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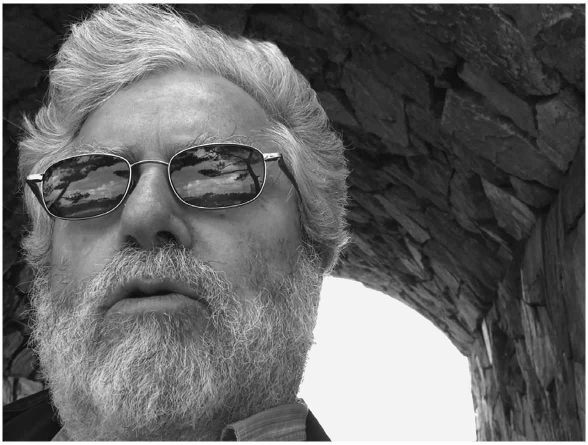
Southwest Talks: The *New Mexico Historical Review* Interview Series

Enrique R. Lamadrid



Interview by Gianna May Sanchez, assistant editor

For nearly forty years, Dr. Enrique R. Lamadrid, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of New Mexico Department of Spanish and Portuguese, has enriched the fields of Southwest history, Latin American folklore, Chicano/a studies, and Borderlands history through his research on New Mexico. His interdisciplinary approach incorporates Hispanic folklore, enthnohistory, Chicano literature, and Nuevomexicano history to broaden the historical understanding of the Southwest and Borderlands region. He further contributes to these fields by supporting other scholars and has been on the *New Mexico Historical Review* board since 2009. Dr. Lamadrid has also shown commitment to fieldwork, public activism, and public history, and has worked with the Smithsonian, Museum of New Mexico, and National Hispanic Cultural Center to curate exhibitions and participate in educational cultural events, such as the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival.

Through this varied work, Dr. Lamardid has received numerous awards and acclaim for his academic research, activism, ethnohistory fieldwork, and museum and public history projects. In 2004 he received the Chicago Folklore

Prize, the oldest and most prestigious award for ethnography, and in 2005 he received the Américo Paredes Prize for his community-based cultural work in museums and for his participation in acequia activism. He has also received Southwest Book Awards for *Nuevo México Profundo: Rituals of an Indo-Hispano Homeland* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2001), *Hermanitos Comanchitos: Rituals of Captivity, Redemption and Transculturation in the Indo-Hispano Folklore of NM* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), and *Amadito y los Niños Héroes* (University of New Mexico Press, 2011).

As an ethnographer and historian, Dr. Lamadrid's work centers on New Mexico, but also includes regions in Mexico, Spain, the Andes, and the Caribbean. He explores how indigenous cultures in New Mexico have influenced the Spanish language, popular imagination, and the Borderlands as a cultural space. Dr. Lamadrid is also a scholar of the corrido ballad tradition in Mexico and Borderlands region and has produced a series of CDs featuring these folk songs. His most recent work is *Sisters in Blue: María de Ágreda Comes to New Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 2017) about the mystical and spiritual journey of Sister María de Jesús de Ágreda. This summer, the *NMHR* reached out to Dr. Lamadrid to discuss his career, recent work, activism and public history endeavors, and experience utilizing interdisciplinary approaches in historical research.

NMHR: How did you become interested in the history of the Southwest, Latin American folklore, and Borderlands history? Why focus on Nuevomexicano history?

LAMADRID: In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the consequences and reminders of our history are an inescapable aspect of daily life. Historical traumas are transmissible across generations and easily transform into shame and humiliation. Historical triumphs can transform into excessive pride, patriotism, and exceptionalism. Just ask Native and Hispano people how language loss feels and contributes to cultural and social erasure. As New Mexicans, we all belong to this complicated and fascinating place, with its double colonial legacy.

Although I am a literary folklorist, New Mexico history is the contextual frame of reference in my cultural work on the region. From the beginning of my public school education, local history was missing in action. Our seventh grade New Mexico unit was mostly a survey of state monuments and parks. As a child raised in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, I had seen Pueblo dances, but never heard of the Pueblo Revolt until I was a student at the University of New Mexico (UNM). College friends took me to witness my first Matachines dance, the beautiful rosetta stone for understanding our cultural history.

