Salvador Armijo: Citizen of Albuquerque, 1823–1879

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ON AN APRIL NIGHT in 1874, a meeting of Albuquerque community leaders was held in the old Bernalillo County Courthouse, then located south of the plaza in what is now called “Old Town.” The purpose of this assembly was to discuss ways to alleviate the suffering of the poor in Albuquerque and its environs. Presiding over the meeting was a stocky, shrewd-eyed man of fifty whose Spanish descent was belied by the ample red beard which spread over his shirt front. The way in which he dominated the proceedings made it clear that the chairman was no stranger to political gatherings. After some preliminary discussion in which it was decided that local justices of the peace throughout the county would compile lists of needy persons in their respective precincts, donations were solicited from the well-to-do. Making the first and largest contribution was the chairman. He pledged 30 sacks of corn, 15 fanegas (about 22½ bushels) of wheat, 2 fanegas (3 bushels) of beans and 20 ristras of chili, total value of about $140. Plans were then made to distribute the food supplies provided by the assembled ricos and the meeting was adjourned.¹

This act of civil leadership was typical of the chairman, a mid-nineteenth century Albuquerque merchant, farmer, and politico whose name was Salvador Armijo. During Armijo’s lifetime, New Mexico experienced a period of dramatic political and social change. After 200 years as a remote colony of the Spanish crown, a regime which ended just two years prior to his birth, New Mexico went through a 25-year period as part of the Mexican Republic before becoming a territory of the United States. Born to the coterie of closely interrelated Spanish families which dominated

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New Mexico’s Rio Abajo region, Armijo was an important figure in the development of Albuquerque. Although his father, Ambrosio Armijo, and his uncle, Manuel Armijo, both held high office under Mexican rule, Salvador Armijo’s activities indicate that he had little difficulty in accepting U.S. administration. In contrast to the Rio Arriba where Mexican nationalism flared into open revolt at Taos and other northern locations, the Albuquerque area remained calm.

In Armijo’s era, concurrent with the famous Santa Fe Trail, the new government fought the Civil War, subdued the Plains Indian tribes and brought New Mexico to the brink of the industrial age with introduction of the railroad. Armijo had a part in all these events and exemplified a native New Mexican who welcomed the changes thus engendered. Despite occasional schisms of bitter intensity, it was the political acquiescence of Armijo and like-minded Hispanic citizens, motivated by self-interest and the opportunity for monetary gain, which paved the way for the new economy and technology of the post-railroad period.

Salvador Antonio Armijo was born in Albuquerque, January 23, 1823, to María Antonia Ortiz and her husband Ambrosio Armijo, a marriage representing a union of two leading New Mexico families. Even in the early nineteenth century the Armijo name was an old one in New Mexico, traceable back to 1695 when the widow of José de Armijo, Catalina Durán, came to Santa Fe with her four sons as part of the resettlement effort. A 1790 Spanish colonial census indicates that Lieutenant Vicente Ferrer Armijo, a great grandson of José de Armijo, was living on a ranch at the Plaza de San Antonio north of Albuquerque near Alameda with his wife Barbara Casilda Durán y Chaves and seven sons. One of his sons was Manuel Armijo, future three-time governor of New Mexico under Mexican rule, who was holding office in 1846 when the area was occupied by U.S. military forces. Another of Vicente’s sons was Salvador’s father, Ambrosio Armijo, born about 1784, who by 1812 had inherited the family hacienda at San Antonio. Also enumerated in the 1790 census were Salvador Armijo’s maternal grandparents, José Marcos Ortiz and Monica Durán, residents of the village of San Isidro de Pajarito south of Albuquerque on the Rio Grande’s west bank.
The Armijos were one of the ruling families of New Mexico's Rio Abajo which extended roughly from Peña Blanca to Socorro. Together with the Chaves, Otero, and Perea clans to whom the Armijos were closely allied by marital and business connections, they formed the oligarchy which controlled social, economic, and political affairs in the Albuquerque area. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, Vicente Ferrer Armijo's sons alternately held the prestigious position of Alcalde of Albuquerque—Francisco in 1820, Juan in 1823, Manuel in 1825, Ambrosio in 1828. After service on the Albuquerque ayuntamiento (town council), Ambrosio Armijo was elected in 1832 to serve as deputy to represent New Mexico in the national congress in Mexico City. Unfortunately, the office was denied him because of a revolution in Mexico, led by General Antonio López de Santa Anna, which voided the elections. Ambrosio's governmental career was climaxed by his appointment as Jefe superior de Hacienda del Departamento de Nuevo Mexico, an office comparable to departmental treasury secretary. He died in October, 1849.

