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Columbus, New Mexico

The Creation of a Border Place Myth, 1888–1916

BRANDON MORGAN

Mexican Revolutionary general Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s raid on Columbus in the early morning hours of 9 March 1916 put the New Mexican village on the national and international map. Newspapers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border brandished the story of Villa’s attack on the front page. Although Columbus is remembered today as the site of the only organized Mexican revolutionary attack on U.S. soil, boosters had been hard at work from 1888 to 1916 to bring the border village to national notoriety.

Agents of the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company published pamphlets and flyers to promote the up-and-coming town. In the weekly *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* and its successor, the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, references were routinely made to the projected growth of the town. At times editor Perrow G. Moseley even argued that Columbus would exceed El Paso, Texas, in size and notoriety within only a few short years. These concentrated efforts were intended to create what geographers Rob Shields, Christian Brannstrom,

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and Matthew Neuman have termed a “place myth.” Such myths aimed at overcoming negative stereotypes or images of a given town or region to recreate it as a place attractive for settlement and development.

For over a decade, boosters, settlers, and capitalists attempted, in and around Columbus, to create a place myth that would reconfigure the town as the epitome of American development and modernization along the international border between New Mexico and Chihuahua, Mexico. Their endeavors to construct this place myth illustrate the ways in which elite actors intended to recreate the Columbus area as a space firmly controlled by white Americans.¹ Place myths effectively reoriented the public images of several southwestern towns around the turn of the twentieth century, but the case of Columbus underscores the limitations of the place-myth construct. In the end, Mexican revolutionary actions beyond the boosters’ control thwarted their work to redefine the town’s image. No amount of image-making could disconnect Columbus from its historical ties to Mexican issues and events just over the border.

The creation of place myths, defined by Shields as “stable sets of place images,” was common throughout the American West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Place images are the ideas and meanings connected to physical places. Such images are often the result of “stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups or places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants.”² Brannstrom and Neuman build on Shields’s work in their article “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905–1941.” Based on their research on the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas, they argue that place myths tended to appear in remote locations because outsiders had little or no personal experience upon which to base their perceptions. Isolation and lack of experience often meant that existing images of such areas were negative stereotypes. Boosters and other local elites with a stake in recreating specific regions or townsites virtually had free reign to redraw ideas about their targeted places through newspapers, pamphlets, and mailers. Brannstrom and Neuman conclude, “Although distance and brevity of experience make place myths possible, the negative stereotypes and the imperative for accumulation make place myths necessary.”³ Indeed, for a small time prior to World War II, the Lower Rio Grande Valley became the “Magic Valley” along the very lines that the architects of the place myth had intended.

Many small rural towns throughout the American West seemed to fit this pattern near the turn of the twentieth century. Historian David M. Wrobel has portrayed that time in the West as one “of anxious transition from the premodern to the modern”—the precise conditions that preoccupied officials and developers in Porfirian Mexico as well. In that context, “western promoters hurriedly raced toward the future, often announcing its presence before it had actually

arrived, while old settlers lamented that arrival and expressed their reverence for past times.” Although booster literature may easily be dismissed as “the lies of unscrupulous salesmen,” Wrobel points out that “it is important to treat these sources as reflections of the purpose of their creators rather than as accurate descriptions of places and events.”⁴ In other words, booster bombast often had the intended purpose of refashioning public images of western towns, whether or not their claims had any foundation in reality.

Turn-of-the-century Columbus was such a place, struggling in a harsh environment on the periphery of both the United States and Mexico. Local elites worked to redefine the town as an attractive and prosperous place for white family farmers to build their lives and their futures by casting it as quintessentially American. Although I will make some attempts to illustrate the formation of contesting place images and myths about Columbus at this time, I follow Brannstrom and Neuman in privileging elite perspectives.⁵ I do so primarily because Columbus is, and was, such a liminal place relative to centers of political and economic power in both the United States and Mexico that it has received only a cameo appearance in historical and geographic literature on the Borderlands and the Mexican Revolution. Indeed, had Pancho Villa not raided the town in 1916, it might make no appearance at all in the historical record. Yet most, if not all, scholars of the history of the modern U.S.-Mexico Borderlands and the Mexican Revolution briefly mention Columbus as the site where Villa’s anti-American frustrations took their most tangible shape. In these accounts, Columbus is referred to as the “sleepy border town” or the “U.S. army garrison town on the border” that was the victim of Villa’s rage. At that point, scholars generally turn to a discussion of Villa’s possible motives for the attack and of its impact on the course of the civil war then raging in Mexico. The village of Columbus and its residents are banished to historical oblivion as collateral damage of the Mexican Revolution.⁶ An examination of the elite-generated place myth in Columbus is a first step toward piecing together a historical narrative told from the border village itself.

The history of Columbus and its place myths begin on the Palomas tract in northern Chihuahua. On 4 June 1888, Luis Huller signed a colonization contract with Carlos Pacheco, the *Secretaria de Fomento* (Secretary of Public Works) in Mexico City. Pacheco had been working to advance Porfirian colonization policies intended to modernize and industrialize the Mexican republic by settling white Europeans and Americans on tracts of government land. In the 1880s, such concessions were made to groups of Italians, Germans, Boers, and Mormons in states throughout Mexico. By 1888 Huller and his International Company of Mexico already controlled vast land grants in Chiapas and Baja California, as well as shipping concessions in the Gulf of California and a railroad

right-of-way in Sonora.⁷ The contract of 1888 granted Huller the right to control the Palomas tract in northern Chihuahua in exchange for the creation of colonies there. It required Huller's company to "establish 500 colonists at least, during the period of three years, and to increase the said number with fifty more every year for a period of five years." In addition to these requirements, sixty percent of the total number of colonists had to be Mexican, with "preference to such Mexicans who reside in New Mexico, Upper California, Arizona and Colorado, through the press and through the agents it [the company] may appoint to that effect."⁸

Although the exact methods employed by the company to attract settlers—both Mexican repatriates and foreigners, such as the German colonists who settled on Huller's lands in Chiapas—remain unclear in the historical record, Huller's company did draw to Palomas a handful of settlers, including Columbus founder Andrew O. Bailey. Huller's control of the Palomas tract promised to transform a desert region, dominated until very recently by various Apache and Tarahumara peoples, into a place that was ripe for both agricultural production and cattle raising. Yet, as historian Jane-Dale Lloyd states, through "false promises Huller abandoned on the tract a few impoverished Mexican families, who had hoped to work rich agricultural lands that did not exist."⁹ Indeed, when the Mexican government imprisoned Huller for misappropriating the International Company's funds in 1889, he began trying to sell the Palomas concession. Between 1889 and 1910, the company, with subsidiaries on both sides of the international line, changed hands a number of times. By the time the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910, California capitalist Edwin Jessop Marshall had acquired the tract under the auspices of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company. As Lloyd so aptly points out, these developments were detrimental to the inhabitants of Palomas. A Mexican customs house, relocated to the town in late 1892 from La Ascensión, kept the small town intact.¹⁰

