mexican stated that the letter published by Samuel Watrous in the June issue gave only a faint indication of the many outrages committed by the Navajos and
added a list of recent occurrences. The newspaper stated that a party of some 23 Navajos recently passed near Santa Fe and crossed the Rio Grande near San Ildefonso. The Pueblo Indians, afraid that the Navajos would be tempted to confiscate their livestock, pursued the Navajos, but the latter managed to escape. The New Mexican also reported that another band of Navajos stole 70 mules belonging to Don Jesus Maria Baca, who lived near Pecos. Pointedly, the New Mexican also added that Don Baca lived a mere twenty miles from Santa Fe, the capitol of the territory; it seemed that no one was safe from the destructive hand of the Navajo.

Finally, after four years, the dissension surrounding Carleton's policies combined with the ending of the Civil War, and a change took place. On September 19, 1866, the Secretary of War issued an order directing the Commander of the Department of Missouri to relieve General James Carleton as Commander of the Department of New Mexico. Many citizens of the territory, including William Arny, Kirby Benedict, and Samuel Watrous, rejoiced at the end of Carleton's tyrannical reign. The New Mexican, which had frequently attacked the general, stated that:

For five years or more he has been supreme commander in New Mexico, and during this whole time has accomplished nothing for which he is entitled to the thanks or gratitude of our people, or the confidence of the War Department. He has, however, succeeded in gaining for himself the
detestation and contempt of almost the entire population of our territory...41

Within four months of Carleton's reassignment, the War Department relinquished authority over the Navajos, restoring full custody to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And finally, Congress authorized General William Sherman and Colonel Samuel Tappan to arrange a treaty with the Navajos. After the governmental officials and various Indian chiefs signed the long overdue peace treaty, approximately 7000 elated Navajos left the Bosque Redondo. On June 15, 1868, they retraced their steps of the long walk and returned home.42

General Carleton had not resolved the Indian problem in New Mexico. However, the Navajos, greatly diminished in number following their confinement at Bosque Redondo, were now content to be on their own land again, and would never threaten the settler on the northern frontier as in former times. But as the diplomats and headmen gathered to arrange the returning of the Navajos to their homeland, the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches, living in the vicinity of the Abiquiu and Cimarron agencies, expressed discontent with the Indian agents and frontiersmen in the surrounding countryside. War with these two tribes seemed inevitable. The Utes and Jicarilla Apaches would continue harassing and pillaging the settlers until their final removal to their respective reservations in 1876.
In many ways, Samuel Watrous' actions during the Carletonian era characterized the paradox which had confronted all the citizens of New Mexico. Many of the people at the onset welcomed Carleton's punitive expedition against the Mescalero Apaches, an impressive campaign which silenced the tribe. However, most of the people were not aware of how stringent and unbending Carleton's power would become. Neither did they realize how extensive would his control of the economy be, at times challenging the civil governor's authority, or how he would totally disregard the advice of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs about critical Indian policies.

Samuel Watrous, undoubtedly like most New Mexicans at the time, also did not perceive the more subtle economic, political, and military implications. His prime concern was with rendering a change in the current Indian policy. In order to accomplish this, he was forced to delve into the mud-slinging political arena, siding eventually with the Arny-Benedict faction. The rancher's dream was to see the day when the frontiersman could live without fear of marauding Indians. While lacking finesse, his vision certainly seemed clearer than that of James H. Carleton. To a modern historian, the general callously failed to comprehend the dilemma that he forced upon the Indians and settlers, as he alternately starved and punished the desperate Indians. In order to effect change, Watrous actively campaigned for the Republican Congressional
candidate, Francisco Chavez, and assisted Arny and his friends in ousting General Carleton from his office as commanding general of New Mexico.

At this point, we might have expected Watrous to emerge from the election equipped with new-found political power and influence. But he was not a politically ambitious man. His failure to exploit this opportunity indicates his ambiguity, which would have tragic consequences for him in 1886.
15 Steck to Dole, November 16, 1864, Michael Steck Collection, Special Collections, University of New Mexico.

16 Kenner, A History of New Mexican-Plains Relations, p. 147.


18 Thompson, The Army and the Navajo, p. 37.

19 S. B. Watrous to Steck, March 10, 1864, US BIA, LROIA, NMS 1864-1865.

20 Steck to Dole, March 11, 1864, US BIA, LROIA, NMS 1864-1865.

21 New Mexican, November 25, 1864.


24 Murphy, Frontier Crusader—William F. Arny, p. 129.


27 Unfortunately, though, Michael Steck suffered as a result of Perea's attack; he was replaced by Felipe Delgado in the spring of 1865. William Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico, p. 434.

28 New Mexican, July 21, 1865.

29 New Mexican, July 21, 1865.

30 New Mexican, July 21, 1865.

31 New Mexican, August 4, 1865.

32 New Mexican, August 4, 1865.

33 New Mexican, October 6, 1865.

34 New Mexican, September 29, 1865.
35 New Mexican, August 25, 1865.
36 New Mexican, August 25, 1865.
37 Santa Fe Gazette, August 12, 1865.
38 New Mexican, June 8, 1866.
39 New Mexican, April 27, 1866.
40 New Mexican, June 15, June 22, 1866.
41 New Mexican, October 22, 1866; Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico, p. 457.
42 New Mexican, October 27, 1866.
43 Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico, p. 466; Thompson, The Army and the Navajo, p. 156.
Figure 1. Samuel B. Watrous Ranch, Watrous, New Mexico. Taken in 1885. Courtesy of Museum of New Mexico Photo Archives, Santa Fe.
CHAPTER V

Samuel Watrous, standing in front of his ranch house, watched the flicker of distant fire which seemed to burn only for him. The Hermit was probably taking his supper of atole before retiring to bed. Since the 1860s, Samuel had been involved in a unique and mystical relationship with this Italian ascetic who was to become a metaphor for the later tumultuous life of Samuel Watrous. He could see the Hermit's Mountain, El Cerro Tecolote, from his ranch. Samuel had asked the Hermit to light a fire every evening if all was well on this secluded peak. If the western sky remained black, Samuel promised the Hermit to climb the mountain to see what was amiss.

