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## ORIGINS OF THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION OF NEW MEXICO DURING THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD

*By* RICHARD R. GREER

**I**N THE United States the foreign-born population has always been an object of practical interest and a factor of importance and significance in political, economic and social life. The reasons for this are too obvious and have been too frequently set forth to require repetition in this place. The states of the eastern, and to a lesser extent those of the western, seaboard have of course been most directly affected by the influx of trans-oceanic immigrants; it is in those states also, perhaps, that newcomers have attracted the greatest amount of academic interest. But what has been the numerical, political and economic importance of such sojourners in the commonwealths of the interior? And, more specifically, what has been the picture in the Southwest, where, in addition to ultramarine immigrants, has come a large delegation from our neighbor to the south, the Republic of Mexico?

Under the aegis of the United States, New Mexico underwent a long formative period. Politically, this extended from 1850, when the Territory of New Mexico was formally organized, to 1912, when statehood was achieved. Economically, maturity is even yet a thing of the future. It was not until the coming of the railroad in 1879-1881 that any extensive development was possible, and the story since

that time has been, generally speaking, one of an expanding process. The number and composition of the population has, of course, been a prime factor in determining the rate and direction of this expansion. It is the purpose of this paper to study the origins and number of New Mexico's foreign born during the vital years of the territorial era. The statistical information is taken exclusively from the decennial reports of the United States, 1850 to 1910 inclusive.

In the year 1850 the total population of New Mexico was reckoned at 61,547.<sup>1</sup> Included in this total were 2,063 persons born outside the United States, or 3.3 per cent of the whole. Of these 2,063 more than half claimed Mexico as the land of their birth—1,365 of them, to be exact. Other nations of the western hemisphere were but scantily represented, as the aggregate for British America was 38, the West Indies 2 and South America 1. The largest European contingents came from Ireland (292), Germany (215), England (43), Scotland (29), and France (26). Other nations represented were Prussia (14), Switzerland (11), Spain (8), Russia (4), Norway, Denmark, Holland (2 each), and Portugal, Wales, Sweden and Italy (1 each). Five persons hailed from "other countries" while the nativity of 223 of the foreign-born was unknown.

From the foregoing statistics at least two inferences may be drawn. The first is that, as in the United States generally, the bulk of the European born proceeded from the northern and western countries of that continent; the second is that, as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, the population of New Mexico was surprisingly cosmopolitan as to origin, if not as to culture.

The succeeding decade witnessed a rapid increase in the ranks of the foreign-born, for in a total population of 93,516 were included 6,723 persons who were of non-United States origin, their percentage of the total having jumped to 7.1+.<sup>2</sup>

1. The data in this paragraph are from the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, I, p. xxxvii.

2. These data are from the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, I, p. 573.

Mexico still led the field with 4,815,<sup>3</sup> while the other nations of the western world sent representatives as follows: British America, 76; South America, 8; West Indies, 8. European immigration was greatly in evidence, as there were in New Mexico in 1860 from Ireland, 827 persons; from Germany, 569; from England, 145; from France, 108. From Scotland the number was 49, with 27 from Switzerland, 24 from Spain, 13 from Poland, 9 from Denmark, 6 from Holland, 5 each from Belgium and Portugal, 4 from Australia, 3 from Sweden, and 2 each from Wales, Russia and Norway, while China, Greece, Italy and Turkey sent 1 each. Northern and western Europe (as compared with southern and eastern Europe) yet preserved an overwhelming majority, and it will be observed that several previously unrepresented nations had cast their names into the (melting) pot in the decade between 1850 and 1860.

The census report for 1870 reveals the most interesting fact that during the preceding ten years the population of New Mexico decreased to a total of 91,874 persons.<sup>4</sup> However, the foreign-born element seems to have followed the general movement, for its aggregate declined to 5,620. Thus the numerical relation of this latter group to the whole did not change greatly, the percentage being 6.1+, or a drop of one per cent. In breaking down the figure given for the foreign-born, we find that the Mexicans again claim first honors, with 3,913 (a sharp decrease, however, from 1860).<sup>5</sup>

3. The sharp increase here indicated is not surprising if we remember that the Gadsden Purchase fell within the decade covered by this census report. The foreign-born who were acquired with that tract fell wholly to New Mexico—but not as immigrants in the usual sense.—Editor.

