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Columbus, New Mexico, and Palomas, Chihuahua: Transnational Landscapes of Violence, 1888-1930

Brandon Morgan

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Brandon Morgan

Candidate

History

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Linda B. Hall, Chairperson

Samuel Truett

Judy Bieber

Maria Lane

**COLUMBUS, NEW MEXICO, AND PALOMAS
CHIHUAHUA: TRANSNATIONAL LANDSCAPES OF
VIOLENCE, 1888-1930**

BY

BRANDON MORGAN

B.A., History and Spanish, Weber State University, 2005

M.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2007

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

In memory of Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, chronicler of La Ascensión.

For Brent, Nathan, and Paige, who have spent their entire lives thus far with a father constantly working on a dissertation, and especially for Pauline, whose love and support has made the completion of this work possible.

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ABSTRACT

In examining the area surrounding Columbus, New Mexico, and Palomas, Chihuahua, as a landscape of violence, this dissertation historicizes the process by which violent actions create a sense of place. Although neither town is considered large enough to be of much consequence, both were targeted by bellicose campaigns that sought to destabilize the Mexican state during the Porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution. Raids on the Palomas customs house were, at least in part, responses to the drive of the Mexican government under Porfirio Díaz to create modern progress and order in Mexico. For many inhabitants of rural northwestern Chihuahua, the imposition of capitalist modes of land and resource ownership, delineation, and exchange deprived them of access to a livelihood. The dissertation, therefore, considers as violence the reallocation of resources under the modern capitalist notion of law and order. By employing a broad definition of violence, seemingly disparate actions, such as land surveys and insurgencies, are juxtaposed in order to highlight the connections between them.

The dissertation shows the various ways in which violence was at once a destructive as well as creative force along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border between 1888 and 1930. The violence of new legal and land regimes that left colonists and settlers of northwestern Chihuahua without access to land and resources was answered through the violence of armed movements that specifically targeted the towns of Las Palomas, La Ascensión, and Columbus—sites of intensified development efforts around the turn of the century. By drawing on geographers' and sociologists' theories of legal and spatial violence, this dissertation places these actions in their proper context as localized movements for social and economic justice, rather than haphazard precursors to the subsequent Mexican Revolution. In this context, Pancho Villa's Raid on Columbus is not simply an isolated incident that spilled over from the larger struggle of the Mexican Revolution. It is part of a dialectic of violence specific to the New Mexico-Chihuahua border region.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction: The Lower Mimbres Valley and Landscapes of Violence

“West of the Rio Grande, the border ignores nature. Except for one short jog at the Colorado River, a series of straight lines adhering to treaty, not topography, define the boundary. As a result, the terrain along these political extremities often refuses to cooperate. Water flows where we don’t want it; the land tilts unfavorably in one direction or another; and much of the frontier discourages access, even by the Border Patrol. The logic of the natural boundary as seen in the glories of the Big Bend gorges is absent. Like retribution for imposing distinctions where none should exist, the faint delineation between Old and New Mexico beyond Juárez and El Paso is one of the border’s more violent excesses.” –Alan Weisman, *La Frontera*, 103.

The small towns of Palomas¹, Chihuahua, and Columbus, New Mexico, are located in a remote, dry, and desolate stretch of the international boundary that both divides and connects the United States and Mexico. Reports of the Palomas mayor’s abduction and murder in 2009 and the arrest of three Columbus officials charged with arms trafficking to Mexico in 2011 remind us of the two villages’ continued existence.² Otherwise, the virtual ghost towns have been all but forgotten by people outside of the immediate region. Such contemporary events reflect major trends in the villages’ history. Even in the towns’ heyday, Palomas and Columbus were part of an area that gained

¹ The name of the town has been slightly altered several times during its existence. It has been known as “Las Palomas,” “Palomas,” “Puerto Palomas,” “Puerto Rodrigo Quevedo,” and “Puerto Palomas de Villa.” Throughout this work, I use “Palomas” unless the name changes play a role in the narrative.

² See, for example, Bill Conroy, “Raided Mexican Ranch Linked to U.S. Drug War Corruption” *Narcosphere* Blog, <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/bill-conroy/2011/06/raided-mexican-ranch-linked-us-drug-war-corruption>, accessed 7 July 2011; Rene Romo, “A Village in Turmoil: Columbus is Still Reeling from the Arrests of Three Officials as Financial Irregularities Come to Light,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 1 May 2011; Daniel Borrunda and Matt Robinson, “Palomas Mayor Abducted, Killed,” *El Paso Times*, 9 October 2009; and Michael Martinez, “On the Border: Guns, Drugs—and a Betrayal of Trust,” *CNN Online*, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/10/us/cartels-columbus-new-mexico/index.html>, accessed 19 December 2012.

international notoriety due to violent activities. The 1870s and 1880s were defined by military campaigns that targeted various Apache groups who had long inhabited the area. In 1893 and again in 1908 Mexican *revoltosos* (agitators) raided the customs house at Palomas. And, in 1916, Francisco “Pancho” Villa led his infamous attack on Columbus. Yet, when the villages had been founded in the late 1880s, their promoters dreamed that they would one day be the anchor of a major trade connection between the two republics. Railroads, ranching, mining, and business ventures dominated their imagined future for the region, not violent rebellion.