The Hermit, Giovanni Agostini, was born of noble ancestry in Novarra, Italy.¹ For some obscure reason—it was whispered that he had killed a cousin and felt that he must account for this sin—Agostini became a wanderer, turning his back on his wealth. First he traveled the southern hemisphere to Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Mexico. Twenty years elapsed before the Hermit arrived in Council Grove, Kansas, where, in the summer of 1863,² he joined a
wagon train bound for the city of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Although over sixty years of age, he was said to have walked the entire way, as was his custom.

The captain of the caravan, a Romero, befriended Agostini, persuading him to stay in a cave located on the Romero ranch, near present-day Romeroville. Tranquility was what the Hermit sought; however, news spread throughout the villages that a holy man resided in a cave nearby. The old and the young, the sick and the curious, made their way to the hideaway of this man who possessed godly powers. Finally, no longer able to accommodate his newly acquired followers, the Hermit moved to the lofty El Cerro Tecolote, now called Hermit's Peak, and found shelter in a cave.

High above the villages in the rustic comfort of his cave, Agostini continued to be visited by the Spanish people of nearby San Miguel, San Jose, and Las Vegas. The people of northern New Mexico relied on folk medicine to cure most ailments, and a person like Agostini, well versed in potions and herbal concoctions, became an important figure in the community. Also known as a healer, Agostini was reputed to have worked miracles. Probably the most widespread of all legends associated with his name concerns the origin of the spring at the top of the Hermit's Peak. According to a story collected from several sources in the region, only enough water
seeped through the rocks at the top of the mountain to keep the Hermit alive. One day, observing that several of his guests were thirsty, the Hermit took his walking stick and struck several rocks on the ground, causing the water to bubble forth from the earth. To this day, the people of the mountains tell of the clear, sparkling water of the Hermit's Spring. Another day, Agostini supposedly instructed a visitor to chop down a tree. When it fell, the log bridged a deep chasm. Afterwards, the Hermit walked the span on the log. When people asked why he risked his life by crossing the abyss, he replied that he wanted to remind himself that the balance of life was precarious.4

Agostini served as a constant reminder that there was more to life than amassing a large fortune. The Hermit, stationing himself upon his mountain, subtly influencing the lives of the local people and perhaps the life of Samuel Watrous, paralleled a religious fervor which was sweeping through America. Christian Science, New Thought, Spiritualism, and the Gift of Speaking Tongues were some of the religious offshoots which gained a large following. Watrous was attracted to the Spiritualist movement.

Samuel's accounts of his Spiritualist practices have been handed down through his children. Joseph, his eldest son, related a story of Samuel's encounter with a Spiritualist medium when Samuel traveled east to visit
his relatives. The mystic induced a trance and envisioned Samuel's son (more than likely Joseph) crossing The Plains in a wagon train, when suddenly the wagon train was surrounded by hostile Indians. The woman told Samuel that if Joseph yielded to his inner spirit, no harm would befall the young man. Strangely enough, Joseph wrote to his father later, telling him that he had been detained by a band of Kiowa Indians, whose chief insisted that Joseph hand over a sack of sugar stored away in one of the wagons. Joseph said his immediate reaction, as the Indians grabbed the sack of sugar and ripped it open with his knife, was to let out an angry cry, but some unexplicable force compelled him to remain calm.

Not only did Samuel seek guidance from mediums, he also professed to have clairvoyant powers of his own. Johanna Guerin, daughter of Belina Watrous Wildenstein, remembered her mother telling her that Samuel owned a special chair where he liked to sit and meditate. As one story goes, an elderly man who lived in the vicinity of Watrous fell ill while out strolling one day and died. The man's family looked everywhere for him, and in despair they sought Watrous' help. When the family returned to the Watrous ranch later that day, Samuel was able to tell the family where to find the old man.

Though he became a close friend of the Hermit and was intrigued by the ascetic's abstinence from material
pleasures, Samuel Watrous' own lifestyle was much more materialistic and capitalistic. It seemed that life had treated Watrous kindly and had shown him prosperity; what his hand touched profited and yielded him wealth. His store, located in the back of his home, still kept him and his son, Joseph, busy. Samuel had also concentrated on expanding his ranching and farming. In the later years, his cattle no longer wandered the wide expanse of the plains looking for grass. Instead, in 1880, Watrous' ranching company, S. B. Watrous and Sons, had fenced in their grazing lands. The Watrous holdings had grown to over 1000 head of cattle, mainly of the Durham variety, and 100 horses. On the ranch's remaining land the workers, supervised by Joseph, sowed large tracts of timothy, clover, blue grass, red clover, and alfalfa, which they used to feed their cattle. The first forty head of steer fattened in this manner, Joseph recollected, were sold to a butcher in Las Vegas.