4. Citations of this paragraph are from the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, I, pp. 336-42.

5. Here again, properly to evaluate statistical figures, it is necessary to remember important boundary changes of New Mexico. When Colorado Territory was created in 1861 (following gold discoveries and the rush of the '59ers), she was given that part of New Mexico which lay north of parallel 37° north and from the 103rd meridian west to the Continental Divide. Then in 1863 approximately half of what was left (all west of the 32nd meridian west from Washington) was cut off to make the Territory of Arizona. Naturally these losses in area meant also losses in population, both native and foreign-born. In what was left of New Mexico, we should probably find that there was a natural increase instead of decline in population.—Editor.

A change is to be noted in regard to the European picture, for Germany (582) has taken a narrow lead over Ireland (543). Totals for other countries are: British America, 125; France, 124; England, 120; Switzerland, 42; Scotland, 36; Italy, 25; Spain, 16; Denmark, 15; Poland and Russia, 12 each; Austria, 10; Wales, 9; Sweden, 6; Norway and Belgium, 5 each; Hungary, 4; Holland and South America, 3 each; Portugal, West Indies and Bohemia, 2 each; Central America and Asia (unspecified), 1 each; also 1 born at sea.

It should be noticed that there was a decrease of nearly three hundred in the Irish-born inhabitants during the decade. Also, the French delegation overtook the English, and the Swiss element surpassed the Scotch. Northwestern Europe was still in the ascendancy, but the number from Italy increased from one to twenty-five.

By 1880, the population of New Mexico had more than recovered the ground lost between 1860 and 1870, for the total had climbed to 119,565.<sup>6</sup> The foreign-born included 8,051 persons, or 6.6+ per cent of the whole. Mexico accounted for more than half, with 5,173; Ireland regained second place with 795; Germany came third with 729; England outstripped France with 339; then came British America, 280; France, 167; Scotland, 110; Italy, 73; Switzerland, 54; China, 52; Sweden, 39; Wales, 28; Denmark, 23; Poland, 22; Norway, 17; Russia, 16; Austria, 15; Bohemia and Cuba, 13 each; Spain, 12; Pacific Islands (other than Hawaii), 11; Portugal, 8; Hungary, West Indies, South America and born at sea, 7 each; Holland and Belgium, 6 each; Australia, 4; Sandwich Islands, 3; Africa, Luxemburg, Malta and Turkey, 1 each. The increasingly cosmopolitan character of the foreign-born population is clearly revealed by these figures. Italy is the country to watch, however, for her representation trebled in the decade between 1870 and 1880.

The succeeding ten years witnessed a further growth in the population of New Mexico, for in 1890 the total figure

6. The data of this paragraph are from the Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, I, pp. 4, 492-95.

stood at 153,593.<sup>7</sup> The foreign-born element increased likewise, attaining the sum of 11,259, or 7.3+ per cent of all inhabitants. For the second time the Mexican representation registered a decrease (the first being between the censuses of 1860 and 1870), but yet maintained the lead with 4,504 persons. Germany forged into second place with 1,413; then England with 1,258, followed by Ireland with 966, Canada and Newfoundland with 681, Scotland with 436, China with 369, Italy with 355, France with 284, Austria with 172, Sweden with 149, Wales and Switzerland with 122 each, Russia with 73, Denmark with 54, Holland with 46, Norway with 42, Belgium with 35, Poland with 24, Spain with 23, Cuba and the West Indies with 16, Portugal with 14, "born at sea" with 13, Australia with 12, South America with 10, Hungary with 9, Bohemia with 8, India and Asia (unspecified) with 7, Africa and Europe (unspecified) with 5 each, Japan with 4, Luxemburg and Atlantic Islands with 2 each, and Turkey, Greece and Central America with 1 each.