Although the Armijos had been primarily farmers and stockmen for generations, they were among the first New Mexico families to grasp the commercial possibilities presented by the opening of the Santa Fe Trail. In 1821, the same year in which Mexico declared her independence from Spain, William Becknell, a native of Boone's Lick, Missouri, left his home with a small assortment of goods loaded on mules with a vague plan for trading with the Indians near the Rocky Mountains. Somewhere south of Raton Pass, Becknell's party encountered a Mexican patrol which invited the Americans to accompany them to Santa Fe where the goods were sold at a handsome profit. The following year no fewer than three American caravans made their way to Santa Fe hoping to repeat the success of the previous season. New Mexico was soon saturated with American goods, however, and it was not long before both Mexican and American traders began plying the historic Camino Real toward Chihuahua and the Mexican interior seeking new markets.

In September, 1828, a guía (commercial passport) was issued to family member Vicente Armijo, to pass through the customs house at El Paso on his way south with merchandise bound for Chihuahua-
hua and Sonora. Despite this early beginning, it was not until the mid-1830s that the Armijos entered the Mexican trade en masse with various relations trailing large bands of carneros (mutton sheep) into Chihuahua in addition to their wagonloads of trade goods. Customs records for October, 1840, indicate that Ambrosio Armijo and two of his older sons were conveying 44 bultos (bundles) of New Mexico products to southern markets. Four years later they received a guía for a mixed consignment of locally made, homespun cloth and hides—buffalo, deer, and antelope—destined for Chihuahua and Durango.

This, then, is the world into which Salvador Armijo was born—farming, ranching, trading, and politics, a milieu in which he was to assume a position of leadership. Although the Armijo family tree is extremely intricate, it appears that Salvador was the fifth of six children. His older brothers were Juan, José, Antonio José, and Mariano. Ambrosio's only daughter, María Plácida de los Dolores, was born October 7, 1827, four years after Salvador. Little is known of Salvador Armijo's early years, but his later activities make it evident that he had some education for he was literate in both Spanish and English. He also acquired extensive practical knowledge in farming, sheep ranching, and freighting as the youngest partner in the family enterprises. In February, 1847, Armijo married his first cousin, Paula Montoya, and soon after this he began acquiring property just north of present-day Old Town, which was to be his headquarters for many years.

In July, 1849, Armijo purchased 50 acres of land and a twelve-room house from his older brother José Armijo y Ortiz, who had added his mother's family name to distinguish himself from several other “José Armijos” then living near Albuquerque. The house, which still stands just south of the Sheraton parking lot on Rio Grande Boulevard, was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the National Park Service. Although it has been substantially altered on three different occasions during the last century, the original floor plan is still apparent. It is interesting as an example of nineteenth century New Mexico architecture when building materials were few and defensive requirements a primary consideration in house construction.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the structure consisted of a flat-
roofed, one-story dwelling approximately 100 by 70 feet surrounding a *placita* with *zaguanes* (covered entrances) through the north, south, and east walls which gave access to corrals and outbuildings of the hacienda. Except on the north, where stone was used, the 32-inch-thick walls were made of adobe bricks laid on the ground without a foundation, which resulted in considerable settling with the passage of time; all exterior surfaces were plastered with the traditional mixture of adobe and straw. Windows were few because of continuation of the defensive pattern and, more importantly, the lack of glass and sash on the frontier. The roof was covered with packed earth and was drained by long *canales* (spouts) which extended two or three feet out from the walls. Divided into twelve rooms, with dirt floors and plastered adobe walls, the interior was dark, sparsely furnished and unattractive to outsiders unfamiliar with the development of this style of architecture. Contemporary accounts by American travelers in the late Mexican and early Territorial years, however, record that initial contempt often gave way to grudging admiration for the comfort afforded by these old adobe houses.