In spare moments when the ranching chores were done, Samuel supervised his men in working on the grounds around his home. He and his family had taken care of the ranch, and over the years the tall willow trees shading the dirt road which wound up to the main house, and the flower gardens that his wife attended, became familiar landmarks for people traveling through the region. The Watrous ranch was also known for its extensive orchards;
every autumn the family harvested bushels of plums, pears, and apples.\footnote{9}

Besides farming, ranching, and selling merchandise at his store, Samuel Watrous was the main investor in the New Mexico Woolen Company, a woolen mill located southwest of the Watrous ranch in Cherry Valley. Since New Mexicans had for many years exported wool to eastern markets Watrous and his partners conceived the idea of constructing a woolen mill in the territory. After an initial investment of over $70,000, with Watrous contributing $21,639.26 of his own money, the owners began planning their factory.\footnote{10} They built the mill along the banks of the Mora River, running the equipment with power generated by a waterwheel. A three-story stone structure, the building also had ample room to house the workers. Carl Wildenstein, and later Samuel Junior, served as the supervisors of the mill. The New Mexico Woolen Company was in full operation by 1867, producing a variety of items such as blankets, rugs, carpets, and serapes. Governor Robert Mitchell, in his annual address to the Legislative Assembly, commended the company's accomplishments, in his efforts to encourage additional industrialization in the territory.\footnote{11}

A mere decade later New Mexico began to encourage the extension of railroads, which Governor Mitchell and others had realized would inspire growth and settlement in
New Mexico. One of the main needs of the territory was a transportation system which would link New Mexico with the Midwest and the Eastern Seaboard. In 1879 the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad extended its line from eastern Colorado, following the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail to Trinidad, Colorado. After a brief dispute with the rival railroad, the Denver and the Rio Grande Company, over the rights to the Raton Pass, the AT and SF won the battle and continued construction. The route followed the contour of the Mora River to the junction of the Sapello and then south along the Sapello toward the town of Las Vegas, New Mexico. In the same year that the AT and SF turned its attention toward New Mexico, the railroad laid out plans for a grid pattern town near Watrous' homestead, designating the new town Watrous. It is said that Samuel Watrous objected to the changing of the name from La Junta to Watrous, but the railroad argued that the renaming was necessary since the AT and SF already had a stop named La Junta in Colorado. Samuel Watrous, then an aging man nearing his death, must have proudly pondered the notion that this new town, bearing his name, would endure and thrive long after he had perished.

The land that Samuel loved and helped settle underwent dramatic transformations after the railroad roared through this region. Samuel, who donated ten acres of
his prime farmland to the railroad,\textsuperscript{12} watched with uncertainty as the workers built a depot, various warehouses, a lumber yard, corrals for livestock, and an ice house on the west side of the railroad track. Construction began in the town, but the real boom came years after Samuel's death. From the train station, passengers bound for Las Vegas could see the sign "Wine, Liquor, and Cigars" hanging from the local saloon located on the corner of Second and Union Streets.\textsuperscript{13} On the opposite corner was Thomas Lesters' two-story adobe blacksmith shop.

Hoping to prosper from the activity generated by the coming of the railroad, strangers to Samuel Watrous and the other established families of the area moved to the town, opened up new businesses and bought town lots to build their homes. A new competing mercantile operation opened in town. Benedict Marcellin St. Vrain, nephew of Ceran St. Vrain, an old French Canadian settler of New Mexico, established a store on the corner of Concord and Second Streets. Across from St. Vrain's place was the town's livery stable. A one-room school house, a Methodist church, and later two hotels were eventually added to the town of Watrous.

Many of the people from the surrounding farms and ranches brought their produce or livestock to the Watrous station to be transported to Las Vegas or to other markets in the East. Often these farmers camped in the
village square for a number of nights while waiting to load their animals or farm crops onto the train. Located two blocks from the tracks in the middle of town, this area also served as a place for town meetings, recreation, and, in later years, a place where the small circuses would put up their canvas tents. By the 1880s, Watrous, New Mexico, was populated by some one hundred individuals. Samuel Watrous, with time on his hands and little to do, watched the rural community burgeoning and the landscape changing.

More and more, by the 1880s, in an effort to obtain inner stability, Samuel's gaze returned to the beacon of light on Tecolote peak. The spring wind rustled the cottonwoods which lined the road leading up to the Watrous ranch. Stirring and trying to erase the thoughts of the past from his mind, Samuel realized that he had not been watching the Hermit's fire burning on the distant mountain, but the bonfires of El Sociedad el Ermitiano. The memory of the Hermit still lingered in the hearts of the common folk, even though Agostini had died many years earlier. One day in 1867, Watrous recollected, the Hermit had appeared at the Watrous ranch and told him he would cease lighting the signal fires because God had revealed to him that he must not tarry a moment longer in the New Mexico wilderness. At the age of 65, the Hermit journeyed southward to Mexico, never reaching his destination. He was found
two years later in the Organ Mountains near Las Cruces with a dagger in his back. Every May, members of El Sociedad el Ermitiano climbed the precipitous path and ignited bonfires in honor of the Hermit, acknowledging his ubiquitous presence.15

Since the Hermit had first inhabited his lofty mountaintop, New Mexico had changed. Samuel had reluctantly witnessed the slow, inevitable transformation of the landscape. Eastern tourists poured off the trains at Albuquerque and Las Vegas to bask in the warm southwestern sun, renewing their fragile health wracked from bouts with asthma and tuberculosis. They came and gawked at the paganistic rituals of the Pueblo Indians, pounding out their slow, steady beat of the dance on deerskin drums. The intruders came and marvelled at the spectacular Southwestern sunsets enveloping the wide span of the mountain desert and turning the Sangre de Cristo Mountains a deep blood red.

Balancing these changes, which were happening at too quick a pace for Samuel, were the support and satisfaction which he felt from having his family around him. While the town of Watrous slowly grew, Samuel was confronted in his old age by his daughters and sons, who had married and lived nearby. His oldest son and right-hand man, Joseph, lived about three-fourths of a mile south of the town of Watrous. In 1862, he had married Louisa Berg,
daughter of a Ft. Union blacksmith who had migrated west from Baltimore. Carrie Roulet, daughter of Joseph, recalled that her father had first seen Louisa when she was only a young girl of eleven traveling on one of W. H. Moore's wagon trains.\(^{16}\) Joseph immediately fell in love with the New England girl, and they started a family several years later, only to lose their first two children.