Persistent early personal and cultural doubts and questions were addressed by the study of history: Who are we and how did we get this way? How come costumed conquistadors seem as exotic as the mariachis at the Santa Fe Fiestas? How come literally all my friends' fathers were or had been in the military or worked at the national laboratories? And everyone always asked us, are you Lamadrids Spanish or Mexican?

As a Latin Americanist, my reading Eduardo Galeano stirred up the dust at my feet when he wrote: "History never really says goodbye. History says, See you later." When I first visited Lt. Gov. Roberto Mondragón in the Roundhouse, there was Gov. Lew Wallace's plaque on the wall: "Every calculation based on experience elsewhere fails in New Mexico." *Claro que sí.* But as a folklorist deeply interested in the poetics of folk narrative, I'm most inspired by Grace Lee Boggs, from the African and Asian American branches of Ethnic Studies, who wrote: "History is not the past. It is the stories we tell about the past. How we tell these stories—triumphantly or self-critically, metaphysically or dialectally—has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our evolution as human beings."

NMHR: Whom do you consider your biggest educational influences and mentors?

LAMADRID: Poets and Seers: Walt Whitman for his expansive North American voice and for his love of the people; Gary Snyder for his telluric poetics of bioregion and our deepest Paleolithic humanity; Pablo Neruda for his all-encompassing perspective of social justice for the Americas; Ernesto Cardenal for his poetics of history and his plain, persuasive language; and Rudolfo Anaya for inscribing the Nuevomexicano imaginary onto the literary map of North America and for his generous collaborations. Los Grandes de UNM: David Johnson with his fine Jungian sense of the mythic and for encouraging my fieldwork in Mexico; Sabine Ulibarrí for evacuating me to Ecuador to recover my Spanish, and for exemplifying how directly New Mexican literature is linked to the traditions of Spain and Latin America; and Gary Brower for his poetic tour of Ibero-American history and letters.

A chance encounter in 1970 while hitchhiking to northern New Mexico reconnected me with social philosopher and visionary Tomás Atencio, who took me to Embudo, New Mexico, the place of my birth, to join a work crew on his *torreón*, the Nuevomexicano equivalent of the defensive towers of Spain. Why? "Our culture, our water, our land is under siege, so I thought we'd better build one," he winked. It was my introduction to La Academia de la Nueva Raza (The Academy of the New People), a community-based think-tank of writers, artists, and activists. Poet-historian E. A. Tony Mares, novelist and *acequia* leader Estevan Arellano, and artist-agriculturalist Alejandro López became lifelong collaborators. The *Nueva Raza* is the same "New Humanity" that Ernesto Guevara and Paulo Freire wrote about so eloquently—the provocative mix of cultural and social activism that was emerging across the Americas. The foundation is the lively Socratic dialogue that Atencio called *Resolana*, named for that emblematic sun-drenched spot, usually near the plaza, where people gathered to reflect and converse. This public space, where critical community dialogue is cultivated, is a direct descendent of the agora of ancient Greece. By 1970 the Academia's foundational oral and cultural history survey was well underway, and I have referenced it in my research and fieldwork ever since. The Atencio and López collections are now housed at Zimmerman Library's Center for Southwest Research at UNM.

NMHR: In what ways is your research on Nuevomexicano history and culture a continuation of and a departure from traditional Spanish Borderlands history pioneered by Herbert E. Bolton?

LAMADRID: Bolton's mentor, Frederick Jackson Turner, convinced historians how deeply North America transformed its east-to-west settlers, but did not think very deeply about the consequences for the indigenous and mestizo peoples on the receiving end of Manifest Destiny. Bolton demonstrated how the autocratic but decentralized institutions of the Spanish empire laid the groundwork for its dramatic expansion. Spanish Borderlands histories confirm that *la tierra adentro* (the interior lands) may be landlocked and hard to get to, but is not really as "remote" as some would portray it. A disheartening sense of triumphalism has crept into some of these histories, beginning with Bolton's misconstrued, heroic portrayal of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado.