During the late 1840s, when Armijo was improving his newly purchased farm lands, Albuquerque was an important garrison town for U.S. troops stationed in central New Mexico. The post was officially established November 17, 1846, three months after the entry of the Army of the West commanded by Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny. U.S. Army expenditures in New Mexico in the period 1848-1853 amounted to $12,000,000, an economic bonanza for those with stores of supplies for the soldiers and their livestock. Provisions such as flour, beans, salt, beef, and bacon for the troops and hay and corn for the horses, mules, and oxen were exchanged for hard cash or eastern credits which were always useful for those merchants doing business in “the States.” Despite his father’s commitment to the Mexican government, Armijo quickly saw the possibilities for an aggressive merchant and had few qualms in accepting the new government. His store north of the plaza became a popular meeting place for local dignitaries; its proprietor was described thus by business rival Franz Huning: “This man was very liberal with all the military officers and other officials for reasons of his own.” During the
1850s, Armijo leased part of his property north of town as a camp­
ground to the garrison while other units and the Army hospital
were established south of Albuquerque on land formerly owned by
Armijo’s mother, Antonia Ortiz.18

Unfortunately Armijo’s marriage to Paula Montoya was not as
successful as his business ventures. The couple was separated in
1848 but was not divorced until 1860, when Armijo sought to end
the union in a suit which must have scandalized the community.
His petition was granted by territorial Chief Justice Kirby
Benedict, a crony of Armijo’s who ordered much of the testimony
expunged from the official court record.19 In the meantime, Armi­
jo had become involved in a long and stormy relationship with
María de las Nieves Sarracino, daughter of a prominent family
from the Plaza de Los Padillas south of Albuquerque. A daughter,
María Piedad Armijo, born to them perhaps as early as 1846, re­
mained close to both parents throughout their lives.20

Armijo’s relationship with Nieves Sarracino had important busi­
ness as well as personal aspects. Details are scarce but it seems
that much of the day-to-day operation of the hacienda north of
Albuquerque was entrusted to Doña Nieves while Armijo was
away with his wagon trains or checking on his sheep camps. The
farmlands were extensively developed, their value greatly en­
hanced by their proximity to the *acequia madre* of Albuquerque
which formed the east boundary of the property. Grapevines and
fruit trees were set out, fields were plowed for hay and grain and a
large garden was established to provide produce for the house­
hold. By 1860 Armijo’s lands were the envy of many and he was
becoming one of the community’s wealthiest and most important
citizens.

Though far from the center of conflict, New Mexico was to
undergo a period of uncertainty and confusion during the years
before and during the Civil War. The sectional strife that
characterized national politics in the later 1850s and early 1860s
was felt even along the Rio Grande. Because of the supposed Con­
federate sympathies of Congressional Delegate Miguel A. Otero
and other territorial officials, it was believed in some circles that
New Mexico would side with the South. After the firing on Fort
Sumter, however, when fighting actually began, Rebel hopes that
the entire Southwest would adhere to their cause failed to materialize, and those U.S. Army officers stationed in the territory who held southern convictions resigned their commissions and left for Confederate military posts in Texas. Among these officers was Major Henry H. Sibley who was recommissioned as a brigadier general in the Confederate Army and, in the summer of 1861, formed a brigade at San Antonio for the conquest of New Mexico. In January of the following year, Sibley’s army entered the territory and, after defeating a Union force composed of both regulars and native New Mexico volunteers at the Battle of Valverde south of Socorro, continued its northward march up the Rio Grande.

Albuquerque at this time was not without Confederate sympathizers, however, notably Armijo’s cousins Manuel and Rafael Armijo y Maestas, wealthy merchants who staked their fortunes and reputations on the Southern cause and lost. In contrast, Salvador Armijo was unwavering in his support of the North. In the fall of 1861, on orders from Territorial Governor Henry Connally, a company of militia known as the Albuquerque Home Guard was mustered to supplement regular Army forces. Despite his 38 years, Armijo enlisted as a private, although payroll records indicate that it is unlikely that he was ever called to active duty. Following Sibley’s victory at Valverde in February and the subsequent Confederate advance, Armijo felt the effects of the conflict. On March 1, Captain Herbert M. Enos, ranking Union officer at the Albuquerque quartermaster depot, ordered the destruction of the large stores of materiel stockpiled there to prevent their capture by enemy forces. When Sibley’s men arrived a week later, they found the town devoid of supplies and were ordered to scour the countryside for food, forage, and any remaining livestock.