Samuel's first daughter, Mary Antonette, who had married early, still lived with her husband, James Johnson, in Cherry Valley. Also living close to her folks, Emeteria, Samuel's second oldest daughter, had married George Gregg, the owner of Gregg's Inn, situated where the Cimarron and the Mountain branches of the Santa Fe Trail converged. The Barlow and Sanderson stagecoach stopped at Gregg's Inn, a bustling place in its time. Travelers would tumble out of the coach, dusting themselves off from the tedious and grueling ride, and refresh themselves while the driver stretched and chatted with the inn's owner. However, the stage line now only transported passengers to local destinations, its function as a long-distance carrier having been usurped by the AT and SF, which stopped at the Watrous stations.

Samuel's old partner, William Tipton, who had come to La Junta and helped the Watrous family settle their land, had married Mary Watrous, the third oldest daughter.
William had bought into the Scolly land grant and built himself a house in Tiptonville, northwest of Watrous. He also owned a ranch and a mercantile store there.

Samuel's other old friend, William Kronig, had married his daughter Louisa around the time of the Civil War during Samuel's private battle with the bothersome scoundrel James Collins.\(^{17}\) Louisa and William had built a lavish residence near Watrous called the Phoenix Ranch.\(^{18}\) Containing nine artificial lakes, an elaborate irrigation system to water the fields, and various outbuildings, the ranch had cost the enormous sum of $40,000. Louisa had purchased the house furnishings, which were hauled by oxen down the Santa Fe Trail from stores in St. Louis. Elegant and extravagant, the house resembled a country mansion. Unfortunately, though, the house was later sold to pay for a mining venture that had failed in Elizabethtown. Some years after this fiasco, the Kronigs returned to La Junta Valley and built a stone house, a less pretentious home, just a couple of miles southwest of the Watrous ranch.

Across the road, Samuel could see the soft, shimmering lantern glow from a window in the house of his fifth daughter, Belina, and her husband, Carl Wildenstein. Samuel recalled meeting Carl in St. Louis, where he was working in one of the furniture warehouses. Samuel had liked the young man and had persuaded him to join his
wagon train and move to New Mexico. Carl married Belina and later became Samuel's bookkeeper and the manager of the woolen factory. The Wildensteins and their children had purchased some land from William Kronig and built their ranch house, the Glenwood farm, right across from the Watrous ranch.

Samuel had one other child by his marriage to Tomacita Crespín, Samuel Junior, his favorite son. Samuel Junior lived close to his father, approximately twenty miles from town. He had a small ranch of about one hundred cattle and became a rather prosperous young man. Samuel Junior, unlike his brother and sisters, was a loner and showed little inclination to marry.

As Samuel reflected on his life, increasingly he saw the resemblance of his life to the balancing act of the Hermit as he crossed the abyss on the log. Although his children had survived a surge of diseases—smallpox, diphtheria, cholera—which ravaged the countryside and filled the parish cemeteries with fresh earthen mounds, Samuel in his young manhood years had to bury two women he loved. Tomacita, his first wife, who bore him seven children, had died just after the Watrous family moved to their land. He then married Rose Chapin, who died sometime in the 1860s without giving birth to any children. Raising a large family alone did not suit Samuel Watrous, and sometime after the Civil War he married his second
wife's sister, Josephine, who gave birth to two more children, Rose and Charlie.

Josephine, a New Engander, and thirty odd years younger than her husband, was almost a contemporary of her older stepchildren. She supervised numerous Indian servants and entertained guests and neighbors. Johanna Wildenstein, Samuel's granddaughter, remembered Josephine when the latter was an elderly lady. Johanna and her older brother, Louis, used to perch upon the fence of their father's house and watch their grandmother, dressed in black, dashing by in her buggy. Grandmother, Johanna recalled, drove back and forth to town every day calling upon her daughter Rose.²¹ Their mother had forbidden them to speak to their grandmother; in their eyes Josephine was simply a strange old woman who always wore black and raced back and forth in her buggy.

While the influx of tourists may have been distracting and annoying, reminding Samuel that the West had been transformed, the death of Samuel Junior, his favorite son, must have been most disconcerting. According to the newspaper account, his son had been drinking heavily on that April day before his death. The next day, on April 17, 1885, he was found at his ranch with a bullet through his head—a self-inflicted wound, the paper stated, although the paper hinted some peculiar mystery shrouded the whole affair.²² "The shock was too much for father," Joseph
later recalled; "his mind continued to grow worse" after Samuel's death. 23 For some strange reason Samuel had wanted the revolver which had taken his son's life. There were many things which Samuel had to do following his son's funeral. Young Samuel's estate had to be attended to, his ranch house cleaned, sealed, and boarded up, his herd of cattle and horses sold. These things Samuel Senior had put off for some time now.