In my work to identify and define the mestizo cultures of New Mexico, the twin concepts of *querencia*, the love of place, and *tierra sagrada*, the sanctity of place, have set the stage for the work of emerging scholars. Spanish colonialism was deeply transformed by our arid, cultural landscapes. I wrote: "The *Españoles Mexicanos*, as they eventually called themselves, arrived with all the fury and suppressed desire of the Spanish peasant to possess the land. The price of arrogance was paid in blood in 1680 when the Río Grande Pueblos arose and reclaimed their heritage. In the space of a few mestizo generations, the newcomers who sought title to the land were instead possessed by the land. As they became Nuevomexicanos, indigenous to this place, the boundaries of the *Campo Santo*, the Sacred Ground, spread past the narrow church yard and the bones of the dead towards valleys, plains, and mountains beyond. In the center of this sacred landscape are the native and mestizo peoples who have survived the rigors of the northern desert and the cost of each other's desire." As interdisciplinary and impressionistic as my work has been on mestizaje, it has always found a home in the *New Mexico Historical Review*, beautifully illustrated by the photography of my collaborator in the field, Miguel Gandert.

NMHR: How does your research on Nuevomexicano history and culture fit into Chicana/o studies and history, and how has the field evolved over your career? Is it an extension of these fields or a separate field of inquiry? Has it always been receptive toward public engagement and interdisciplinary approaches?

LAMADRID: Our job as scholars, teachers, and cultural activists is to broaden and connect our fields of inquiry. Nuevomexicano studies were often misrepresented in the initial rounds of Chicano studies curriculum. The land grant movement was poured into the mold of revolutionary radicalism, in spite of its leader, Reies López Tijerina, whose vision was actually deeply theological. Then there is the infamous conquistador "wannabe" myth. What Carey McWilliams identified as "Spanish Fantasy Heritage" in California was uncritically transferred to New Mexico. Part of the problem is rooted in Américo Paredes's scathing critique of Aurelio M. Espinosa's writings, well after the latter's death, despite don Américo's lack of on-the-ground fieldwork in New Mexico. After a solid fifty-year foundational career as our first folklorist and one of the founders of the new science of linguistics, Espinosa took a hard-right political turn in support of Spanish fascism. In retaliation, American folkloristics erased him from the academic map.

Chicano studies does get credit for introducing mestizaje and cultural hybridity into the North American conversation, especially as it was construed and promoted after the Mexican Revolution. But the new cultural agenda included Azteca dance, which can also be characterized as a fantasy heritage. I drew from my fieldwork to define Nuevomexicano mestizaje within my ethnography, *Hermanitos Comanchitos*, and my signature collaboration with Miguel Gandert, *Nuevo México Profundo.*

When I took the helm of Chicano studies at UNM, I broadened the focus to include Hispano and Mexicano students who had felt alienated by it. My achievement was to put Nuevo México on the map of Chicano studies by including Spanish as a language of instruction, linking with UNM's historic Sabine Ulibarrí Spanish Heritage Language program, and including the Acequia and Land Grant Culture and Heritage in the curriculum and articulating with the emerging Land Grant studies program. The *mercedes* (grants of land) bestowed by the Spanish crown and Mexican Republic include all the Pueblo land grants. By definition, communities had to prove their viability to gain title to their lands. Sustainability studies must begin with land grants. We conducted a series of summer field schools on acequias in Embudo and Mora, New Mexico, and Valle de Allende, Chihuahua, New Mexico's Ellis Island. There, families, travelers, and their animals and seeds were inspected and registered to travel further north.

NMHR: In what ways does Nuevomexicano history and culture participate in the larger narrative of Hispanic North America and in what ways is its history unique within that larger history?

LAMADRID: New Mexico is a participant in the history of the Spanish Borderlands and cannot be understood in any more comprehensive way. The people of our twice-conquered land live out a double colonial legacy. As a colonial enterprise, New Mexico began as a celebrated missionary province, achieved independence as a remote and impoverished Mexican state, and is now a prosperous military colony of the United States. Ironically, our wealth has always been predicated on a sizable underclass, which began with Indian slavery, then debt peonage, and is today supplemented by a dynamic, but exploited immigrant community. In 1848, in our region, the border of Mexico moved more than five hundred miles south, from the Arkansas River in southern Colorado, to the Rio Grande at El Paso. In this broad border zone, language and identity are negotiated in every social encounter. We decide on the spot how much Spanish to include, if any and with whom, in our conversations. Cultural resistance becomes a survival strategy. We live between languages and cultures in asymmetrical relations of wealth and power.