My dissertation examines this little-studied Chihuahua-New Mexico borderland in order to evaluate the history of its development and the reasons for its collision with Mexican revolutionary movements. Following Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill’s recent call for borderlands scholars to remember “the need to root their studies in place,” this project focuses on developments in Palomas and Columbus in order to add a close-grained, local perspective to the historiography of the U.S.-Mexico border. In other words, my study recognizes that “Borders may be international spaces, but border communities are also local spaces whose distinctiveness should be accounted for rather than obscured.”³ Recent historical studies by Rachel St. John and Samuel Truett, among others, have employed spatial analysis of the U.S.-Mexico desert border region to provide insights on the impact of capitalist development (especially in mining and ranching ventures) and the two nation-states’ claims of sovereignty along the line. Yet, neither of these works examines the section of the border between El Paso-Ciudad Juárez and

³ Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 23.

Douglas-Agua Prieta. This geographic gap in coverage is also present in the historical literature of the Mexican Revolution and geographers' studies of the area. This oversight is most likely due to Columbus' and Palomas' present-day miniscule size and economic insignificance. Yet, I argue that the seeming triviality of these towns that makes them worthy of study.

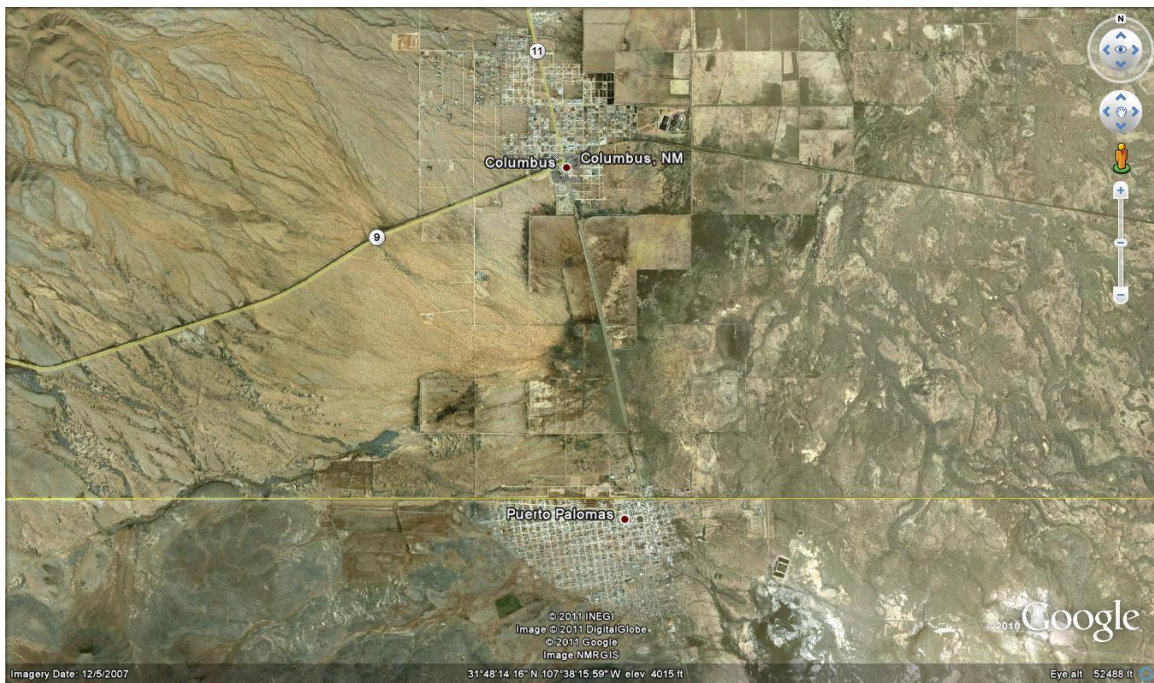


Figure 1.1: Google Earth map of Columbus and Palomas, created 14 July 2011

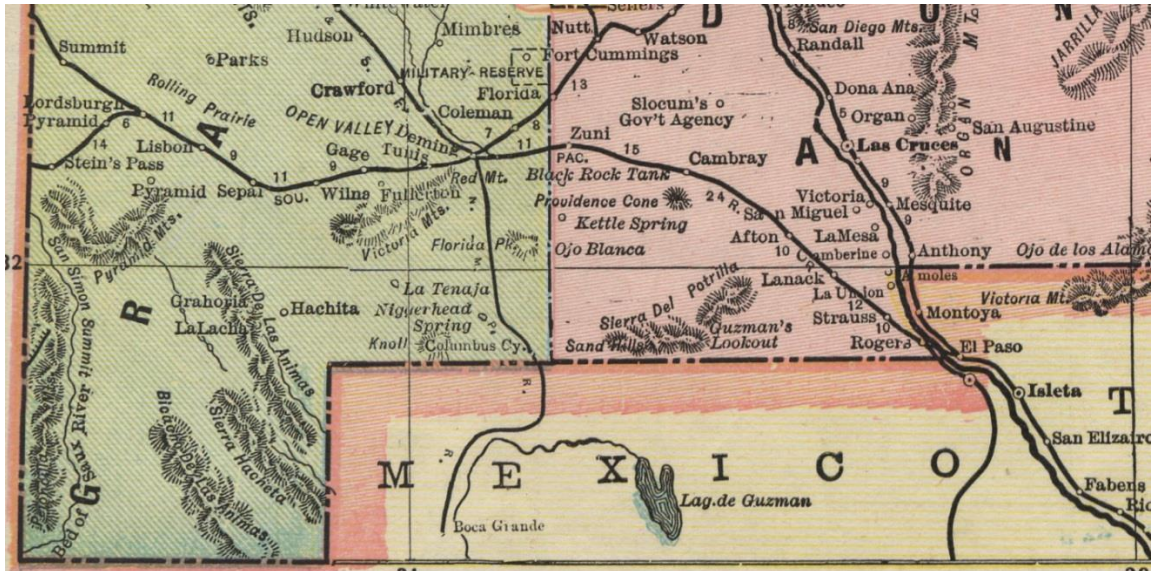


Figure 1.2: From Watson's 1892 New Mexico Atlas, Showing Columbus City and the proposed Deming, Sierra Madre & Pacific Railroad from Deming to Columbus and into Chihuahua

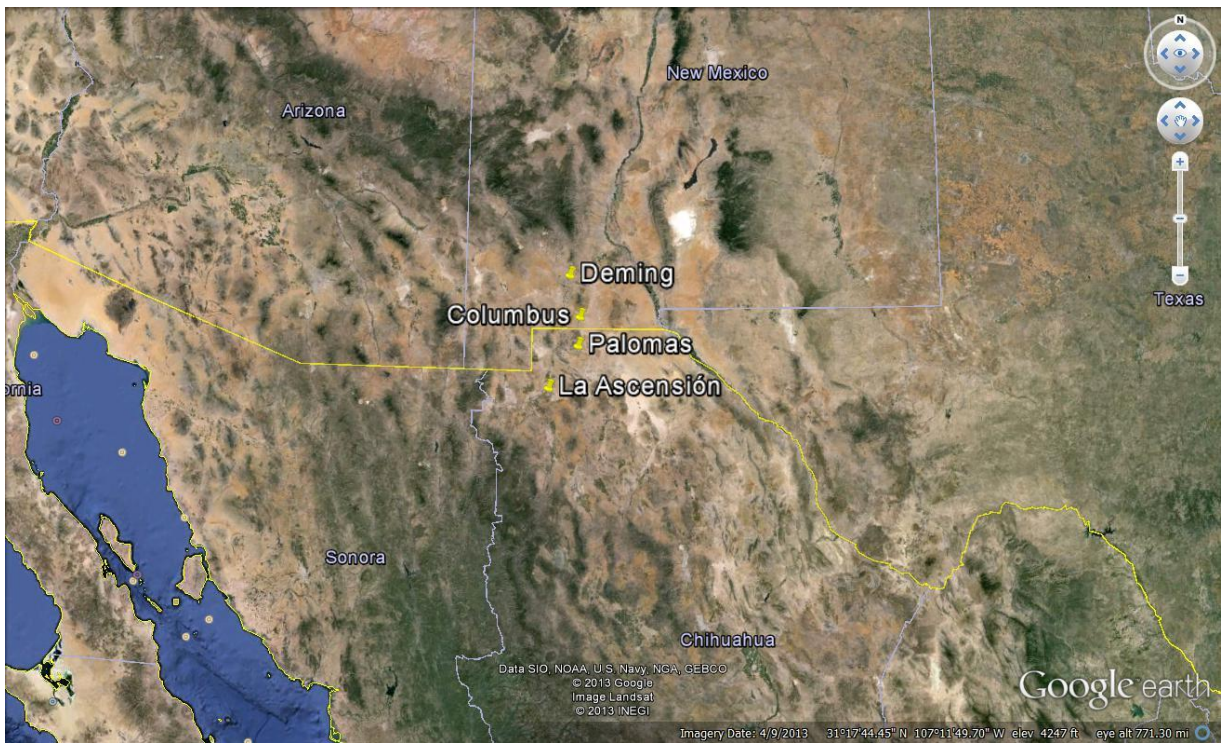


Figure 1.3: Google Earth map of modern Lower Mimbres Valley in the context of the larger U.S.-Mexico border region