Simultaneously with the news of the death of his son, Samuel's businesses began to falter. The New Mexico Woolen Company had closed in 1884. The following winter had been severe in the Southwest. Cattle losses in Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico were staggering. S. B. Watrous and Sons was forced to borrow, using the company's animals and farm equipment for collateral. The ranch owed a fistful of promissory notes to the Charles Ilfeld Company, the First National Bank of Las Vegas, and other private individuals. One was dated January 1, 1886, payable in six months for the sum of $10,939.18; another, January 23, 1886, for $5,000.00, payable in one year; and finally, another dated March 10, 1886, for $2,000.00. 24

Samuel's own life had changed since the days as a younger hunter in the mining camps of Dolores. He was no longer the frontier farmer or the omnipotent patriarch of a large family; he no longer meddled in the politics of the territory, spewing forth rabid editorials in the New Mexican; and he no longer fought the Indians--the fierce
raiders of the plains had been subjugated and banished to reservations in Colorado, New Mexico, and Indian territory. Wedged in amongst forces over which he had no control, this seasoned pioneer must have viewed life as futile and meaningless. Perhaps overcome by a strange sense of impotence, he struggled with his world and with himself. On March 25, 1886, the Santa Fe New Mexican noted: "S. B. Watrous committed suicide in his room at his home ranch near Watrous station this morning at 5:00 by shooting himself through the head twice with the same weapon used by his son a few months ago [actually almost a year ago], and since that time the father who was about seventy years of age had been greatly troubled."
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In references to the Hermit, the people from the nearby communities under the guidance of Margarito Romero found El Sociedad el Ermitano (the Society of the Hermit). On May 1, el Dia de la Invencion de la Santa Cruz (the finding of the cross), the members of the Society made a pilgrimage up to the Hermit's peak, and on their way to the top would recite the Stations of the Cross. See Milton Callon, "Las Vegas: The Town That Wouldn't Gamble" (Las Vegas: Las Vegas Daily Optic, 1962), p. 320.

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EPilogue

Situated behind the Watrous ranch upon a bluff lies the Watrous family cemetery where a rickety wire fence, sagging in various places, keeps the cattle from trampling the tombstones. In an unmarked grave, Samuel Watrous, who supposedly loathed monuments, was put to rest many years ago. However, only a few of the remaining Watrous descendants still remember where he was buried, and fewer people still remember the importance of this early New Mexican whose life exemplified the American pioneer of a bygone era.

Yet Johanna Guerin, granddaughter of Samuel Watrous, recollected an interesting story about the death of Samuel Watrous. I was fortunate enough to have interviewed her in the summer of 1982, and her account is totally different from the newspaper version of his death. There was definitely a reason why the little Johanna and her brother Louis sat on the fence post, many years ago, with their lips sealed while their grandmother Josephine rode past their father's house in her buggy. Belina Wildenstein Watrous told the children that Josephine and Joseph had paid someone to kill their Uncle
Samuel, believing that the two of them coveted the woolen factory. Belina also thought that Samuel Senior had found out that this was the reason why his son had died.

According to this account, on the evening of March 24th, Josephine, unable to bear her husband's ominous mood, entered his bedroom chambers. A bitter quarrel between husband and wife ensued. At around five in the morning, two shots rang out in the stillness. The servants, sleeping in the back of the house, ran into the bedroom and found their master and mistress lying on the floor. Samuel Watrous was dead. Josephine told the servants that Samuel had gone berserk and accused her of killing Samuel Junior. He then pulled her down on the floor and began strangling her with his hands. At that moment, Josephine said, she pulled out a revolver hidden in her pocket and fired twice. The first shot went wide, ricocheted, and became embedded in the ceiling. The second shot pierced her husband's head.

Unfortunately, neither the newspaper nor the family account concerning Samuel's death seems totally satisfactory, nor can either be verified without further documentation. In the first case, how does one go about shooting himself in the head two times? And was Samuel sufficiently motivated by the death of his son, or other personal problems and financial difficulties, to commit suicide? This seems out of character with the man who
demonstrated a driving determination to succeed throughout his entire life.

However, Belina Wildenstein's version of Samuel's death seems to be lacking some crucial information. Why was the lady of the ranch concealing a revolver in her pocket when she went to speak to her husband on that fateful evening of March 24th? Also, how would eliminating young Samuel Watrous allow Josephine and Joseph to get their hands on the woolen factory, which had been closed for two years? Unfortunately, there are no answers at this time to these questions.

The bizarre and untimely death of Samuel Watrous seems destined to remain a mystery. The uncertainty surrounding it diminishes the image of the pioneer—a courageous individual who journeyed alone to New Mexico and carved out a sizable domain for himself and his family, despite the harshness of the climate, the incessant Indian raids upon his ranch, and the isolation of his homestead from any major settlements. The elements which overwhelmed him were either the combination of the sorrow he felt over the loss of his son, his own lack of self-fulfillment, and his loss of income. Or even more disastrously, he was struck down by his wife, who should have been by his side during his personal crisis. Indeed, either way was an undignified ending for such an important New Mexican figure.
Samuel Watrous' house still stands surrounded by cottonwood trees and tall grassy meadows, much as it did when Samuel first built it many years ago. And the town of Watrous, New Mexico, although now sleepy-eyed and picturesque with crumbling adobe walls and shattered glass windows, still endures. Perhaps it is fitting then that the cattle still nibble around the wire fence of the Watrous cemetery where the founder of the town lies in peace.
HISTORIC RESOURCES OF WATROUS

(NOT TO SCALE)

Figure 3. Historic Resources of Watrous
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Watrous, New Mexico, taken from National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form prepared by New Mexico Preservation Bureau, Santa Fe.
Interview with Mrs. Guerin on July 22, 1982 (Mrs. Guerin passed away 12 March 1983 at the age of 94) (INTERVIEWER: ALEXIA KOSMIDER)


Alexia: Samuel Watrous was married to Tomacita Crespin?
J. Guerin: Yes. When Tomacita died he married Rose Chapin. My mother said that Rose was wonderful with the family. Samuel Watrous had a large family. He even took in Indians and raised them in the family. He used to buy Indians with groceries or yard goods. They would raise the Indians and then use them on the farm. He planted all those trees. Have you ever been up there? He had those trees planted all around. The Indian boys would help him plant those trees.

Alexia: Did you know any of those people?
J. Guerin: No.