In the southern reaches of the Rio Grande Valley, the border became the river itself. To the east it is line surveyed onto the desert, an amalgam of fences, weeds, and walls. To the Nuevomexicanos "crossed by the border," the lines of separation became interiorized and psychological, re-negotiated with every interaction. This continuous negotiation marks cultural difference. In our border zone, the ethnic boundaries first theorized by Frederic Barth are defined, crossed, re-crossed, observed, and acknowledged, sometimes unconsciously. Santa Clara Pueblo anthropologist Edward Dozier reminds us how culturally segregated our society is here.

As for the uniqueness of New Mexico, we are surrounded and saturated with the heritage of double colonialism, and neocolonialism. Hispanos have embraced the seductive notion of New Mexican exceptionalism, until Spanish and Latin American colleagues have gently pointed out its foibles and ironies.

How many times on the obligatory Santa Fe tour have visitors chuckled at the signs of "Oldest Plaza," "Oldest Church," and "Oldest House" among others. "It's American exceptionalism, Chicano style," I tell them. When we try to own the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, scholars point out how it simultaneously happened in a huge area all over northern New Spain. When we talk about the uniqueness of Santa Fe's Barrio Analco, they point out that Durango also has its Barrio Analco, where Mexican Indian twin communities were founded across the nearest river, as in all the major settlements of the Camino Real.

Besides Mexico and Spain, my most-interesting collaborations have been with colleagues from Puerto Rico and Okinawa, two strategic external military colonies, as essential to the defense of the United States as New Mexico has been as its internal military colony. Both places have extraordinary historic and cultural parallels. Where Puerto Rico has the contested island of Vieques, Okinawa has its own Iejima island, also in the strategic shadows of the U.S. Navy. The University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa has a thriving Southwest U.S. Studies program that examines how culture and language survive after they have been politically subordinated.

NMHR: As an ethnographer and ethnohistorian and as a former director of Chicana/o studies, you have researched, written, and published on Nuevomexicano identity. Is it Spanish, Mexican, Chicano, mestizo, or something else? The debate is still with us. How do you address the complex problem of ethnic and racial identity in your teaching, scholarship, and administration?

LAMADRID: Ethnic identification is highly situational, flexible, and pragmatic in our border zone. Whatever is most expedient and socially beneficial is readily adopted into families. Well-known intergenerational studies reveal that as many as four or five ethnonyms may be used in the same family. When speaking Spanish, people often use the terms *Nuevomexicano*, *Mexicano* (*de aquí* as opposed to Mexico), and *Hispano Americano* in pre–World War II generations. *Hispano* is a historic term used as early as the 1880s and popular ever since. Here it does not carry the negative charge of *Hispanic*, the English term imposed by the U.S. Census Bureau. *Chicano*, a term introduced during the Civil Rights movement, did not get much traction beyond university circles. In traditional usage, it is used either as a term of endearment or as an intra-ethnic slur, *Chicanos* being less assimilated, less privileged, or more recently immigrated Others.

English terminology proliferates in a cocktail of ethnonyms in New Mexico. In the nineteenth century we were derogatively called *Mexicans,* a term whose negative charge was noticed and shunned by the people. *Spanish American* was introduced by Anglo American elites anxious to help elevate our status and make us more acceptable to Washington legislators in the much-delayed quest for statehood. All over Latin America, a distinct *criollo* identity emerged that included social elites, often phenotypically whiter and more privileged than their countrymen. In New Mexico, criollo identity merged seamlessly with the Spanish American designation that can be seen in the writings of Gov. L. Bradford Prince. From outside New Mexico, this complex of overlapping ethnonyms seems excessive, contradictory, or duplistic. In my professional work, I use the term *Chicano* in reference to the cultural and literary renaissance, *Indo-Hispano*, popularized by Tijerina, and of course *Nuevomexicano*.