According to claims filed with the Federal Government in 1865, the heaviest losses from confiscations by Sibley’s “Texacans” were sustained by Salvador Armijo, his brother José and their neighbor and fellow merchant Tomás Gonzales. Large stocks of staples including corn, wheat, flour, sugar, coffee, and beans were seized, along with fourteen barrels of whiskey and brandy which presumably warmed the Rebel force as it continued on toward Santa Fe. The greatest loss was in the form of livestock, however, including
Claim for compensation for goods and livestock confiscated by Confederate troops, presented by Armijo October 10, 1865. Reproduced from Territorial Archives of New Mexico, Records of the Adjutant General, Confederate Depredations File, State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, N.M.
over 75 horses and mules, 67 oxen, Gonzales’s milk cow and “2 hogs (fat)” belonging to José Armijo y Ortiz. The mules may have been among those killed by Union troops under Major John M. Chivington in his famous raid behind Rebel lines during the battle of Glorieta Pass in which the Confederate supply train was destroyed. This disaster made the Southern position in the region untenable and forced a retreat down the Rio Grande to El Paso, which ended hostilities in New Mexico.

With return of peaceful conditions to the Rio Grande, Armijo was able to give his attention to important personal matters postponed by the recent invasion. On May 10, 1862, his daughter Piedad was married to flamboyant Santiago Baca in the first wedding ceremony held in San Felipe de Neri Church after the Confederate withdrawal. One of a big clan of soldiers and politicians from the Santa Fe-Pecos area, Baca was cut from the same cloth as his father-in-law. He later became his heir-apparent in Albuquerque business and political circles. Early in 1864, advertising which appeared in the Santa Fe New Mexican announced the formation of a new freighting and mercantile partnership doing business as “Salvador Armijo y Hijo” with estimated gross receipts of $100,000. Baca’s role in this business is not altogether clear, but it is probable that he undertook some of the more arduous and time-consuming travels necessitated by the firm’s far-flung enterprises, thus giving Armijo more leisure for his interests near Albuquerque—merchandising, farming, and politics.

The new partnership began an aggressive campaign to increase retail sales by opening branch stores at several locations in Doña Ana, Socorro and Valencia counties during the late ’60s and early ’70s. The most successful of these were at Cebolleta, Cubero, Jarales, and Peralta, particularly the latter, which became Armijo’s headquarters in 1875. Assistance in the stores and other family enterprises was provided by two adopted children, Luis and Felipe O’Bannon, who became part of the Armijo-Sarracino household around 1860 when their father, Lieutenant Lawrence W. O’Bannon, a South Carolinian, left New Mexico for service in the Confederate Army and Armijo became their guardian.

In the post-Civil War years, however, not only Armijo y Hijo, but many of their competitors were beset with serious transporta-
tion problems because of raids by increasingly hostile Plains Indian tribes. In June, 1867, their wagon train was "attacked by a band of Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Indians and 72 mules valued at $200 each and one mare valued at $300 were killed." During the same summer, three other New Mexico merchant trains were raided by Kiowas near the Cimarron Crossing of the Arkansas, including those of Juan Montoya of Lemitar and Pedro Montaño of Albuquerque. Seven years later, in an effort to provide federal government reparation for the raids, legislation was proposed by Territorial Delegate Stephen B. Elkins to recompense Armijo and 25 other New Mexicans for their losses. Evidently the bill failed to pass for the matter was shifted to the Federal Court of Claims. There it remained in adjudication for more than a decade after Armijo's death when it became a source of heated dispute among his heirs. This incident may have dampened the enthusiasm of the partners in Armijo y Hijo for long-distance freighting; it is probable that, henceforth, their goods were brought to New Mexico by others.