My study addresses this geographic gap and furthers scholarly knowledge of locally specific histories along the U.S.-Mexico line. In doing so, I focus on two main questions: In what ways has violence been the defining historical force in the region immediately surrounding Columbus and Palomas? How did violence both promote and limit local development schemes and contribute to local definitions of nationality, ethnicity, and place? To address these issues, I use a broad definition of violence that encompasses not only acts of physical aggression but also the (re)definition of property regimes and spatial arrangements. I place the corridor between Deming, New Mexico, and La Ascensión, Chihuahua at the geographic center of my study. By exploring the long history of violence specific to this corridor, known as the Lower Mimbres Valley, bellicose events such as Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s raid on Columbus can no longer be viewed in isolation. Historically, the Lower Mimbres Valley has been a flashpoint for violent encounters between national governments, capitalist investors, and peasant populations. Once ignited, such conflicts often spread to the surrounding region. Additionally, as violence continued on the ground between state and insurgent forces, diplomats attempted to steer the meaning of the violence in directions that would be favorable to their specific interests and projects. The isolated, empty desert border represented a weak point in each nation’s armor.

To contextualize the history of Columbus and Palomas, my study examines the larger physiographic region known as the Lower Mimbres Valley. In terms of political geography, I study the municipal jurisdictions that include both villages: Luna County, New Mexico, and the Municipio de La Ascensión, Chihuahua. Physically, the region is defined by desert landscapes, dotted with yucca and cactus, broken by small mountain

ranges. The Mimbres River runs south from the Black Range in New Mexico. To the northeast of Deming, the river becomes an underground aquifer that flows beneath the valley between the Florida Mountains, eventually feeding the Palomas Lakes a few miles south of the border. Its water supply was (and is) vital to the survival of Columbus and Palomas, as well as the municipal seats, Deming and Ascensión. This landscape provides continuity across the arbitrarily drawn international boundary line, and the unbroken physical geography indicates the region's interconnected history. Yet, since the Treaty of La Mesilla (Gadsden Purchase) in 1853, this geography has been divided and politically defined by boundaries drawn at the international, national, and state levels. By the turn of the twentieth century, the border towns of Columbus and Palomas were defined by their proximity to the international line, as well as their relationship to the county/municipio seats of Deming and La Ascensión at the local level.

The Lower Mimbres Valley, as well as the municipal divisions of Luna County and the Municipio de La Ascensión, have historically been unified as a landscape of violence, even though (or, perhaps because) they are divided by an international border. As journalism professor Alan Weisman remarked, "West of the Rio Grande, the border ignores nature. . . . Like retribution for imposing distinctions where none should exist, the faint delineation between Old and New Mexico beyond Juárez and El Paso is one of the border's more violent excesses."⁴ His comments emphasize the violence implied by the imposition of an international boundary on an otherwise unbroken landscape. Although

⁴ Alan Weisman, with photographs by Jay Dusard, *La Frontera: The United States Border with Mexico* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 103.

he did not specifically engage the literature on the relationship between spatializations⁵ and violence, cultural and legal geographers have focused much attention on this issue. Additionally, scholars of borderlands and Mexican Revolutionary history recognize that violence has been one of the major forces that have shaped the history of the entire border region that both unites and divides the United States and Mexico. It is also crucial to note that connections, violent or otherwise, between people within the area that I've designated as the Lower Mimbres Valley were often more nodal than regional. The towns of Palomas and Deming, for example, were closely tied together in the late 1880s through local entrepreneurs' efforts to support Luis Huller's development and colonization projects. The town of La Ascensión, also a part of the Lower Mimbres Valley, was not directly connected to such efforts. The social, economic, and violent trends that were present in the Lower Mimbres Valley during the period of this study did not equally impact all of the people of the region. Instead, the people of the region forged nodes of connection within and across certain parts of the region based on the contingencies of the moment.