In the midst of such tumultuous times for the Palomas colonization project, Colonel A. O. Bailey acquired extensive holdings just north of the Mexican border. Bailey, independently wealthy, held stock in Standard Oil and the Hudson Bay Company. It was perhaps his economic status that first acquainted him with Luis Huller. However the two came to know one another, Bailey was willing to relocate to Palomas in 1888 both for promised economic prosperity and for the dry warm climate of southern New Mexico and northern Chihuahua that would benefit his tubercular son, Frank. In 1891 and 1892, through Bailey's own efforts and those of his wife, Charlotte, and another son, Lester, the family acquired 648 acres along the international boundary by purchasing existing homesteads. The Baileys then moved to the U.S. side of the border, into New Mexico, from the large estate house they had inhabited on the Palomas tract. It was there that

Colonel Bailey constructed a two-story frame house and began to promote the Columbus township, which was recognized with a post office in 1891.¹¹

Despite Colonel Bailey's dedication to his venture in Columbus, its growth was sporadic at best between 1890 and 1909. Throughout the 1890s, Bailey kept a suite in the Astor Hotel in New York City where he met with prospective investors. He promoted railroad construction through the area as the clearest sign that Columbus was on the road to modern prosperity. He also supported measures that would link Columbus to Palomas and northern Chihuahua. To this end, he invested heavily in a proposed railroad known as the Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific. John W. Young, a son of deceased Mormon leader Brigham Young, headed the venture. The proposed route would have connected Columbus with Salt Lake City, Utah, through the railroad hub of Deming, New Mexico (a town thirty-four miles north of Columbus). Although Young consistently denied the charge, newspapers throughout the American West reported that his intention was to link the Mormon colonies in northern Chihuahua with the headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah.¹²

Huller partnered with Young for the construction of the railroad section from Palomas, through Chihuahua and Sonora, with a terminus at Guaymas or Topolobampo, Sonora. Bailey recognized the potential for the growth of Columbus in the proposed line and partnered with a Mr. Tenney (presumably Ammon Tenney, one of the Mormon settlers in Colonia Díaz). Bailey contributed about eighty thousand dollars of his own money to construct the northern half of the railroad. As Huller's fortunes collapsed, financing for the entire project unraveled; Tenney was unable to secure the forty thousand dollars he had promised and Young departed for England, leaving investors like Bailey with sizable unpaid debts. When Young left, Bailey was granted control of the Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific's assets stored in Deming. Although he made every attempt to sell the assets in order to pay back the various project investors, railroad ties reportedly sat in piles around the Bailey home for years.¹³

In the mid-1890s, Bailey was at the center of another effort to promote north-south traffic and international trade between Columbus and Palomas. In September 1895, fifty American citizens living in southern New Mexico filed a petition with U.S. Consul Louis M. Buford, at Ciudad Juárez, asking that a consular agent be appointed to serve American merchants and cattle traders at Palomas. The undersigned (including Bailey) argued that residents in the "towns of Deming, Silver City, Lordsburg, and Columbus are all interested in having such consul appointed." They buttressed their proposal with the claim that a U.S. consul was needed in Palomas because a Mexican consulate in Deming represented Mexican citizens in southern New Mexico. Buford wholeheartedly supported the proposal and requested that Bailey be appointed as the new

consular agent. He also added his own arguments to strengthen the idea and endorsed Bailey for the consular post: "As a consular agency at Palomas should be convenient to some cattle shippers, exporting live stock from Mexico in to the United States, and might increase the commerce between the two republics, I hereby give my endorsement to the petition, and suggest for the position of Consular Agent of the United States at Palomas, Mexico, the name of A. O. Bailey, Esq., an American Citizen, residing at that place."¹⁴ Again, Bailey endeavored to enhance development in Columbus by emphasizing north-south connections between the United States and Mexico. In this case, the consular agency at Palomas came and went with the whims of the changing leadership within the U.S. Department of State and the consul at Ciudad Juárez, to whom the agent at Palomas reported.

Unfortunately for Bailey, his early efforts to establish and promote the town of Columbus were largely unsuccessful, yet the construction of another railroad signaled a brighter future for the village. In 1901 the Phelps Dodge Company proposed a line to connect its smelters in Douglas, Arizona, to the thriving industrial hub of El Paso, Texas. Residents of Deming were hopeful that the "Bisbee railway," as they referred to it, would choose their town as its terminus, using its link along the Southern Pacific to El Paso, but the El Paso & Southwestern (EP & SW) ultimately headed east along a line just to the north of the border.¹⁵ The railroad's right of way was three miles north of Bailey's Columbus townsite. Still intent on making a solid north-south connection with Mexico, Bailey next threw his support behind another ill-fated railroad proposal, the Colorado, Columbus and Mexican railroad, which promised to connect the town to Denver. Bailey likely believed that Columbus could grow and prosper from its location as a railroad crossroads, as had Deming, which in 1901 became the seat of the newly formed Luna County. Additionally, with the arrival of the EP & SW, the customs house relocated to Columbus, making it the port of entry to Mexico.¹⁶ Once the EP & SW line was in place, however, the capitalists who created the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company took control of the town's development and proposed a new place myth to attract settlement.

In 1907 James W. Blair, John Ross Blair, Louis Hellberg, and Charles L. Hiday came together to form the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company (hereafter Townsite Company). Unlike Bailey, who had a personal fortune through his connections to eastern capitalist ventures, the members of the Townsite Company were more modest entrepreneurs. The Blair brothers, for example, had been born in the early 1860s to a farming family in Iowa. When they were young, the family relocated to Kansas where the pair started their adult lives as school teachers. By the 1890s, both were married and almost constantly on the move. After working in Centralia, Oklahoma, as the city clerk

and postmaster, J. W. Blair started a mobile notions company. He sold buttons, thread, and other sewing accessories in towns across Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. In short the brothers were constantly looking for new opportunities and adventures; it was possibly this search for opportunity that drew them to Columbus.¹⁷