Throughout his career Armijo was a hard-working, progressive farmer and sheepman. In 1860 he purchased for $3,200 an additional 90 acres adjoining his original 50-acre home place north of Old Town. According to the Federal Census Report made in that year, Armijo was running 200 cattle and 2,000 sheep for which he registered a brand with Bernalillo County authorities, one of the first to be so recorded. He also maintained a small horse-powered grist mill, one of 10 or 12 then operating in the county, which in 1860 produced 3,500 pounds of flour and cornmeal. Within 10 years, however, all of these small entrepreneurs had been put out of business by the large steam-powered mills established by the Huning brothers in Albuquerque, José Leandro Perea in Bernalillo and Francisco Chaves in the southern part of the county. A military observer and self-styled agronomist, Col. James F. Meline, who traveled through New Mexico in 1866, noted that Armijo was probably the only farmer in New Mexico to spread manure on his fields, hauling 2,000 loads from his sheep corrals in that year. He was also among the first to use such innovations as steel plows from "the States" and Midwestern seed corn. His orchards and fields were often the subject for admiring news reports in the local press.
Soon after Piedad’s marriage to Santiago Baca, her parents began to divide their tangled business assets, a process which took over 10 years to complete. In August, 1865, Armijo deeded the big house and large part of the adjoining orchards, vineyards, and farmlands north of Albuquerque plaza to Doña Nieves for $10,000, an extremely large sum for that era. At the same time he began reinvesting in other similar properties nearby, concentrating his purchases at Ranchos de Atrisco west of the Rio Grande, at San Antonio, Tijeras, and Cañoncito de Nuañes in the mountains east of Albuquerque, at Las Lagunitas south of Barelas and at Los Duranes north of Old Town. He also acquired locations near the plaza for new warehouses and living quarters. The census of 1870 indicates that Armijo was not only the largest farmer in the Albuquerque precinct with 300 acres under cultivation, but also that his lands were more productive than his neighbors’, growing large crops of wheat, corn, and beans. He was also the community’s largest agricultural employer, with an annual payroll exceeding $4,000.

The 1870 census also indicated that Armijo’s sheep increased from 2,000 to 6,000 head over the previous decade, a period in which sheep ranching became increasingly attractive. The price of wool rose from 4¢ a pound F.O.B. Albuquerque in 1862 to 18¢ a pound in 1871. Despite a substantial decline two years later, profit potential for ranchers running large flocks on the public domain was very promising. Although there was always the possibility of disastrous losses from Indian raids or unseasonal blizzards, expenses were negligible. A labor-intensive industry, sheep ranching on the open range required large crews of men for the lambing and shearing operations and careful supervision of numerous sheepherders and camp tenders who were constantly moving the various bands to ensure fresh grazing.

Wages for herdsmen and other laborers were usually $12.00 a month, with top hands such as the castrador, who castrated newborn lambs, drawing $15.00. Because Armijo’s men were usually in debt to him for the purchase of shoes, clothing, and other efectos, actual cash outlays were minimal. Guadalupe Nuañes, for many years Armijo’s mayordomo, was paid the princely sum of $1.50 a day but provided his own horses. New Mexico’s sheep industry received enthusiastic support during this
period from the Albuquerque newspapers, first the *Rio Abajo Weekly*, which editorialized on the need for a local wool processing mill, and later by its successor, *The Republican Review*. This encouragement was increased in the early 1870s when *Review* editor William McGuinness became agent for a Trinidad, Colorado firm which hoped to sell large numbers of purebred Cotswold rams in the Albuquerque area.

True to family tradition, Armijo played an active role in local politics and civic affairs. Following in the footsteps of his father and uncles, he held, in 1851-52, the office which the Armijos had dominated for 30 years, Alcalde of Albuquerque, although it was then a less prestigious post than in the years of Mexican administration. 45 Ten years later, he was elected Probate Court Clerk and, in 1867, county treasurer, an office which he held for six years. 46 Other family members who held various county and legislative positions included brother-in-law Nestor Montoya, brother José, and later, son-in-law Santiago Baca, a substantial demonstration of political muscle. These offices were not highly remunerative, but they gave the holders a certain distinction in the community. More importantly, they provided inside information regarding real estate transfers and other interesting matters. In 1863 Armijo was elected president of the Board of Aldermen, the body which then administered Albuquerque. Under Armijo's leadership the board issued a tough new code of ordinances designed to make the town a more desirable place to live. Regulations were passed which prohibited public drunkenness and enjoined citizens from relieving themselves in the town or the cemetery. All dead animals were to be hauled off by their owners and it became illegal to throw ashes, dirty water or garbage into the street. To provide enforcement, a police magistrate and a town marshal were named who were empowered to levy fines of from $5.00 to $50.00. 47