Certainly, in the case of the inhabitants of the Lower Mimbres Valley, violent actions brought the area to the attention of people outside of the region for a few fleeting moments in time. Yet, the entire history of the Lower Mimbres Valley between the 1870s and the 1940s is best characterized as the continuation of an ongoing struggle between different forms of violence: a dialectic of violence. Such violence began with the

⁵ Geographer Nicolas Blomley makes an important distinction between the notion of "spaces in the abstract" and "spatializations." The latter emphasizes that categories describing geographic spaces (such as *frontier*, *survey*, or *grid*, among others) are "always and ever recursively related to social relations." See, Blomley, "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 1 (March 2003): 123.

binational campaigns to dispossess Apaches of their lands, and then was replaced by the settlement of the villages and towns in the area. The violence of the imposition of new property regimes in the form of the fledgling townships and the gargantuan land concession made to the Palomas Land and Cattle Company was contested by explosive rebellions from the 1890s to the 1910s, culminating in Pancho Villa's Raid on Columbus in 1916. From this perspective, the Villa Raid is not simply an isolated incident that spilled over from the larger struggle of the Mexican Revolution. It is part of a history of violence specific to the Lower Mimbres Valley. The strain of violence that began with the forced removal of the Apaches was resolved, at least in part, when the Mexican state completed the redistribution of lands along border in the early 1940s, establishing the *ejidos* of Puerto Palomas, Vado de Fusiles, and Colonia Díaz in the Municipio de Ascensión. My project emphasizes that this region is worthy of study, not merely because it has been passed over in the literature, but also because its history illustrates the ways in which violences have simultaneously advanced and hindered the development of sovereign claims and development schemes at both nation-state and local levels. Further, violence is often inscribed onto local landscapes.

My study specifically examines violent landscapes in a borderland. In analyzing the historical developments and transformations that took place within the Lower Mimbres Valley, I draw a distinction between the concepts of frontiers and borderlands. I do so in an attempt to highlight changes over time, as well as to give the concepts more precise analytical rigor. Historian Stephen Aron recently suggested that perhaps the term

borderland has been used so widely that it will soon be derided as the “b-word.”⁶ Yet, with precise definitions I believe the terms still maintain their usefulness. I follow scholars such as David J. Weber, Jane M. Rausch, and Andrés Reséndez in viewing frontiers as spaces “where cultures meet,” and where different groups of people come to terms with one another.⁷ Frontiers predate the development of modern nation states; they are spaces of conflict, accommodation, and competition between distinct groups that are themselves bounded by language, history, and/or ethnicity. Unlike borderlands, frontiers do not include precisely defined boundaries between nation-states. Instead, as Peter Sahlins has suggested, frontiers are bounded through non-territorial markers—jurisdictional rather than territorial sovereignty.⁸ The former indicates local, de facto control of a region despite a lack of demarcation whereas the latter suggests official delineation of the landscapes controlled by a particular entity.

Borderlands, on the other hand, continue to be spaces of contention, accommodation, and conflict, but such interactions are complicated by attempts of two or more nation-states to establish clear territorial sovereignty over their respective sides of a territorially delineated border. Scholars of the Mexican North, including Friedrich Katz, Ana María Alonso, and Juan Mora-Torres view a progression along the U.S.-Mexico boundary from a frontier to a border region, but in the Lower Mimbres Valley historical

⁶ Stephen Aron, “Frontiers, Borderlands, Wests” in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., *American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 261-284. Cited in Brian DeLay, *North American Borderlands* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7, n. 7.

⁷ David J. Weber and Jane M. Rausch, eds, *Where Cultures Meet: Frontiers in Latin American History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994); Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 7, 28.

evidence indicates more continuities than such a transformation might suggest. And, as the work of Jane-Dale Lloyd also indicates for northwestern Chihuahua, the construction of capitalist economic structures transformed life along the U.S.-Mexico border at the close of the nineteenth century.⁹

Historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron recently put forth a provocative, yet contested model that addresses the issues at the heart of this discussion. They argue that the transition from frontier spaces to borderlands eventually ends when formerly contested spaces become “bordered lands.”¹⁰ This final phase suggests closure; that earlier conflicts and contestations between nation-states and peoples who share a common border finally resolved such issues. Although the idea of finding theoretical order and clarity is seductive, as many borderland scholars have pointed out, the model does not fit the evidence. Yet, Adelman and Aron are on to something. Lance Blyth’s recent volume, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880*, has greatly informed my understanding of the ways in which frontiers, borderlands, and violence all served to create and define space in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Blyth illustrates the ways in which violent interactions served as a form of communication and even community building between the Spanish presidial community of Janos, Chihuahua, and the Chiricahua peoples along what became the New

⁹ Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, The United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 7; Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico’s Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Juan Mora-Torres, *Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo León, 1848-1910* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); and Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Proceso de Modernización Capitalista en el Noroeste de Chihuahua (1880-1910)* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1987).

¹⁰ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814-841.