As the company name indicates, the four men owned and platted the Columbus townsite itself. The *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier* reported on 28 March and 11 April 1913 that Higday was the first to have platted the townsite, but Bailey had surely laid out his own plans for the town that he spent so much time and energy promoting. In early 1907, Higday laid out a site not far from the Bailey home, directly adjacent to the border. That year, just after they founded the Townsite Company, Higday's partners J. R. Blair and Lewis Hellberg persuaded Bailey to relocate the town three miles north in order to place it directly on the EP & SW line. The Townsite Company members' vision for the development of Columbus departed from that of Bailey's in terms of location and proximity to the new railroad, yet there was apparently no animosity between the parties. The partners consistently trumpeted Bailey as Columbus's founder and model citizen in the pages of the town paper. By that time it seems that Bailey was prepared to allow the Townsite Company to take the reins to promote the village.¹⁸ Their ideas about how to best promote Columbus also differed greatly from those of Bailey. Whereas Bailey invested in railroads to connect to Mexico and backed the creation of a U.S. consular agency in Palomas to create a modern image of the town, the Townsite Company published tracts, including the town newspapers, and organized excursions to advertise the benefits of life in the Lower Mimbres Valley. As editor Jesse Mitchell states, "Every edition of the COURIER is a boosting edition for Columbus and the lower Mimbres valley." Editors of both the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* and *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier* proudly admitted to mailing copies of the paper to prospective settlers across the United States.¹⁹

The new townsite included an area of about two hundred acres purchased by the company's members and registered on 16 May 1909 in the Luna County Court-house in Deming. Almost immediately they initiated promotional activities. They organized on the EP & SW an excursion that brought prospective buyers from El Paso to Columbus, where they enjoyed a barbeque and music. The endeavor was relatively successful; many lots were sold to people like C. C. Parks, "a driller who drilled the first town well." Two more booster excursions from El Paso were organized within the next six months, and the Blair brothers and their partners made regular trips, mostly to California and the Midwest to promote Columbus as the "Queen of the Mimbres." Between 1909 and 1911 almost every issue of the weekly newspaper reported on newcomers who either arrived to investigate the town's opportunities or had purchased land in the area.²⁰

Water: 99.98 percent Pure. Government Test. Atmosphere: 100 per cent Pure. Breathing Test.

Come to Columbus

The Coming Metropolis of Southern New Mexico

- ☞ The only Port of Entry between El Paso, Texas and Douglas, Arizona, which fact insures its commercial importance and ultimate greatness.
- ☞ If you want to make money, invest in Columbus Town Lots.
- ☞ If you want an income at once, build a business house in Columbus, a renter is ready for you as soon as it is completed.
- ☞ If you want to go in business, Columbus is the place for you.
- ☞ If you are looking for Health, come to Columbus.
- ☞ Columbus is situated in the center of a beautiful valley surrounded by a country whose soil is the silt deposit and mountain erosion of ages past—very fertile and productive, and underlaid with an inexhaustible supply of the purest water in the United States, obtained at shallow depth for irrigation.
- ☞ There is plenty of—

Free Government Land Here

- ☞ Deeded Land may also be secured now at reasonable prices.
- ☞ For particulars call on or write—

Hellberg & Blair

418 Roberts-Banner Bldg. El Paso Texas

Richest Soil in America. 300 Squares Daily a Year.

Figure 1. Come to Columbus. The Townsite Company published advertisements in every issue of the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* and *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*. This version appeared in the *Courier* on 30 June 1911.

Yet such success did not come without the creation of new place images to replace existing, often negative, ones. Due to Columbus's isolation from population centers and most Americans' relative unfamiliarity with the Lower Mimbres Valley, the Townsite Company was in a prime position to redraw the place myth to bolster their investment.²¹ Much of the literature they distributed was dedicated to erasing extant ideas and stereotypes about the area, as well as conveying the virtues of Columbus. If other Americans thought about the region at all, they connected it to images of dry, desert landscapes; lawlessness and disorder; and the presence of Spanish-speaking Mexican people.²² Members of the Townsite Company and the village's newspaper editors, Perrow G. Moseley and Jesse Mitchell, attempted to topple and replace such place images in their pamphlets and weekly papers. In a September 1911 editorial in the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, Mitchell commented, "It seems hard for many easterners to realize that New Mexico is no longer the frontier territory that it was forty or fifty years ago." He alluded to the cartoons printed in many eastern papers on New Mexico's statehood bid, "depicting a wild and wooly country on the ragged edge of nowhere." From his perspective, such views were "not only untrue, but unjust."²³

Mitchell's predecessor, Perrow G. Moseley, published a similar editorial in November 1910. In a short article that otherwise extolled the benefits and vir-

tues of living in Columbus, he concluded: “Social surroundings here are as good as the best, with nothing suggestive of the ‘Wild and Woolly West’ so terrifying to those in the misguided East. There are less than five per cent of the native, or Mexican, population in the entire valley.”²⁴ In these two sentences, he recognized that many easterners equated Columbus, and New Mexico more broadly, with the backward “Wild and Woolly West.” Both editors inferred that the phrase connoted isolation, lawlessness, and disorder. Moseley went a step further to connect the “native Mexican” population to those types of problems. He claimed that even if people of Mexican heritage created those issues in other parts of the territory, Columbus was free of such frontier concerns because of the relative paucity of Mexican people living in the Lower Mimbres Valley.

As with other elements of the redefined Columbus place myth, the idea that so few people of Mexican heritage lived in the area was not based on empirical evidence. The U.S. Census of 1910 reported that Columbus had a total population of 268. Of that number, 66 were identified as having a Mexican background—either they or their parents had been born in Mexico and they primarily spoke Spanish. These figures indicate that approximately 24.6 percent of Columbus’s total population was Mexican, a larger proportion than reported by Moseley. Interestingly, that number was lower than the population count in the U.S. Census of 1900, which reported 33.1 percent of the Columbus population as having Mexican heritage.²⁵ Still, the census figures also indicate that the promotional efforts of the Townsite Company had attracted large numbers of people from places like New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, California, and Germany. Perhaps Moseley and the other boosters hoped that continued settlement would further decrease the proportion of Mexican-heritage people in the overall population.

In the same editorial, Moseley touted Columbus as the “only port of entrance on the line between New Mexico and Old Mexico,” a move that emphasized the town’s connection to Mexico. The presence of the federal customs house and mounted customs inspectors, “who patrol the international line from El Paso to the Arizona line,” became one of the pillars of the Columbus place myth in the years between 1909 and 1916.²⁶ At the end of 1911, Mitchell included the phrase “The Only Port of Entry between Old Mexico and New Mexico,” as a subtitle for the weekly *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*. That masthead appeared regularly between 1914 and 1916.²⁷

Such preoccupation with the customs house and port of entry, read together with Moseley’s comments on “native Mexicans,” indicate that elites in Columbus viewed their town as a bastion of American political and economic values, although they were on the front lines of trade with Mexico—an enterprise that had made many local capitalists quite wealthy. Despite an emphasis on the mythic American enterprise of irrigated farming, Columbus capitalists

were tied to Mexican trade, especially to the cattle industry. Indeed, until he installed an irrigation pump in late 1909, Colonel Bailey, the town's original and most distinguished resident (as reported in the papers), had dedicated his land to ranching. Starting with its inaugural issue on 9 July 1909, the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* emphasized the town's status as *the* port of entry between Chihuahua and New Mexico. Stockyards to accommodate the trade were central to Higday's original plan for the town, and in April 1910, editor Moseley boasted, "Columbus stock yards may someday rival Chicago's mammoth pens."²⁸ Yet, the town's proximity to the border did not, from the booster perspective, indicate that Mexicans dominated the Lower Mimbres Valley. Columbus was a place to be settled by white people who espoused American economic values. In other words, Mexico could (and should) be fully embraced economically, but held at arm's length socially.