Ethnonyms cannot be legislated or imposed any more than ethnic identity can. Students are curious and impressionable as they explore who they are. As a teacher and ethnographer, the best I can do is to clarify my own positionality, first to myself, then in my work. My paternal grandparents were Spanish peasants from Cantabria, a mountainous rural area in the north hard hit by the military draft and economic collapse that came with the final demise of the Spanish Empire in the 1890s. Their dream, and the salvation of the family was immigration to the land of opportunity—for them, Mexico and decades later, the Caribbean. The Lamadrids are truly Spanish Mexicans, Españoles Mexicanos, not either/or, but both. A good point of departure has always been foundational historical documents for my New Mexican students. A good example, the establishment and naming of New Mexico's second *villa*—La Villa Real de Santa Cruz de la Cañada de los Españoles Mexicanos. Their search for identity belongs to them and their families as they reclaim their history, culture, and language.

NMHR: What are the most exciting avenues of research in the history and culture of Spanish-speaking peoples of New Mexico, the Southwest, and northern Mexico—the Greater Southwest as the *New Mexico Historical Review* labels the region?

LAMADRID: The most important literal avenue for my work over the past two decades has been the ongoing series of symposia, trips, fieldwork, and collaborations surrounding the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Thanks to the historic binational partnerships of institutions like the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, the National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution, UNESCO, and several universities, we have worked with new colleagues in Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas, Tlaxcala, and Mexico City. I have published with the Sociedad Histórica de Chihuahua as well as the Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala. We have taken students to Durango to the former Colegio Seminario (now the Universidad de Juárez del Estado de Durango), where so many Nuevomexicanos studied as seminarians, engineers, and lawyers (including the famous Padre Antonio José Martínez of Taos), between the 1770s and after 1821. By mid-century, Nuevomexicano families began sending their children to U.S. universities.

Colleagues with research agendas in New Mexico, such as Luis Urías Hermosillo, Tomás Martínez, José de la Cruz Pacheco, and many others, have joined us both here and in Mexico. The *NMHR* has now published two articles in Spanish by Dr. Pacheco. Our research and fieldwork on the origins of the *Hermandad de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* (the Penitente brotherhood) in Durango have also appeared in the *NMHR*, and most recently, on Tlaxcaltecan presence and heritage in New Mexico.

Other important "avenues" have led me and my colleagues to Spain—to Valladolid with our work on folk religion, and to Valencia with our work on acequia culture. We have ventured as far as Naha, Okinawa, where we have also presented and published on Nuevomexicano topics.

NMHR: Your research often includes literary analysis and ethnohistory. How does this interdisciplinary approach enrich your work as a historian? What might historians learn from the many ways you have engaged with your research? For example, why should Borderlands or Southwest historians include folklore and literature in their research?

LAMADRID: Traditionally, folklore studies in the Hispanic world are rooted in the study of the *Romancero*, the millennial Ibero-American ballad tradition. Many of these ballads, both older *romances* and the newer *corridos* are rooted in historical incidents and their heroes. Through documents and oral history, historical contexts can be constructed to frame the extraordinary folk poetry at the heart of this tradition. Américo Paredes wrote *With his Pistol in his Hand*, the seminal study on border *corridos*. My ambition is a manuscript based on *inditas*, New Mexico's signature narrative ballad form, and is entitled *La Pasión de Plácida Romero: the Poetics of Memory, Authority, and Faith of a Cautiva and her Ballad*.

Early in my career at UNM, historian Ramón Gutiérrez was working on marriage and power in colonial New Mexico and approached me concerning my fieldwork on *La entriega de novios* (Delivery of the Newly Weds), the ritual folk wedding song tradition I was researching. I was amazed with the insights he developed from folk poetry, which he was able to weave into his historical studies. My first article in *NMHR* was on *La entriega*—no accident.

Folklore and literary studies are predicated on a profound knowledge of the Spanish language. I am so pleased to see that the bar has been raised in the translation of documents for historical studies. Case in point—Richard and Shirley Flint's groundbreaking new work on Coronado, much of which is published in *NMHR*. Their foundation is the new standard of "philological quality" translation, which picks up many important nuances that previous generations of historians have simply overlooked.