Mexico-Chihuahua border. Unwittingly, however, Blyth follows the frontier to border construction in his assertion that the creation of the international boundary marked the beginning of the end for the communities of violence at the center of his study. He concludes that with the international boundary came a type of closure for the Janos and Chiricahua communities; my study emphasizes the continuation of a dialectic of violence long after the border had been delineated.

The border did clearly redefine the terms of the dialectic of violence between Chiricahua and Janos, but it did not create ordered, bounded space and it certainly did not bring an end to violent interactions along the border. As historian Rachel St. John has vividly illustrated, the creation of the border between the United States and Mexico west of El Paso-Ciudad Juárez has been a drawn-out, contested, and incomplete process.¹¹ The line itself does not address questions of how the people who live along or near it will interact with one another. My study highlights the lack of finality that accompanied the creation of the border in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Rather than bringing an end to violence as a force that was at once destructive as well as constructive, the creation of the border simply reoriented the violence that had historically been at work in the region. Thus, there was a distinct transition from a frontier region to a border area, as suggested by Katz and others, but the formation of the border through the rise of capitalism brought new forms of violence, this time codified in law, land surveys, and capitalist land and

¹¹ Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

resource regimes—the markers of modernity and progress that were the pride and joy of Gilded Age America and Porfirian Mexico.¹²

For the purposes of analysis, I define violence as a force that illustrates and defines relative power relations. It encompasses the ability to obligate others “to do things they do not want to do” through the implied threat of force, incarceration, and/or physical harm.¹³ I examine both interpersonal and structural forms of violence. The structure of law established by both the American and Mexican nation-states in the late nineteenth century provided a framework through which individuals and groups, whether state agents, corporations, or private persons, worked to compel others to recognize that their customs and traditions were no longer valid. Violence, rather than coercion, is the most fitting concept in such cases because of the element of legitimacy gained through the possible infliction of damage implied in the dominant legal or land regimes. Such actions might not cause direct physical harm, but they do cause other problems, ranging from the inability to prosper economically to indirect physical and psychological injury caused as a result of the individual or group’s loss of access to resources. The structures of law, land surveys, railroad tracks, boundary markers, town plats, etc. inscribed

¹² Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, “Introduction: Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands,” in Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 17-18.

¹³ Quote from Richard Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 15. My thinking on violence is also influenced by Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns, eds., *Law’s Violence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Manuel Eisner, “The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3, no. 1, (2009): 40-59; Barbara H. Chasin, *Inequality and Violence in the United States: Casualties of Capitalism* (New York: Humanity Books, 2004); Kathleen A. Brown-Pérez, “From the Guest Editor: An Introduction to Stolen People, Stolen Land, Stolen Identity: Negotiating the Labyrinth of Anglo-American Culture and Law” *Landscapes of Violence* 2, no. 1, Article 1, Available at: <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/lov/vol2/iss1/1>; and Max Weber, trans. Guenther Roth, *Economy and Society, Vol. 1: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), especially p. 315.

violence on the Lower Mimbres Valley between 1888 and 1940. Physical violence in the form of armed movements, including those led by Santana Pérez (1893), Práxedes Guerrero (1908), and Pancho Villa (1916), signified efforts to contest and unseat the structural violences that were enacted in the same period.

As the above description suggests, all violence is not equal and various types of violence comprise a continuum. At one end of the scale are actions of physical violence, events in which a person or persons inflict bodily harm on another person or persons. The protracted wars against Apache peoples and the armed movements against Palomas and Columbus provide examples of this type of violence. At the other end of the spectrum are situations in which violence is a central, though implicit, component of a political, social, economic, or spatial regime. The reallocation of access to resources, such as grazing land and water, due to platting the towns of Columbus and Palomas is an example of this type of violence. Private property is protected and enforced through the implication that violations of property rights will be answered through incarceration or physical attacks. Between these extremes are various means of combining the two. Also, intent serves to mitigate or aggravate instances of violence, as does the extent of the violence. Genocidal campaigns are clearly not the equal of resource dispossession. Yet, both types of actions are supported through actual or implicit violence.

My conceptualization of violence is informed by the work of geographers and legal scholars that have connected the notion to the legitimation of property and land regimes. As geographers Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts have argued, the notion of violence is most powerful as an analytical tool when it is conceptualized as a “sort of habitus.” They cite the work of Jean-Paul Dumont to elaborate: “Violence is a habitus. . .

. , at once structured and structuring: structured because the idea of violence results from historical events, stored as the memory of past deeds, of past encounters, of past frustrations; and structuring because the idea of violence informs human actions, determines the acceptability, even the banality of violence, if not the ability to erase the scandal of its occurrence.”¹⁴ Viewed in this way, violence is ever present in human relationships, as well as human interactions with specific landscapes, even though it is not often acknowledged except in cases of explicit physical harm or damage. Legal systems have codified the role of violence in day-to-day life to the extent that its structural manifestations become difficult to see (both by researchers, as well as historical actors). As geographer Nicholas Blomley has pointed out, “despite the routine association between law and violence within Western political theory, it still sticks in the throat.” He argues that the reason for this ambivalence is that “violence and law appear antithetical. Liberalism tends to locate violence *outside* law.”¹⁵ Yet, the reality of the matter is that without violence or the threat of violence the power of law to bring order to society is negated.