Several items merit mention. England, it will be noticed, more than trebled her figure of 1880—although the reason for this is probably beyond definite proof, the increase might have come as a result of the growth of the cattle industry during the 'eighties, an enterprise in which the Scotch and the English took an active part. The sudden growth in the Chinese element was very probably due to the building of the Santa Fe railroad and others during the decade. Chinese labor had been found superior to that of the Irish and other nationalities during the construction of the Central Pacific in the latter 'sixties. Doubtless the factor which contributed most to the increase of nearly all kinds of foreign-born, as well as to that of the total population, was the coming of the railroad. This made access to New Mexico much less difficult, and, consequently, rendered immigration more attractive. Mining activity, which began on a large scale in the territory after 1869 or 1870, was of course a constant inducement to the more adventurous and the more desperate, and

7. These figures come from the Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, I, Pt. 1, pp. 2, 606-9.

without doubt drew many persons of foreign origin into New Mexico during the era examined in this paper.

By 1900, the total population of the territory had risen to 195,310, while the ranks of the foreign-born numbered 13,625, making a percentage of 6.9+. Mexico recouped her losses of the decade 1880-1890 and was represented by 6,649 persons.<sup>8</sup> All the other leaders suffered a numerical decline from 1890 to 1900, with the exception of Italy. The relative standings were: Germany, 1,360; England, 968; Ireland, 692; Canada, 680; Italy, 661; Scotland, 427; Austria, 352; France, 298; Sweden, 244; Switzerland, 123; Wales, 105; Russia and Holland, 99 each; French Canada, 84; Denmark, 57; Poland, 55; Hungary, 41; Norway, 33; Bohemia, 15; other countries, 583.

It will be seen that the figures for 1900 are somewhat less complete than for preceding censuses. Italy was the only European country among the first five which made any gain, but her representation was nearly doubled between 1890 and 1900.

The census of 1910<sup>9</sup> was the last one taken during the territorial period of New Mexico's history, for two years later the Sunshine State arrived at political maturity and claimed its place in the union. The growth in population during the decade 1900-1910 was the most impressive yet recorded, as in the latter year a total figure of 327,301 was reached. The foreign-born element likewise experienced a healthy increase, attaining the sum of 23,146, or 7 per cent of the whole. Mexico accounted for about half, with a representation of 11,918. Italy finally came into her own, carrying off second place with 1,959—then Germany, with 1,746; Austria, with 1,233; England, with 1,101; Canada, with 912; Ireland, with 644; Scotland, with 509; Sweden, with 365; France, with 326; Japan, with 254; Russia, with 228; Hungary, with 209; China, with 202; Switzerland, with 172; Greece, with 167; Bulgaria, Servia and Montenegro,

8. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, I, Pt. 1, pp. 2, clxxxiii-clxxiv.

9. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, I, pp. 30, 838-39.

with a total of 167; Norway, with 151; Turkey in Asia, with 123; Denmark, with 116; French Canada, with 111; Spain, with 100; Wales, with 93; Netherlands, with 86; Belgium, with 44; Finland, with 26; Cuba and the other West Indies, with a total of 25; Turkey in Europe, with 17; Central and South America, with 14; Europe (unspecified), with 12; Portugal, with 10; India, with 7; Roumania, with 6; Newfoundland, with 3; Luxemburg and all other Asia, with 1 each; and all other countries, with 88.

Several generalizations may be ventured on the basis of the data given in the preceding pages. With the exception of the figure for 1850, it may be said that the foreign-born element represented a stable factor in the population of New Mexico during the territorial period. In the half-century included between the years 1860 and 1910, the extreme variation of the percentage of foreign-born in the total population was but 1.2. The lowest point occurred in 1870, with 6.1 per cent of the total population born outside the United States, while the highest mark was achieved in 1890, with the percentage of the foreign-born standing at 7.3. Throughout the period under consideration, the Mexican deputation was without fail the largest, and this fact is to be regarded as the natural result of the proximity of that country to New Mexico. Again, it is to be noted that, in contrast to the condition prevailing on the eastern seaboard after 1890 (at the latest), the northern and western parts of Europe constantly furnished the bulk of the immigration into the Territory from that continent. The statistics in regard to the Italian-born supply another item of interest. From no other nation did immigration proceed in such a constantly and rapidly increasing stream, for from 1860 to 1910 there was not a decade in which the Italian representation was not tripled. In conclusion, it should be noticed that during the entire territorial era the foreign-born population of New Mexico exhibited a satisfying, and rather surprising, degree of cosmopolitanism. A host to peoples of every clime, the Territory of New Mexico served in its way to further the American tradition of assimilation.