Alexia: Did they just stay with the family for a little while?
J. Guerin: Yes. I didn't know any of them. But I did hear my mother talk about them. He (Samuel Watrous) used to buy Indian boys and girls. The girls used to work in the house; they would do kitchen work, laundry and all those things.

Alexia: He would buy them from some of the tribes here?
J. Guerin: Yes. They used to sell them for groceries or yard goods.

Alexia: Can you tell me anything about Rose Chapin? Where was she from.
J. Guerin: Somewhere in Missouri. He (Samuel Watrous) had wagon trains to haul.

Alexia: And you think he met her some time when he was doing business there?
J. Guerin: Yes. She was from Missouri. I don't know which town but I believe it was St. Joseph, Missouri.

J. James: Could he have been on the Santa Fe Trail?
J. Guerin: Yes. He had wagons and they would travel from here and the other wagon train would come from there...the one going from here was empty and the one coming from there was full. (The family had beautiful furniture brought over by ox train.)

Alexia: When did he marry Josephine.
J. Guerin: Samuel Sr.'s second wife, Rose, died at childbirth. The child also died. Josephine was Rose's sister. Rose was a good wife and a good mother to his children
but Josephine turned out to be bad. She was mean with all the children, especially the younger ones, one of whom was my mother. She was also mean with Samuel Jr.

Alexia: What was your mother's name?

J. Guerin: Belina. She was a few years younger than her brother, Samuel, Jr. Samuel B. Watrous, my grandfather, had an older son, Joseph (born April 7, 1837, two years before Samuel B and Tomacita Crespin were married. He was the son of an Indian woman from Taos). Samuel Watrous also had a woolen mill in Cherry Valley.

Alexia: Where is Cherry Valley? Is it in Mora County?

J. Guerin: Yes.

Alexia: Have you ever been up there to the ranch?

J. Guerin: Yes. I was there many times, but I never saw the woolen mill. Samuel Jr was not interested in the woolen mill, Mother said. Joseph was jealous of Samuel Jr., and she claimed that Joseph and Josephine had Samuel Jr killed.

Alexia: I found out by looking at the old newspapers that Samuel had killed himself with a gun. This is what the papers said back then.

J. James: This is what my sister (Angeline G. Kramer) has disputed. She has gone back into history and she has written to the New Mexico Magazine correcting it.

J. Guerin: My mother claimed that Joseph and Josephine planned to get rid of him.

Alexia: Can you tell me anything about the sons of Samuel Jr or Joseph.

J. Guerin: Samuel Jr was not married. He had no children. I know that my mother would never let Joseph in her home. He would come and visit and she would go to the door and tell him, "You can't come into my house. You killed my brother, Sam." My mother and her sisters never spoke to Josephine after that. I remember she was sitting out by our house—my grandfather's (Samuel Watrous) house was across the water. Our house was near the Sapello River and she used to go by our house. She (Josephine) had a daughter living in town. Her daughter's name was Rose Lang.

J. Guerin: Yes. Then mother (Belina Watrous Wildenstein) never spoke to Rose Watrous Lang, Josephine's and Samuel Watrous' daughter. Rose was married to Otto Lang and they had the
prettiest house in Watrous. Josephine used to go by twice a day in her little buggy and horse. She would run by our house. I was at the gate. I used to love to watch her go by. Mother always said to me, "Don't speak to her." So I used to go to the gate with my brother Louie and we would get on the fence to see her coming.

Alexia: What did she look like?

J. Guerin: She was a pretty good looking old lady. She always dressed in black. She used to wear a little cap that tied under her chin. She always wore black.

Alexia: Was she still in mourning?

J. Guerin: I don't know. I guess.

J. James: What did you think about her, mother? Did you think she was pretty and sophisticated?

J. Guerin: I just thought of her as a little old lady.

J. James: Kind of mysterious person?

J. Guerin: Yes.

Alexia: Did she do things like play the piano or did she read? Was she a lady of culture?

J. Guerin: I didn't know her then. I guess after my grandfather died there were four or five girls—Belina, Louise (married to Kroenig) and there was one they called Emeteria Gregg. She had another sister who was married to a Tipton... but I don't remember her name— I believe it was Mary... called "Chata".

Alexia: I have it here that your mother was married in 1890. (J. Guerin was born in 1889 so she couldn't have married in 1890. Her mother, Belina, was born in 1853. Belina Watrous Wildenstein)

J. Guerin: I don't think so. I was the youngest child and I was born in 1889... so you can see that 1890 is incorrect.

Alexia: Could you tell me about your mother? Where did she grow up and where did she go to school?

J. Guerin: She went to school in Watrous, I guess. She knew how to write well. When my father died, she took over and raised the children. My father had a ranch three miles from Watrous. He had a lot of alfalfa on it. Also they used to raise sacks and sacks of beans. They used to haul the beans to a big barn where they kept the horses on the first floor. On the second floor they had unbailed hay and on the top floor they had bailed hay. It was a three-story barn.
Alexia: Is it still standing?

Johanna Guerin: No, after my mother sold the house—she sold it to her nephew, Willie Kroenig. It seemed that he rented it to a man and woman from Wagon Mound. I remember I met her once. We had two orchards on the farm, mostly apples and pears. They were the best apples. This couple cut down all the trees in the orchard and tore down the barn. There was a road that came in from the street and on one side of the road there was a "buggy" house. It was built real well. There was also a shed. It was a cart shed for my brother—he had a two-wheeled cart. My father had given him a horse, and he used to go all over the place with it.

Alexia: When did your mother sell the farm?

J. Guerin: I don't remember.

Jerry James: I think that it would be hard to remember. Do you know how old you were?

J. Guerin: When she sold the house, I was already married and living in Las Vegas.

Alexia: So it was after 1908?