Political, cultural, and legal geographers have used this conceptualization to illustrate the ways in which violence is manifested through certain spatializations that are contingent on local and/or regional histories and social structures. Peluso and Watts’ work responds to a body of literature that has focused on the violence of international-

¹⁴ Jean-Paul Dumont, “Ideas on Philippine Violence: Assertions, Negations, and Narrations,” in C. Nordstrom and J. Martin, eds., *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, 277; quoted in Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, eds., *Violent Environments* (Ithaca, N. York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6.

¹⁵ Blomley, “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence,” 121; for an extended discussion on the reasons for the “aura of strangeness” surrounding common perceptions and understandings of modern violence, see John Keane, *Reflections on Violence* (New York: Verso, 1996).

level conflicts over resources and modern state-sponsored conservation projects.¹⁶ As a corrective, they view violence in a more specific way: “We see violence as a site-specific phenomenon rooted in local histories and social relations, yet connected to larger processes of material transformation and power relations.” Thus, violence must be understood within the social and historical context of specific places in order to reveal true insights about its impact. In his own research, Watts illustrates that what he has dubbed an “oil insurgency” in the Niger Delta is the result of a specific, localized history of marginalization produced by neoliberal policies toward the extraction and control of oil resources. Peluso’s work illustrates the counterinsurgency efforts that have been at work in the political forests on the fringes of Southeast Asian nation-states since the 1960s. Although Peluso’s work has illustrated the rise of strong states that have violently quashed forest insurgencies, Watts’ case shows that when similar resource disputes transpire in a distinct locale they have produced the opposite result: the creation of “parcellized sovereignty, rather than a robust, modern oil nation.”¹⁷ And, in approaching the problem from an abstract-theoretical perspective, Blomley has demonstrated how the spatializations of the frontier, grid, and survey have masked the violence of land dispossession in Western political thought. By (re)casting certain spaces as frontiers and grids, colonial property regimes have turned acts of land and resource appropriation into

¹⁶ See, for example, Thomas Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from the Cases” *International Security* 19 (1994): 5-40; Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Dabelko Simmons, “Environment and Security” *SAIS Review* (winter 1997): 127-146.

¹⁷ Nancy Lee Peluso and Peter Vandergeest, “Political Ecologies of War and Forests: Counterinsurgencies and the Making of National Natures” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101, no. 3 (2011): 587-608; and Michael Watts, “Blood Oil: The Anatomy of a Petro-Insurgency in the Niger Delta” *Focaal—European Journal of Anthropology* 52 (2008): 18-38 (quote, p. 18).

heroic (rather than violent) actions.¹⁸ Geographer David Correia recently has built upon Blomley's ideas to explain that the category of property law itself cannot explain long-term events such as the Hispano New Mexicans' land loss in the nineteenth and twentieth century. As he indicates, "law and property are not independent objects that operate on society and cause land loss." Instead, they are sites of contestation that, through the application of violence and dispossession, can create land loss.¹⁹ The surveys, grids, and boundary markers themselves are not violent, but they become sites of violence when they are utilized to deny certain groups of people access to resources or rights.

The growing literature on the ways in which sites of violent events have been memorialized and commemorated has also informed my thinking on violence as an analytical category. Geographer Kenneth E. Foote's work focuses on the question of why some sites of American violence and tragedy are preserved (for example, Civil War battle sites) while others are allowed to waste away (there is no monument to the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts). Central to his argument is the idea that commemoration sites (or the lack thereof) are geographical texts that "offer insights into how society deals with violence and adversity, how people create, sustain, and break emotional attachments to place and landscape, and how Americans view and interpret the past."²⁰ Karen E. Till's research focuses on the ways that the people of Berlin have worked to define their own history by redesigning and revitalizing local cityscapes. In the case of Berlin, the troubling violence of the Nazi regime and Cold War partitioning of the city have been

¹⁸ Blomley, "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence," 123-129.

¹⁹ David Correia, *Properties of Violence: Law and Land Grant Struggle in Northern New Mexico* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 7.