Armijo was also a leader in the highly partisan politics of the day, being in effect the *jefe* of Albuquerque Republicans in the late '60s and early '70s. As such, he served as president pro-tempore at innumerable meetings honoring party dignitaries such as Territorial Congressional Delegates Colonel J. Francisco Chaves and Stephen B. Elkins. 48 Armijo and his party were staunchly supported by the *Republican Review* and editor McGuinness, but in
the spring of 1876, the latter, after much soul-searching, declared himself a Democrat. Just before the bitterly contested Hayes-Tilden presidential election, he changed the name of his paper to *The Albuquerque Review* and began to champion the local Democratic ticket. At this astonishing turn of events, several leading Republicans including Armijo, his brother José, brother-in-law Montoya and son-in-law Baca, plus José Leandro Perea and Mariano S. Otero, all cancelled their subscriptions. Rancor, however, seems to have been foreign to Don Salvador’s character. Naturally convivial, he entertained frequently, notably at a grand *baile* given in 1866 to honor Major General John Pope, commander of the Department of the Missouri.49

Armijo was generous with both time and money in promoting programs for New Mexico’s economic advancement, particularly those which would assist Albuquerque. In 1865, seeking to combine altruism with possibilities for profit, he joined a group of local businessmen, including his cousin Cristóbal Armijo and veteran merchant Tomás Gonzales, in forming a company to build a toll bridge across the Rio Grande.50 The plan was premature, however, and many years elapsed before the river was spanned by a permanent bridge. Two years later Armijo journeyed to Santa Fe to take part in a large public meeting on the plaza called by territorial leaders to encourage the construction of railroads into New Mexico. Under the chairmanship of Governor Robert B. Mitchell, the delegates elected Armijo as vice-president. He was also named to the finance committee together with such notables as Chief Justice Benedict, General Carleton, Christopher (Kit) Carson, and José Leandro Perea.51 He also encouraged Albuquerque’s early school system, then directed by Jesuit priests, and was a frequent contributor to church coffers, providing funds for masses, sermons, and processions, particularly during Holy Week.52

In the fall of 1874, Armijo and Nieves Sarracino finally completed the division of their property begun 10 years before, with Armijo making the stipulation that Santiago Baca be made administrator of Nieves’s share.53 The Baca family moved to Albuquerque from Pecos a few weeks before Christmas and at this time Armijo presented deeds to most of his remaining real estate to his
sister Plácida and daughter Piedad, retaining only his lands at Los Duranes and Ranchos de Atrisco. The latter property, which had been assembled so carefully through the years, was sold in March, 1876 to kinsman Jesús Armijo with the notation in the deed that $1,650 was still due Doña Nieves. With the coming of the new year, having thus wiped the slate and prepared for a fresh start, Don Salvador left Albuquerque to take up residence in Peralta. There, in addition to supervising his Valencia County stores, he opened a hotel and “traveler’s rest.” He was soon advertising road improvements made on the east bank of the Rio Grande and the advantages of traveling through his new hometown. To complete the changes in his life, on August 19, 1875, in a ceremony conducted by District Judge Hezekiah S. Johnson, Armijo married 28-year-old Candelaria García, who was to present him with three daughters—Antonia, Beneranda, and Plácida.

Little is known of Armijo’s activities in Peralta, but after three years he disposed of his holdings there and returned to Albuquerque, perhaps longing for the amenities of city life. In the spring of 1878, he began building an elaborate house on his property at Los Duranes with ample facilities for entertaining. Constructed in the traditional manner around a placita, it featured two large dining rooms and a sala on one side, with a kitchen, storeroom and everyday dining room toward the rear. Outside were a large corral for the household livestock, a coach house and porter’s lodge. True to form, Armijo opened a store on the Albuquerque plaza across from the Centennial Hotel and began to reestablish himself in the livestock business. He took 10,000 ewes from his old friend José Leandro Perea on partido which he trailed to pastures on the headwaters of the Colorado Chiquito (little Colorado River) near St. Johns, Arizona.