The introduction to a pamphlet published by the Townsite Company in 1912 to attract settlement also supported the idea that American nationalism, including the U.S. economic system, political system, and family values, was a crucial element in the Columbus place myth. The first item of business discussed in the pamphlet was New Mexico's statehood, which elevated the economic, social, and political value of investment in Columbus. New Mexico's new status as a state in the Union emphasized the state's devotion to American democratic principles and its equal footing with other states in the national legislature. According to Hellberg and Blair, "Her [New Mexico's] people, proud of its resources, certain of its future, look upon Statehood as the beginning of a marvelous development era, which within a few years will place New Mexico among the most densely populated and prosperous of the western States." New Mexico, and Columbus by association, was an equal partner—no longer a subjugated territory—in an American state, with people dedicated to exploiting and developing its vast, untapped natural resources.²⁹

If the land and its resources were merely waiting for "the hand and brain of man to uncover" and develop them, the "splendid" educational system of the state was already well-established. The authors of the Columbus pamphlet argued, "No man need be afraid to bring his children here for no matter in what section he goes he will find ample educational facilities." By 1910 a school had been constructed in town, and a local school board was in place to administer instruction. In April 1910, the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* reported that none other than Colonel Bailey had been re-elected to the school board. The service of a prominent and well-known local citizen in that capacity further indicated the high level of local commitment to children's instruction.³⁰ Such emphasis on the educational system illustrated the boosters' desire to attract hard-working American families to Columbus. Additionally, it illustrated the strong measure



Figure 2. Pamphlet Cover (Depot). Cover of Townsite Company's booster pamphlet, circulated in 1912 to promote Columbus. Courtesy Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Beinecke Digital Images, http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3446095?image_id=1353770.

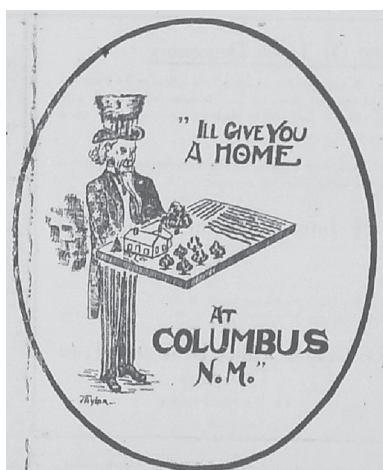


Figure 3. Uncle Sam Cartoon. This cartoon appeared in the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* on 30 June 1911 and various subsequent dates to advertise the promise of agriculture in Columbus.

of civic organization and social order achieved by local officials.

Elite boosters' attempts to overcome former place images that depicted Columbus as a barren desert worked in tandem with promotional images of the town as essentially white American. Alongside an article on the feasibility and virtues of irrigation, the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier* printed a cartoon depicting Uncle Sam holding out an improved plot of land, complete with a home, trees, and planted fields, to prospective buyers. The caption read, "I'll give you a home at Columbus, N.M."³¹ This cartoon, and elite boosters' propensity to emphasize the area's fertile land and "unlimited" water supply, sought to redraw the Lower Mimbres Valley as country prime for agricultural production.

Two main reasons, connected directly to white American values, explain why agriculture was a central element in the place myth framing desert land

in southern New Mexico. First, Columbus boosters sought to make good on the myth of the garden, which was one of the most prominent place images informing public perceptions of the American West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This myth propounded the idea that American industry could cause “rain to follow the plow” and desert areas to “blossom as a rose.” Indeed, Mormon colonists in northern Chihuahua, a group familiar to Columbus boosters and residents, had done just that in their settlements near Ascención and Casas Grandes. Also, in November 1910, the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, referring to Colonel Bailey’s homestead, pointed out that “a typical pioneer ranchman of over twenty years’ residence here, is fast converting his cattle ranch into a veritable garden.”³² Second, the extension and redefinition of federal Homestead Acts were personified in the Uncle Sam cartoon described above. In 1909 revisions to the original legislation promised 320 acres of undeveloped federal land to settlers willing to improve the tract and establish farms. Accordingly, the Columbus papers repeatedly declared that “Uncle Sam is looking for more Homesteaders.” Prospective residents should disabuse themselves of the “erroneous idea” that all public land in the fertile Lower Mimbres Valley had been appropriated.³³

In order to tout the profitability of crops such as beans, alfalfa, and milo maize in the Lower Mimbres Valley, elite boosters emphasized elements of the landscape that promised successful irrigation. During excursions from El Paso, prospective residents visited the Palomas Lakes just south of the border. The lakes were created by an underground water flow fed by the Mimbres River. As well as providing a source of recreation, the lakes indicated the reliability of the underground water supply, which was described by members of the Townsite Company and newspaper editors alike as “inexhaustible.” Articles describing the viability of pump irrigation for agriculture routinely accompanied farming-success stories in the pages of the Columbus weeklies. In June 1911, for example, the front page of the *Courier* included the story of James Durham, a settler who had recently relocated his family from De Ridder, Louisiana, to a homestead just north of Columbus. He was able to improve his land by constructing a “forty-five foot well,” pumped by “an 11 h. p. Foos engine.” The other headline on the same page was “The Virtue of the Pump,” an article describing the power of irrigation pumps to make each irrigator “‘master of his own crop destiny’ in that he controls his own plant and may put the water onto his growing crops just when they need it and in the proper amount.”³⁴ Additionally, the Townsite Company pamphlet included a photograph of an irrigation pump on “the Pierce place,” which supplied between fifteen hundred and eighteen hundred gallons of water per minute. In the photograph, Pierce and a ranch hand stand behind the pump as water gushes. The pamphlet also included

a photograph of the Gibson well producing an equally impressive flow of irrigation water. Below the images, the story of John Hund, “a farmer living in the lower Mimbres Valley,” relates the profitability of his enterprise. His alfalfa and bean crops netted him respectively, \$1,292.50 and \$1,005.20 in 1911.³⁵

By boasting about the viability of pump and artesian irrigation, however, boosters still reinforced the fact that Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley were arid places. Homesteaders could only make good on Uncle Sam’s offer through much toil and expense; the “inexhaustible” water supply was hidden beneath the earth’s surface. Unfortunately, many residents’ crops failed despite their best efforts at irrigation. Although Colonel Bailey’s 185-foot well, powered by a sixteen horsepower Stover engine capable of pumping eighteen hundred gallons per minute, made the front page of the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* in April 1910, the *Courier* reported in July 1911 that his crops and irrigation works had been damaged “to the extent of about \$1,000” by heavy rains. This last episode illustrates that, along with aridity, heavy seasonal rains created unpredictable weather patterns and damaging conditions for many settlers who pinned their hopes on farming in and around Columbus.³⁶