NMHR: You have also worked on several public history and community-centered projects, including exhibition curating, participation in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and acequia activism. How does this work influence your historical research? Do you believe it is important to include these interests with traditional historical scholarship, and if so, why?

LAMADRID: My adventures in what folklorists call "public sector work" began with *American Encounters*, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, CDs, exhibits, and publications to honor New Mexico in 1992. I was fortunate that colleagues there were able to convince the UNM tenure committees that curatorial work on exhibits and festivals is just as important as other research publications and activities. I subsequently worked with the Smithsonian on their *U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* festival, as a regional curator with the *El Río* festival on bioregion and traditional knowledge (which I brought to the Maxwell Museum at UNM), and festivals honoring Mexico and Colombia. I was a curator for a large Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibits Service project called *Corridos sin Fronteras / Ballads without Borders*, which featured a complete New Mexico component that toured independently, *Nuevo México, ¿hasta cuándo?: Four centuries of Hispanic Balladry in New Mexico.* I also led the design team for the International Camino Real Heritage Center and co-curated its permanent exhibit, and participated in the Museum of Spanish Colonial Arts exhibit *Converging Streams: Art of the Hispanic and Native American Southwest*.

I withdrew from the planning process for the expanded New Mexico History Museum, because of its core theme "Culture in Place." I believed their planning committee mired itself in a static view of history in which the twenty-first-century status quo becomes the natural order. In an arid bioregion like ours, rights to place are highly contested. People struggle valiantly to define and keep their places. Despite these initial differences, I have been an enthusiastic collaborator, consultant, translator, and editor on *Cowboys Real and Imagined*; *El Hilo de la Memoria / the Thread of Memory*; *Painting the Divine*; *Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, the Inquisition, and New World Identities*; and *Voices of Counter Culture in the Southwest*.

Work with museum exhibits and music festivals like "Nuestra Música" and "Música del Corazón" is an antidote to the fears and doubts of every teacher.

The exhibits and the websites, and the books and CDs that they produce keep on teaching, even though the educator may no longer be present.

NMHR: Do you have any advice for young historians who pursue both activism and public history projects alongside academic scholarship? How should these fields intersect, and what kind of scholarship can result from this interaction?

LAMADRID: Start with a solid foundation in your discipline and achieve tenure, hopefully without burning out. Then follow your heart and your dreams, and, most importantly, find your collaborators. Take your ideas and passion for history beyond the classroom and into the community, where you probably encountered it in the first place.

Cultural and linguistic activism have been the heart of my career. I began with language recovery, then literary recovery, and finally historical recovery.

NMHR: What research or public history projects are you currently working on?

LAMADRID: Most of my work is with the Querencias Series that I edit at UNM Press. Our current project is an anthology of essays entitled *Genízaro Nation: Ethnogenesis, Place, and Identity in New Mexico.* I just finished a beautifully illustrated, bilingual book with my colleague Anna Nogar entitled *Sisters in Blue: María de Ágreda Comes to New Mexico.* Before that we published the second edition (with six new essays with new maps and illustrations) of the historic anthology from 1989 with Rudolfo Anaya and Francisco Lomelí, *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland.*

My next museum-book project in planning stages with the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art is on the *Morisma* tradition of folk drama and dance, which includes Moros y Cristianos celebrations in Spain, New Mexico, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Ecuador.

My interest in cultural epidemiology continues with a project that I will submit to the *NMHR* on *los fríos* (the chills), a local nickname for the devastating and all-but-forgotten malaria epidemics in New Mexico between the 1880s and 1930s. My professor Sabine Ulibarrí actually assigned it to me many years ago, and I am most inspired by my daughter Yasmín, who is a nurse. My work on *la influencia* and *la viruela* (influenza and smallpox) culminated in a children's book, *Amadito y los niños héroes / Amadito and the Hero Children*, complete with an anthropological essay for parents on cultural epidemiology by my colleague Michael L. Trujillo. Of various prizes I have earned, I am most proud of the Pablita Velarde Award for children's history, given to *Amadito* in the year of our Statehood Centennial by the New Mexico Historical Society!