J. Guerin: She sold it about 1912.

Jerry James: You were already married and you were married in 1908. She must have sold it then in about 1910 or 1911.

Alexia: Did your father ever do any business with your grandfather—were they involved in the freighting business together?

J. Guerin: My father was working in St. Joseph, Mo., in a big warehouse—a big place of business, a wholesale place for furniture or something and my grandfather, Samuel, brought my father here on one of his wagon trains to do his bookkeeping and be his manager. My granddad was one of the first settlers here. He owned everything; he even owned part of Las Vegas. My father was his manager. My father was a mason. I remember at his funeral—I rode a buggy with my mother, and there were about forty men dressed in black, wearing black hats with white plumes, walking ahead of the hearse.

Alexia: Where was he buried?

J. Guerin: In the Watrous family cemetery.

Alexia: Did your father like your grandfather? Did they get along?

(Father: Carl W. Wildenstein
Grandfather: Samuel B. Watrous)
Yes, my father (Carl W. Wildenstein) worked for my grandfather (Samuel B. Watrous) until Josephine shot and killed my grandfather. There was a fight amongst the girls. Josephine would not give them their share of anything.

Did your mother (Belina Watrous Wildenstein) get her share of the estate? How did she feel about this?

Mother got the ranch and I don't know how many acres of land. Samuel Watrous had already given Joseph (son by Indian woman who was born in 1837, two years before Samuel married Tomacita Crespin) a big lot and he built a house on it. It is the first house on the right in Watrous, New Mexico. Samuel Watrous had given my mother fifteen (15) acres as her share of the estate. She had built the house. He gave another daughter, Mrs. Johnson, a big ranch down by the woolen mills.

Weren't they living down there at the time?

Yes. She had a son named George Johnson. He got the small pox. At that time, small pox was fatal. She also had another son who didn't live there, he lived somewhere else. Mrs. Johnson had a daughter that used to take care of her. Her name was Lilly. Later, Lilly worked at the store in Shoemaker, which belonged to a Mr. Murphey. After Lilly's mother died, they got married.

Did Marie and Louise get their share of the estate?

Yes, they got so many acres as he had already given them land to build a home on. It is a beautiful stone building and it is still standing.

In Watrous?

Right out of Watrous.

Who ended up living on the ranch? Josephine?

She got the ranch. And she had a son and daughter.

Did she remarry?

No. The children were from my grandfather (Samuel Watrous). Her son's name was Charlie. Charlie Watrous and boy was he a "drunk".

So he must have been the youngest?

Yes. Charlie...well I remember he went away to war and when he came back...I heard that Josephine (his mother) would say "I hope he never comes back." She didn't even go see him off and mother would say...somebody would tell my mother these things...you know how people are. Well, when he came back, there was this family living across
the street from the big house that my grandfather had. My grandfather had a lot of cabins across the street where the Indians came and stayed. My grandfather had a grocery store and when the Indians came, they would stay in these little houses. These houses didn't have bathrooms and things like that— Anyway, there was a family that moved in one of these homes. Well, Charlie (Josephine and Samuel's son) married the daughter of the family in the home across the street and Josephine disowned him because he married the girl that lived across the street. The family of this girl moved to Denver. Charlie had a family with this girl. Their son was also named Charlie. I took the Post for fifty years and the Denver Post reported that this boy (Charlie) was a wonderful boy and he had a wife and children. Charlie's (the son of Josephine and Samuel) wife left him and he was taken in by his son and his wife. Charlie did not get along with his son because his son would tell him not to come home drunk. So one day he came home and his son said "Didn't I tell you not to come home drunk?" Charlie then shot his son. Charlie was like his mother, Josephine—a murderer. The Denver Post had three or four pages on it.

Alexia: Do you know about what time this was?

Johanna Guerin: No, I don't. I was living in Las Vegas, so it must have been sometime after 1908. I would say about 1915 or 1916.

Jerry James: That is a sad story.

Johanna Guerin: I had the paper saved for a long time. I don't know what happened to it.

Alexia: What was Josephine's other child's name?

Johanna Guerin: She had Rose who married Otto Lang, and they had the prettiest house in Watrous. It's still there. Later in about 1912, they moved to Denver—the whole family. They had a mercantile store in Watrous. Otto came to Watrous to work and married Rose and then he ran his own store.

Alexia: The grocery store that your grandfather had was closed down after his death?

Johanna Guerin: Yes. My grandfather had a store by his house and after his death they closed it down because the old lady didn't know how to run it.

Alexia: Josephine didn't want to take it over?

Johanna Guerin: She couldn't run it.
Alexia: How about Joseph, her son?
(Insertion by Angelina Guerin Kramer—daughter of Johanna Guerin) Joseph was not Josephine's son. Joseph was the son of an Indian woman from Taos and Samuel Watrous. Joseph was born in 1837 in Taos. Samuel Watrous and Tomacita were married in 1839. Proof is documented in letters on file.

Johanna Guerin: No. I don't think Joseph was educated enough to run anything.

Alexia: He didn't go to school?

Johanna Guerin: He went to schools around Watrous, but he wasn't educated. They were buried out here in Calvary Cemetery. They died in Watrous.

Alexia: Joseph wrote a family history, so I thought he was educated. (Insertion by Angelina C. Kramer: Joseph waited to write his history until there were no living members of Samuel's family to dispute it. Johanna Guerin was living but did not learn of Joseph's writings until after his death.)