Yet despite the problems the arid climate caused farmers, aridity was easily advertised as a positive aspect of Columbus for another reason. Along with promising water, land, and business opportunities, Townsite Company advertisements in both Columbus papers underscored that the arid local climate was conducive to good health. Thousands of people, Frank Bailey, the son of the colonel, among them, came to New Mexico and the greater Southwest in the late 1800s and early 1900s in order to recuperate from tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments because of the region’s dry climate.³⁷

As indicated by the preceding discussion, elite boosters, including members of the Townsite Company and newspaper editors, constructed the Columbus place myth between 1909 and 1911. They portrayed Columbus as quintessentially American based on demographics (very few “native Mexicans”), American economic and family values, and the promise for irrigated agricultural production in the area. Between 1912 and 1916, the Columbus papers perpetuated this place myth through the publication of articles extolling the area’s benefits ranging from irrigation pumps to “Uncle Sam’s fine dirt” to educational opportunities. At this point, it would be easy to conclude that such efforts worked to create a town dominated by American values and inhabited by white Americans with family roots in the East. A local census made in 1913 during an attempt to incorporate the village, however, suggests that the opposite was the case. This census counted 373 residents in the town of Columbus, a marked increase from the 268 counted in 1910. The overall percentage of people with Spanish surnames and given names, however, increased significantly as well from 24.6 percent of the

total in 1910 to 40.7 percent in 1913.³⁸ These figures indicated that the Columbus place myth was not accurate, partly due to turbulent and dangerous conditions created by the Mexican Revolution, which caused a spike in Mexican migration across the border.

The boosters' failure can largely be attributed to one final pillar of the local place myth affected by events in Mexico, and therefore beyond the control of the Townsite Company or local newspaper editors. In November 1910, Francisco Madero's Plan de San Luis Potosí ushered in the Mexican Revolution, which was aimed at ousting aging Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz. Throughout 1911 pitched battles between federal and revolutionary armies took place at various sites along the U.S.-Mexican border. Although these events transpired in and around Ciudad Juárez, the most urbanized of border settlements at the time, Americans' fear of Mexican insurgents perpetrating violence against smaller towns like Columbus had an enormous impact on their economies and development.

Unsurprisingly, Columbus elites downplayed the potential for revolutionary violence spilling into the Lower Mimbres Valley. Moseley of the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* did not include a report on developments or upheaval in Mexico until 25 November 1910, although Madero's revolution began on 10 November. Even then the *News* claimed, "It is not thought that the Americans need have any fear on either side of the line," despite the report that Palomas customs officers expected insurgents to attack the port of entry any day. Reluctance to report on violence near the border, especially given that the paper was used as a booster tract to draw settlement, continued until February 1911 when Troop C of the Fourth Cavalry was stationed at Columbus to guard against Mexican "revoltosos [*sic*]." Even then the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News* focused the story of the soldiers' arrival on the cold temperatures in the area: "The thermometer has found its way down about the zero mark and seems content on staying there. . . . The U.S. troops surely brought this 'frio' dope down with them from Ft. Meade, South Dakota." Only at the end of the article, on the second page of the paper, was violence in Palomas acknowledged. To editor Moseley's credit, however, he concluded, "Columbus is mighty glad she has the comforting presence of the U.S. soldiers, and hopes ere many days to deal them a little more favorable weather."³⁹

The presence of Troop C (and units subsequently assigned to Columbus) was incorporated into the local place myth: the federal troops protected Columbus property and lives despite its physical proximity to Mexico. With the arrival of the U.S. troops, regular reports on their activities became the norm. Instead of focusing on the violence in Mexico that might spill over the border into town, Moseley and Mitchell described social events that included the Fourth Cavalry.⁴⁰ For example, to celebrate the Fourth of July in 1911, soldiers and civilians com-

peted in “athletic events, foot and mounted races, base ball game, tug of war” and held a “grotesque parade, basket dinner, musical and literary program.” Locals also integrated the troops into activities beyond the national holiday. Teams representing the town and the Fourth Cavalry participated in a summer baseball tournament, and periodic social gatherings included both soldiers and civilians. Although the Fourth Cavalry was recalled to Fort Bliss in August 1911, leaving locals to infer that the worst was over in Mexico, the resurgence of civil war south of the border following the assassination of President Madero meant that the military presence became permanent between 1913 and 1916.⁴¹

Villa’s brazen pre-dawn raid on 9 March 1916 completely devastated Columbus’s central business district. Its infrastructure was never rebuilt. Present-day visitors who opt for the “walking tour” find empty lots marked by slates that include photos and descriptions of the people and businesses that resided in the structures before the attack.⁴² By early 1916, Col. Herbert Slocum of the Thirteenth Cavalry, then stationed at Columbus, as well as other U.S. military officials along the border, took reports of potential cross-border raids with a grain of salt. News of impending attacks poured in with such frequency that there was no possibility of verifying each one, and most turned out to be unfounded. Unfortunately for the Thirteenth Cavalry and the people of Columbus, on 9 March 1916 the rumors became reality. At about 4:00 a.m. Pancho Villa led a force of 485 men across the international boundary toward the sleeping New Mexico town.⁴³ They quietly cut the barbed wire fence about three miles east of the border gate that allowed passage between Palomas and Columbus, four miles south and three miles north of the gate, respectively. Col. Candelario Cervantes led the advance guard and Col. Nicolás Hernández, Gen. Pablo López, Gen. Juan Pedrosa, and Gen. Francisco Beltrán led their units against Camp Furlong and various other targets in town, including the Commercial Hotel, the Columbus State Bank, and the Lemmon and Romney store. According to most eyewitness accounts, the Villistas also specifically sought out prominent merchant Sam Ravel, who was away in El Paso for minor nasal surgery at the time.⁴⁴

The ensuing battle lasted for about six hours. Although the fighting in the town itself concluded around 6:15 a.m., Col. Frank Tompkins and other members of the Thirteenth Cavalry pursued the Villistas on their retreat into Chihuahua for almost four additional hours. Despite Villa’s own hesitation just prior to cutting the international fence, his senior advisors persuaded him to go on with the raid. Turning back, they argued would signal weakness to the rank-and-file, most of whom had been forcibly impressed into revolutionary service. Among the men were many former troops of the División del Norte that had returned to their homes in the Chihuahua community of Namiquipa following the general’s string of defeats at the hands of Gen. Álvaro Obregón in mid-1915.