The spring of 1879 found Armijo in east-central Arizona looking after his livestock when he was suddenly taken ill. He was taken to the house of Juliana García de Sedillo in El Arroyo Carrizo, north of St. Johns where he lingered for two weeks until April 4, 1879, when, surrounded by his foreman Guadalupe Nuañes, his ward Felipe O’Bannon, and several sheepherders, he died. His last act was to deed the new house in Los Duranes and a tract of farmland described as “tierra rica” to Candelaria and his
small children. As soon as the news reached Albuquerque, José Armijo y Ortiz, Salvador’s closest relative and probably his friend, hired a wagon and four men to haul a casket and monument over the long trail to Arizona to bury his brother.59

Not surprisingly, Armijo’s sudden death left his affairs somewhat confused. His illness did not prevent him from drafting a will several days before he died in which he named his widow and Nestor Montoya as his executors. These two declined to serve, however, for unknown reasons, and Jesús María Perea was named administrator by Bernalillo County Probate Judge Justo R. Armijo, a distant cousin of the deceased.60 Perea’s appointment was probably made at the instigation of his father, José Leandro Perea, who not only owned the 10,000 ewes in Arizona but also held Salvador Armijo’s note for $4,000. Settlement of the estate was a heavy responsibility which involved taking inventory and then selling all Armijo’s remaining goods and livestock, collecting outstanding obligations and paying off a large number of creditors. Acting rapidly, Perea conducted an auction of the merchandise in the Albuquerque store plus 150 horses and mules gathered from the range which together yielded about $5,000. He also terminated the sheep operation in Arizona, overseeing the shearing and the shipping of the wool. The clip was hauled to Albuquerque where it was ferried across the Rio Grande and then conveyed by wagons to loading points at Las Vegas and Otero on the brand new Santa Fe Railroad whose tracks had been extended south from Raton Pass in the summer of 1879.61

Seeing that the debts of the estate would exceed its assets, Perea attempted to replevin some of the lands which Armijo had given to Plácida and Piedad in 1874, a maneuver blocked by a legal action brought by Santiago Baca. As a result, it was impossible for the executor to raise sufficient funds to repay all outstanding debts of the estate.62 José Leandro Perea died with most of his $4,000 note unrepaid and, in 1890, his son, Jesús María, also died with the matter of Armijo’s estate still unresolved.

By the end of the century many changes had come to the Rio Abajo. Symbolized by the steel rails reaching southward across the New Mexico plains, a new era was beginning, one which Salvador Armijo had anticipated with great excitement. Soon
Albuquerque would be a very different place with a whole new town springing up beside the railroad depot a mile and a half east of the old plaza. Newcomers were challenging the economic and political power of Armijo's friends and relatives, the clique of Hispanic dons who had controlled affairs in Albuquerque for so many years. This was an aspect of the new technology which they had not expected. Thus, the wool caravan which in the summer of 1879 slowly made its way along the well-worn ruts leading from Albuquerque toward Las Vegas and points east, was one of the last of its kind. It marked the end of an era, the end of the Santa Fe Trail.

There was a postscript, however, which signified that the old days still had importance. Shortly before the turn of the century, the federal government gave some indication that it might, at long last, settle some of the claims for Indian depredations pending for the past 30 years. Immediately Candelaria García de Armijo and Santiago Baca entered into a fierce court battle over the administration of the Armijo estate, the only remaining asset of which was the claim filed long before for the mules slaughtered by the Kiowas. But the legacy of Salvador Armijo came not from what little remained of his material wealth. He had helped provide stability in a period of transition between cultures, making abrasion between native New Mexicans and newcomers from the East a little less disruptive.

NOTES

1. The Republican Review, April 4, 1874.
2. Albuquerque baptisms, roll 1, frame 964, Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe (AASF).
5. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "A," pp. 65-66, Bernalillo County Records (BCR); Spanish Archives of New Mexico, roll 12, frame 337, State Records Center and Archives (SRCA).

7. Lansing Bartlett Bloom, “New Mexico under Mexican Administration,” Old Santa Fe 1 (April, 1914):354; Hacienda Records, 1840, roll 28, frame 812, Mexican Archives of New Mexico (MANM), microfilm edition, SRCA; Albuquerque burials, roll 34, frame 942, AASF. Tracing Ambrosio Armijo’s career is complicated by the activities of a nephew, also named Ambrosio (c. 1817-1882). The son of Juan Armijo and Rosalia Ortega, the younger Ambrosio was one of Albuquerque’s most prominent merchants, with heavy investments in the Santa Fe Trail trade. The confusion is largely confined to the 1840s, however, because of the thirty-year difference in their ages.