Johanna Guerin: Maybe his daughters wrote his history. Joseph had a son, Lou, who committed suicide for a girl. He was in love with this girl but she wouldn't marry him because they were first cousins. One day he said to a friend of his (she lived in Tiptonville) that if she didn't marry him he was going to kill himself. So his friend went up to town and told her this and told her that she better hide because Lou was coming after her. Well, when he couldn't find her, he got on his horse to ride back home and on his way home he shot himself. I used to hear my mother say, "Well he has sons and I hope something happens to them just because he killed my brother." Joseph had another son named Lincoln. They had a boat here in Las Vegas and Lincoln was an excellent shot.

Alexia: This is Joseph's son, Lincoln?

J. Guerin: Yes. Lincoln went out there—to a lake nearby and he put his boots on (Lincoln used to visit me) and he went fishing in this lake and he took his rifle to shoot at a duck and he tipped the boat over and drowned.

J. James: Sounds like there was a lot of tragedy in that family—murders—self-inflicted gun shots, drownings—

J. Guerin: Lincoln was about twenty-three years old when he died. He should have known better than to shoot a gun. A gun pushes back, you know. I used to shoot a gun.

J. James: You were a good horsewoman, weren't you?

Johanna Guerin: Oh yes. I rode a horse since I was seven years old... up until the day I got married.

J. James: She had a lot of brothers (six) and I think she felt she had to compete. You wanted very much for your brothers to consider you as one of them, didn't you?
J. Guerin: They use to call me "John". They never called me by my name. They always asked, "Where is John?"

Alexia: Was your mother close to her brother, Samuel?

J. James: Yes. She grew up with him.

Alexia: She took care of him, right?

J. Guerin: Mother told me that Josephine use to be real mean, especially with Sam. When he was four or five years old, she used to grab him and put his head between her legs and spank him. One of the Indian girls told him (this Indian girl liked Sam) "the next time she puts your head between her legs, turn around and bite her." So he did what the Indian girl told him and after this incident, Josephine hated Sam, Jr.

Alexia: Did your grandfather want your mother and all his children to go to school? Was this important to him?

J. Guerin: Yes. But my father was interested in all of his children going to school. He sent my oldest brother, Charles to Sacred College in Las Vegas and then to St, Louis University. My brother Ed was a blacksmith and then my brother Rudolph went to the Catholic college in Las Vegas (Sacred Heart College). After the death of my father the children were not able to go to college. My oldest brother Charles married and lived in Raton (he was with the Dawson Coal Mines). Rudolph got a job in a grocery store. He also liked to ride and work with horses. My youngest brother, Louis, worked for the Santa Fe Railroad.

Alexia: Did your mother ever talk about when she was growing up about what religion her family was. Were they Catholic?

J. Guerin: My mother was Catholic, but she never went to church. My brother Louis and I were baptized after the death of my father.

My father was a Mason.

Alexia: Was your grandfather religious?

J. Guerin: I don't know.

Alexia: I hear that in his later life he was interested in Spiritualism. He seemed to be interested in that. Once, when he had gone back East he had met with a medium........
J. Guerin: Well, I heard my mother say that people would go to see him for help. He had a special chair. They would ask him. I know that she said that once there was this old man who was lost close to town. The man had gone walking and I suppose he was sick and this man laid down under a bush and died. His family looked for him everywhere but they couldn't find him. The family then came to my grandfather and he said to them "in a few hours come back and I'll tell you where he is." Mother said that he used to go to sleep... and awaken with the answer.

J. James: Kind of like in a trance or something?

J. Guerin: ---on a chair. When the people came back he told them where the old man was. The family went to the spot and found the old man. Mother said that when Sam, his son, was shot that he couldn't believe it had happened. Sam's face and body were all black, so he buried him...but my grandfather wasn't sure it was Sam. So my grandfather sat in his chair. I don't know if it was a dream or what... but when he awakened he knew that Josephine and Joseph had killed Sam. That is why Samuel Sr., got shot. He accused Josephine of killing Sam Jr.

Alexia: The papers said that he had been very depressed after Sam had died and that's why he shot himself. The papers said that he used the same gun that Sam Jr had used to shoot himself.

J. Guerin: It was the same gun that killed Sam Jr., but it was used by Josephine to kill Sam Sr. Members of the family living at the time Sam Sr. died all gave the same story.

My grandfather, Samuel, Sr., had accused Josephine (one of the Indians told my mother, Belina, that Samuel Sr., had accused her and Joseph of killing Samuel Jr., Joseph had wanted to run the woolen mills. (They used to make the most beautiful wool blankets. I got to see them once. Mother had a lot of them.) Well I guess Josephine sensed that my grandfather was going to do something to her. She got a gun and put it in the pocket of her dress. She went to Sam Sr's room early in the morning and Sam Sr threw Josephine on the floor and was going to beat her up and she pulled the gun from her pocket and shot him. He was on top of her and she lifted up the gun and shot him. There were bullet holes on the wall and ceiling. Now a long time had passed and I know my mother still wouldn't let Joseph into her house. We had a big house. I think there were nine rooms and a big hall. You ought to see it now. Go there and tell them to show you the house.

By A. Kramer: I was ten years old when Grandmother Belina told me the story about her younger brother, Sam Jr and how he came to die. Also that her father, Sam Sr had been shot. Notice in the paper said "suicide". It was reported as "suicide" before the cause and manner of death were determined. Because of possible legal complications, the family members preferred not to pursue his murder.
J. Guerin: I think Mr. Shoemaker lives there now.

J. James: Her house is the one that Leonard Nuckolls lived in for a while.

J. Guerin: These people cut down the trees. We had a buggy house and a wood house. My father had built a log building. He had a log building. He also had a blacksmith shop. After my brother, Louis, and I left, Mother was left alone with one of her grandchildren (Fred) who was only three or four years old. People would come in at night and steal things. Well, this couple who lived in the house after my mother sold it, tore everything down. I guess they used the wood to keep warm.

Alexia: Would you like to stop now?