Additionally, the officers convinced Villa that the minuscule size of the Columbus garrison guaranteed their success.⁴⁵

Villa and his men were thwarted by their overconfidence. A series of tactical blunders allowed the sleeping Thirteenth Cavalry to organize a defense and repel their attack. Villista mistakes included faulty reconnaissance and firing on the stables rather than the barracks at Camp Furlong. When the Villistas set fire to Sam Ravel's residence and the Lemmon and Romney store, the flames subsequently spread to the Commercial Hotel. The advantage of the attack in pre-dawn darkness evaporated in the bright firelight. Their need for money and supplies—arms, ammunition, clothing, and food—focused the Villistas on looting businesses and residences instead of the tactical assault or even killing, although the charge of murder was subsequently levelled against them. Despite Villa's string of anti-American proclamations following Agua Prieta, the actions of his men during the raid show that exacting vengeance and taking American lives were not the principal aims. When the dust settled, eighteen Americans (eight soldiers and ten civilians) had been killed, compared with eighty or ninety Villistas. Many others on both sides were wounded, and several Villistas were taken prisoner.⁴⁶

Tactically, the Columbus raid was a defeat for Villa. He lost nearly one-fifth of his entire force, and his men came away with very little supplies and ammunition. Symbolically, however, the raid was a great success. The date 9 March 1916 marked the first time since the War of 1812 that the continental United States had been attacked by a foreign military force. Although Villa's motives continue to be a matter of intense debate, the raid did make American intervention in Mexico virtually inevitable. For Mexicans, Villa's bravado achieved a measure of payback, however small, for the great losses incurred during the U.S.-Mexico War. Indeed, most Mexicans still maintained deep apprehensions about the intentions of the United States toward their nation during the first decades of the twentieth century. Such sentiments meant that Villa was able to rally his countrymen against the *Norteamericanos* when Gen. George Pershing was deployed to pursue Villa a few weeks later. For the next couple of years, *villismo* resurged throughout Chihuahua and other points in the north, although Villa never again reclaimed his position as a national leader in Mexico.⁴⁷

The raid not only decimated the Columbus business district, it destroyed the lives of local residents. Among those killed was William T. Ritchie. He and his wife, Laura, operated the Commercial Hotel. On the night of the raid, Villistas forced their way into the hotel in search of Sam Ravel who resided in room thirteen. When the soldiers learned of the merchant's absence, the incensed men forced Ritchie, Charles D. Miller, and a few other male guests out the front door and into the street where they were each summarily executed. Ritchie was

among the last, and as the Villistas shoved him toward the door his daughters pleaded, "Don't go, daddy! Don't go!" He responded, "I'll be back in a minute." As gunfire roared in the street, Juan Favela, a ranch hand with the Palomas Land and Cattle Company who lived in Columbus, entered the hotel through the back and led the women and children to safety. Ernest V. Romney, a prominent former settler of the Mormon colonies in Chihuahua, lost his mercantile business in the raid and resolved to relocate his family far away from the violence. With his wife, Mary Alice, and six-month-old son, Douglas, Archibald D. Frost dashed from his home behind his furniture store. When the family finally arrived at Deming in their Dodge, Frost had been gravely wounded and the car riddled with bullets.⁴⁸ The violence of the Mexican Revolution suddenly became a vivid reality in the Lower Mimbres Valley.

Shattered lives, businesses, and homes signaled the death of the Columbus place myth. The Villa raid and the subsequent U.S. Punitive Expedition increased the number of servicemen in town, and the editor of the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier* equated the soldiers with safety. In the 2 March 1917 issue of the *Courier*, the new editor, G. E. Parks, published a short piece that referred to those who left the area due to the raid and the threat of violence as "Columbus' Greatest Evil." He argued the military presence ensured the town's safety and that the "rumors to the contrary must stop—such rumors were injuring our town and retarding the growth of the valley."⁴⁹ These types of articles illustrate the incorporation of the military presence into the local place myth by boosters as an effort to continue local development and demographic growth in Columbus. In the process, Parks walked a fine line between insensitivity toward his fellow citizens and a campaign to redeem Columbus's image in the nation more broadly. Despite his reassurances, the bright future for Columbus imagined and projected by the Townsite Company and his editorial predecessors never came to fruition.

The Mexican Revolution also undermined boosters' efforts to recreate the Lower Mimbres Valley as a place dominated by white farmers. Federal and local censuses indicate that the place myth was not successful in erasing Columbus's historical and social ties to Mexico. People of Mexican heritage comprised a sizable proportion of the local population between 1900 and the local census of 1913; in fact, their presence had actually grown during that period, from 33.1 to 40.7 percent of the total population. This shift can be explained, at least in part, by the massive dislocations of the Mexican Revolution. Most of the early fighting occurred along the border with the United States, and the violence compelled many Mexicans to seek safety north of the border.⁵⁰ Additionally, American cattle interests in Chihuahua ensured the centrality of the customs house, and the economic trade processed through it, to Columbus's economy,



Figure 4. Pancho Villa State Park Historic Marker. Photograph taken by the author at Pancho Villa State Park.

despite advertisements of the area's lush agricultural potential. Last, Villa's raid on the village shattered attempts to equate the U.S. military presence with the guarantee of safety. The U.S. Army's repulse of Villa's force was bloody and successful, but the battle irreparably damaged Columbus's public image.

Ultimately, the Columbus place myth did not take hold in the minds of most Americans or even many locals. Somewhat paradoxically the Villa raid triggered a temporary economic bubble in the town. As increasing numbers of soldiers arrived to support the Punitive Expedition in late March 1916, local merchants and entrepreneurs watched their businesses boom. In June 1917, the *Courier* reported that local businessmen had been accused of raising prices when National Guardsmen arrived, and editor Parks wrote, "It is a matter of fact that prices were out of reason."⁵¹ As early as 1917, then, it was clear the fortunes of Columbus had become intertwined with Villa's raid. Once the permanent presence of military forces ended in the mid-1920s, the town began a rapid decline. In 1920 the population had ballooned to 2,110; by 1930 it had plummeted to 391; and by 1940 it had slipped further to 265. The census reported a small rebound to 307 people in 1960. In 1961, perhaps due to the recognition that Columbus owed its notoriety, and its brief boom, to Villa's attack, local politicians dedicated the former site of Camp Furlong as Pancho Villa State Park. The park was to bear witness to the goodwill between New Mexico and Chihuahua, partners in trade and history. Yet many locals whose ancestors had been killed in the attack were outraged that the park was named after the man who had violently decimated the village. As stated by raid survivor Arthur Ravel, "To name a state park after

someone like that thoroughly disgusts me.”⁵² Although Columbus is still considered a ghost town by many, Villa left an unintended, and much contested, legacy in the dusty border village.

Notes

1. Throughout the essay, I use the term “elite” to describe a privileged socio-economic status, as well as a perceived white American ethnicity—as opposed to a Mexican ethnic identity. These were the people who had something to gain by constructing a specific promotional place myth to mark Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley around the turn of the twentieth century. During this time, people in Columbus generally had modest fortunes. Had they lived elsewhere in the United States, they probably would not have been considered elites. In the context of the rural border region during this time period, however, they were the movers and shakers of their community.

2. Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 60–61.

3. Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905–1941,” *Geographical Review* 91 (April 2009): 125.

4. David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 2, 4.

5. Shields suggests that place myths can be multiple and contradictory. People from other segments of the population can and do conceptualize the same place in conflicting ways. Researchers tend to examine elite, and more visible, place myths. Human understandings of place also tend to be deeply personal and perceptual matters. For an insightful, but limited analysis of the historical construction of place myths, see Yi-Fu Tuan, “The Desert and I: Study in Affinity,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 40, no. 1 (2001): 7–16.

6. Two notable exceptions to this trend are Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Eileen Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar: Pershing’s Hunt for Pancho Villa, a True Story of Revolution and Revenge* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006) Kindle Edition. Neither book centers on the history of Columbus, but Katz provides a description of the trials and executions of *Villistas* captured in the aftermath of the raid. He outlines the racial overtones of those trials and their impact on Luna County, New Mexico, specifically the towns of Columbus and Deming. Welsome’s narrative focuses on Pershing’s punitive expedition, but she describes in detail the layout of the town and the people living in it at the time of the raid. Her multi-dimensional portrait of Columbus is a welcome addition to the literature, but she concentrates on the years immediately surrounding the raid, leaving the earlier history of the village in obscurity. For works that give Columbus a cameo appearance, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols., Cambridge Latin American Studies Series (1986; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Clarence Clendenen, *The United States and Pancho Villa: A Study in Unconventional Diplomacy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961); Linda B. Hall and Don Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910–1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Samuel Truett, *Fugitive*

Landscapes: The History of U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006); and Rachel C. St. John, "Line in the Sand: The Desert Border between the United States and Mexico, 1848-1934" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005). Knight's interpretation of Villa's actions differs significantly from the consensus mentioned above. He argues that Villa acted recklessly, without thought or strategy in March 1916. See Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*, 2:330-47.

7. For the Porfirian colonization project, see Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros en México y los Mexicanos en el Extranjero*, 3 vols. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1994), 2: chap. 5-6. For Huller's extensive holdings, see Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Proceso de Modernización Capitalista en el Noroeste de Chihuahua, 1880-1910* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1987), 32, 82-85; "Huller Deslindadora," *Voz de México* (Mexico City), 19 January 1886, 3; "Huller Still at It," *Weekly (Santa Fe) New Mexican Review*, 7 June 1888, 3; "Very Favorable," *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Morning Democrat*, 30 August 1888, 4; and "In a Mexican Prison," *New York Herald*, 13 February 1889, 10. For Bailey's arrival, see Bill McGaw, "Bailey Family, Founders of Columbus, Knew Tragedy," *The Southwestern* (April 1964): 20; and Richard R. Dean, "Founder of Columbus, Col. A. O. Bailey" (unpublished), Private collection of Richard Dean, President of the Columbus Historical Society, Columbus, New Mexico [hereafter Dean Collection].

8. "Contract entered into between the Secretary of Public Works, General Carlos Pacheco, in representation of the Federal Executive, and Luis Huller, Esq., for the Colonization of Lands Called 'Palomas,' situated in the District of Galeana, State of Chihuahua, and those he owns and may acquire in the Districts of Bravos, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Allende and Ojinaga in the same state" (México, D.F.: Printing Office of Joaquín Guerra y Valle, 1889), 3-4, 10.

9. Lloyd, *Proceso de Modernización*, 32 (my translation).

10. Ibid.; and John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 178.

11. Ray Sherdell Page, *Columbus, New Mexico: Queen of the Mimbres Valley* (Silver City, N.Mex.: Page 1, 2001), 6-7; Dean, "Founder of Columbus, Col. A. O. Bailey"; and McGaw, "Bailey Family, Founders of Columbus, Knew Tragedy," 3, 20. Colonel Bailey's title hearkened back to his Civil War service.

12. For Young's insistence that the railroad was not primarily a scheme to support Mormon colonization in Chihuahua, see "Deming's Delight," *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican*, 20 September 1888, 1; and "To Colonize the Mormons," *Boise Idaho Daily Statesman*, 23 December 1890. Mormon settlers in Colonia Díaz, near La Ascensión, Chihuahua, fully believed that the railroad was constructed for their benefit, and many of them, including the colony's bishop, William Derby Johnson, invested in the road. See Annie R. Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz* (Mesa, Ariz.: printed by author, 1972), 91-95.

13. F. Stanley, *The Columbus, New Mexico Story* (Pep, Tex.: printed by author, 1966), 6; Page, *Queen of the Mimbres Valley*, 8-9; and Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 95-96. See also "Bishop Johnson Interviewed," *Deming (N.Mex.) Headlight*, 31 January 1891, 2; and "Local: A. W. Tenney of Casas Grandes Came in last Thursday for the Purpose of Meeting John W. Young," *Deming (N.Mex.) Headlight*, 31 January 1891, 3.

14. Dispatch from Louis M. Buford to Secretary of State, 11 September 1895, r. 5, microfilm, *Despatches from United States Consuls in Ciudad Juárez (Paso del Norte)*,

Mexico, 1850–1906, Microcopy 184, National Archives Microfilm Publications, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.

15. For references to the proposed “Bisbee railway,” see *Deming (N.Mex.) Herald*, 2 April 1901, 4; 16 April 1901, 1; 30 April 1901, 1; and 4 June 1901.

16. Page, *Queen of the Mimbres Valley*, 12.

17. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

18. *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 28 March 1913, 1; and “A Correction,” *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 11 April 1913, 6.

19. I view both the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, published 1909–1911, and the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, published 1911–1921, as booster tracts. Both dedicated large spreads to advertising the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, and both contained regular articles that described correct techniques for irrigation, local business opportunities, and the benefits of the salubrious landscape and climate in the Lower Mimbres Valley. For Mitchell’s comments, see *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 21 July 1911, 4.

20. Page, *Queen of the Mimbres Valley*, 12–14; and Timothy Lorek, “All Along the Borderline: The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad’s Effect on Natural and Human Environments in Southwestern New Mexico,” (unpublished manuscript), copy in author’s possession, 12.

21. In March 1910, J. W. Blair and Louis Hellberg bought the interest of the other two partners, taking full control of the Townsite Company. Much of the work dedicated to creating the Columbus place myth followed this change in ownership. See *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 4 March 1910, 1–2.

22. Negative ideas about the social, political, religious, and economic inferiority of mestizo Mexican people had been extant in the eastern United States since the end of the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Such perceptions held by eastern congressmen prevented New Mexico’s statehood throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For historical background on negative racial perceptions of Mexicans, see John Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s–1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); and Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

23. *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 8 September 1911, 6.