8. Max F. Moorhead, New Mexico’s Royal Road (Norman, 1958), pp. 60-63.

9. Hacienda Records, 1828, roll 6, frame 509, SRCA.

10. Hacienda Records, 1840, roll 21, frame 358, SRCA.

11. Hacienda Records, 1844, roll 37, frames 470 and 472, SRCA. The extent of Ambrosio Armijo’s Mexican interests is difficult to assess. In 1869 after the deaths of both his parents, Salvador Armijo signed an agreement with John S. Watts, a well-known New Mexican attorney, to prosecute a claim against the Mexican government for $39,020, allegedly owed to Ambrosio Armijo and Antonia Ortiz. County Clerk’s Records, Deed Book “F,” p. 26, BCR.

12. Albuquerque baptisms, roll 2, frame 2266; roll 89, pp. 8 and 38; roll 90, p. 216; roll 1, frame 1180, AASF. A hiatus in Albuquerque baptismal registers (1802-20) prevents direct verification of the births of Armijo’s older brothers but later documents recording the baptisms of their children are extant which name Ambrosio Armijo and Maria Antonia Ortiz as paternal grandparents. When Ambrosio Armijo died, the burial register stated that he was the father of five married sons. Roll 34, frame 942, AASF.


17. Huning, Trader, p. 58.

18. County Clerk’s Records, Deed Book “A,” pp. 128, 132, BCR; Aurora Hunt, Major General James Henry Carleton, 1814-1873, Western Frontier Dragoon (Glendale, 1958), p. 238. Carleton, best known in New Mexico as the officer in charge of subjugation of the Navajo Indians and their subsequent confinement at Bosque Redondo, returned to Albuquerque in the late summer of 1862 to find his property had been destroyed during the Union evacuation of the town in March of that year.

19. Bernalillo County District Court Records, Case #218, SRCA.
20. New Mexico Federal Census Report, 1850, Bernalillo County, household #396, SRCA. This document gives Piedad's age as 4.


25. Records of the Adjutant General, New Mexico Militia Muster Roll, Albuquerque Home Guard, File #652, Territorial Archives of New Mexico (TANM), microfilm edition, SRCA.


27. Records of the Adjutant General, Confederate Depredations, March-April, 1862, SRCA.


29. Albuquerque marriages, roll 95, pp. 141-42, AASF.

30. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, February 20, 1864.


32. New Mexico Federal Census Reports, 1860, Bernalillo County, p. 1, SRCA; Albuquerque marriages, roll 95, pp. 73, 116.

33. Probate Court Cases, File #25, BCR. The mare was used to keep the mules from straying off, and thus had great importance; Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max F. Moorhead (Norman, 1954), p. 129.

34. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 13, 1867.


36. Probate Court Case, File #25, BCR.

37. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "D," p. 47, BCR.

38. Census Report, 1860, Bernalillo County Agricultural and Industrial Schedules, SRCA.

39. Census Report, 1870, Bernalillo County Industrial Schedule, SRCA.


44. Probate Court Records, Wills and Testaments, Book "D," pp. 389-403, BCR.

45. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "A," pp. 33, 119, 133, BCR.


48. Santa Fe New Mexican, June 1, 1867; Republican Review, October 10, 1874.
49. Republican Review, November 4, 1876; Meline, Two Thousand Miles, p. 128.
51. Santa Fe New Mexican, May 18, 1867.
53. Bernalillo County District Court Records, Case file #4758, SRCA.
54. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "G," pp. 46-97, BCR.
55. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "M," p. 27, BCR.
56. Republican Review, January 9, 1875, November 20, 1875, August 21, 1875; Probate Court Records, Wills and Testaments, Book "D," p. 50, BCR.
57. Albuquerque Review, March 16, 1878; County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "H," p. 175, BCR; Probate Court Records, Wills and Testaments, Book "D," p. 127, BCR.
58. Wills and Testaments, Book "D," pp. 58, 408; Albuquerque Review, April 12, 1879.
62. County Clerk's Records, Deed Book "I," p. 94, BCR; Santa Fe County District Court Records, Civil Case #996, Court Records, p. 166.
63. Probate Court Records, Case file #25, BCR.