24. “Columbus,” *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 25 November 1910, 4. The preoccupation with New Mexico’s image as a wild frontier was shared by the editor of the *Deming (N.Mex.) Herald*. See *Deming (N.Mex.) Herald*, 7 May 1901, 4.

25. Thirteenth Population Census of the United States, 1910, microfilm edition, reel 915, fr. 728–733, “1910 New Mexico Federal Population Census Schedules—Grant, Lincoln, Luna, and McKinley Counties,” accessed 7 August 2014, <https://archive.org/stream/13thcensus1910p0915unit#page/n727/mode/2up>; and Twelfth Population Census of the United States, 1900, microfilm edition, fr. 809–811, “1900 New Mexico Federal Population Schedules—Grant, Lincoln, Luna, and McKinley Counties,” accessed 7 August 2014, <https://archive.org/stream/12thcensusofpopu100unit#page/n807/mode/2up>. The figures of Mexican demographics in Columbus are based on the author’s count.

26. “Columbus,” *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 25 November 1910, 4. The figures of Mexican demographics in Columbus are based on the author’s count.

27. No issues of the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier* during 1912 and 1913 remain, and I was unable to examine the paper during those years. The masthead proclaiming the Columbus port of entry first appeared in late 1911 and continued intermittently in 1914, 1915, and early 1916.

28. "Large Importation," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 26 November 1909; "Cattle Importation," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 18 February 1910; "Importation of Steers," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 8 April 1910; "Large Shipments," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 29 April 1910; and Lorek, "All Along the Borderline," 21.

29. Louis Hellberg and John Ross Blair, *Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley, New Mexico* (El Paso, Tex.: Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, 1912), 3–4.

30. "Bailey Remains on School Board," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 8 April 1910, 2.

31. *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 30 June 1911, 7; and Lorek, "All Along the Borderline," 17–18.

32. *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 25 November 1910, 1. For a classic work on the myth of the garden, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950). For Mormon colonists' agricultural success, see Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1954); and Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (1938; repr., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005).

33. Lorek, "All Along the Borderline," 13; and "Uncle Sam' Is Looking for More Homesteaders," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 21 July 1911, 1.

34. "A Trip into the Country" and "The Virtue of the Pump," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 30 June 1911, 1.

35. Hellberg and Blair, *Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley*, 10–11.

36. "The Bailey Well," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 15 April 1910, 1; and "Locals," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 28 July 1911, 5.

37. The ads, such as those that appeared in the *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 15 April 1910, 4, and the *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 30 June 1911, 3, were recurring fixtures of the publications between 1909 and 1916.

38. Collection 12: 1913 and 1919 Columbus Census, Dean Collection.

39. "Mexicans on the Alert," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 25 November 1910, 2; and "Columbus Is under Guard of Soldiers," *Columbus (N.Mex.) News*, 24 February 1911.

40. The Columbus papers occasionally reported on Mexican revolutionary activities and battles. Such reports, however, tended to be short (one to two paragraphs) and were buried in the paper. See for example, "J. M. Rangel Brought to Juarez," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 11 August 1911, 6.

41. "Columbus Will Celebrate," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 30 June 1911, 1; *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 28 July 1911, 3; and "Troops Leave Columbus," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 18 August 1911, 1.

42. Present-day visitors to Columbus are invited to take a walking tour of the central business district that was leveled by the Villistas in 1916. Visitors view empty lots where structures such as the Commercial Hotel, the Lemmon and Romney mercantile, and the Ravel Brothers' store once stood. The Commercial Hotel was the central point around which other buildings were looted and destroyed, and the fire that ravaged the business district originated at the hotel. No attempt to rebuild on the sites has ever been made, and plaques that contain brief historical explanations and photographs of the buildings

mark each point on the walking tour. Richard R. Dean, *The Columbus Story* (Deming, N.Mex.: J and J Printing, 2006), is a pamphlet that visitors can use as a guide for the walking tour.

43. For a discussion of the various estimates of the Villistas' numerical strength at Columbus, see White, "Muddied Waters of Columbus," 78–79. Although reports ranged from 300 to 3,000 soldiers, White convincingly argues that James A. Sandos, "German Involvement in Northern Mexico, 1915–1916: A New Look at the Columbus Raid," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 50 (February 1970): 77, provides the most accurate count at 485. That number corresponds with the general estimates provided by military personnel on the scene at the time of the attack, and it draws on a detailed investigation contained in the John J. Pershing Papers at the U.S. National Archives.

44. Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 560–66; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, chap. 8; and White, "Muddied Waters of Columbus," 79. Affidavits by Sam and Arthur Ravel, Arthur J. Evans, Henry Burtch, G. E. Parks, Rachel Walker, Eleanor M. Dean, Edwin G. Dean, Peter K. Lemmon, H. L. Payne, Myrtle Ritchie English, and Laura Ritchie were taken in conjunction with Albert B. Fall's subcommittee on Mexican Affairs in 1919 and 1920. Each provides an account of the raid, and they are contained in reel 38, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter CSWR, UNM]. See also *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, S. Res. 106, S. Doc. 285 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).

45. Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 563; Tomkins, *Chasing Villa*, 55–59; and Alberto Calzadía Barrera, *Porque Atacó Villa a Columbus (Intriga Internacional)* (México, D.F.: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1971).

46. White, "Muddied Waters," 77–80; and Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 566.

47. For Villa's resurgence due to the raid, see Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, chap. 15.

48. For the Ritchie family's ordeal, see Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1827–1882; Testimony of Mrs. Laura Ritchie, 17 June 1916, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, S. Res. 106, S. Doc. 285 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 1601–1602; and Laura Ritchie to Albert B. Fall, 4 April 1916 and 9 February 1919, r. 48, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, CSWR, UNM. For Romney's situation, see Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 335, 359, 383–85; Affidavit of Peter K. Lemmon, 27 June 1916, r. 48, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, CSWR, UNM; *Deming (N.Mex.) Headlight*, 17 March 1916; and *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 31 March 1916. For the Frosts' story, see "The Story of Archibald Frost," narrative to accompany exhibit at Pancho Villa State Park, Columbus, New Mexico; Affidavit of Archibald D. Frost, 3 May 1916, r. 48, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, CSWR, UNM; Testimony of Archibald D. Frost, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 1614–1616; and Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1928.

49. "Columbus' Greatest Evil," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 2 March 1917, 2; and "Columbus Should Welcome Troops," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 2 February 1917, 1.

50. For Mexicans seeking refuge in the United States during the Revolution, see Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, chap. 8.

51. "An Excellent Idea," *Columbus (N.Mex.) Courier*, 22 June 1917, 2.

52. Introduction to Pancho Villa Documents, and Charles Hillinger, "State Park Name Misunderstood," Francisco (Pancho) Villa Vertical File, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Santa Fe, New Mexico.