²⁰ Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, revised ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 7.

masked by new architecture that symbolizes reunification and a cosmopolitan future.²¹ Chris Post's study of the ways in which the violent history has been rejected in Lawrence, Kansas, follows a similar trajectory. In the case of Lawrence, however, memorialization has taken place in the form of small historical markers sprinkled throughout the city. The commonplace nature and small size of the markers, as well as a local focus on the city's pioneer founding, show that Lawrence has worked hard to overshadow its violent, Civil War-era history with heroic images of its place in America's westward expansion.²²

Taken together, these conceptualizations of violence inform my study of the Lower Mimbres Valley in two important ways. First, this literature clearly illustrates connections between space, landscapes, and violence. The above approaches to violent landscapes, however, are rooted in contemporary events (although they do consider how history impacts current perceptions of violence and place). My study historicizes the creation of landscapes of violence by showing how violent actions not only impact collective memories decades after the fact, but how violence alters and shapes local landscapes as it occurs. Distinct manifestations of violence define the history of the Lower Mimbres valley, from efforts to remove Apache people from their homeland, to the redefinition of the landscape in the form of new towns and counties, to the raids on Palomas and Columbus led by revolutionaries. Second, my dissertation illustrates the ways in which violence was both productive and destructive, depending on social relations and perspectives. From the point of view of the two nation-states, the Apache

²¹ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 31-32.

²² Chris Post, "Rejecting Violence on the Landscape in Lawrence, Kansas" *Geographical Review* 99, no. 2 (April 2009): 186-207.

campaigns were not a form of aggression; they were cast as noble actions because they were framed as a struggle between savagery and civilization. Apache people stood in the way of modernity, progress, and state sovereignty. From the Apache perspective, the story is one of violent dispossession and loss of autonomy and rights. Settlers and boosters that moved into the region between the 1880s and 1910s believed that they were rightfully establishing modern modes of land tenure and capitalist development along the international border. In Chihuahua, the result of the Apache campaigns was to redefine the relationship of frontier colonists to the Mexican state. Development schemes on both sides of the line inflicted dispossession and violence on the peoples that had inhabited the region. Placed in historical context, then, this place that had appeared marginal, and even empty, to capitalists and policymakers has long been a landscape of violence precisely because of projects to solidify national boundaries and exploit the region's resources. Although the Villa raid was, in some ways, an anomalous act of transnational violence precipitated because of the course of the Mexican Revolution, it was no accident that the Lower Mimbres Valley was the site of the raid. The Raid was part of a deeper history of spatial and physical violence.

Although its central theoretical focus is on landscapes of violence, my project's conceptual framework also enters scholarly conversations in the fields of Mexican revolutionary and borderlands history, along with the field of cultural geography. Specifically, my dissertation contributes to debates over the processes of establishing and defining borders. In so doing, my study engages with Raymond B. Craib and Samuel Truett's conception of *fugitive landscapes*, and Rob Shields, Christian Brannstrom, and Matthew Neuman's *place myth* paradigm. Although the term *border* is used widely by

scholars, historian Rachel St. John's definition is particularly apt for explaining the different scales in which borderlanders operated. As St. John put it in her dissertation, "On the U.S.-Mexico boundary line, the interconnection of local, national, and international histories was reflected in the production of border spaces." The border is not just the line dividing the nations in this interpretation; it includes the areas that are defined by that line. Therefore, people in various places have a stake in creating the border. Following the lead of Peter Sahlins, St. John describes border spaces as comprising two scales: "the state level where political figures signed treaties, determined boundaries, negotiated with foreign nations, and established national policy and the local level where individuals and daily experience both conformed to those decisions and tested their practicality."²³ By viewing the drawing of the international boundary as an act of legal violence, this study highlights the ways in which local people used the border as either a separating line or a point of connection based on the contingencies of their day-to-day lives. When railroad projects promised to bring new development and economic prosperity to the region, locals conceptualized the border as a unifying force. When violent revolts devastated Palomas, residents of Columbus called on the U.S. military to help establish the border as a line of division.

Samuel Truett's model for the study of transnational history and the definition of border regions as fugitive landscapes (a term borrowed from Raymond B. Craib) also informs my analysis. In Craib's study of mapping and land surveying in late-nineteenth-century Veracruz, fugitive landscapes are those terrains that escape delineation and

²³ Rachel C. St. John, "Line in the Sand: The Desert Border between the United States and Mexico, 1848-1934," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005), 4-5; and Sahlins, *Boundaries*, xv.

control by the nation-state due to the contesting claims of communities, municipalities, and states. Indeed, he argues, as Mexican officials sought to define boundaries in late-nineteenth-century Veracruz, “[the land] must have seemed almost fugitive, as if it were an accomplice undermining their efforts.”²⁴ In Truett’s examination of the “copper borderlands” of Arizona and Sonora, landscapes became fugitive due to the ability of local people, and the physical geography itself, to resist nation-state or entrepreneurial projects. He argues, “the best laid plans of states, entrepreneurs, and corporations repeatedly ran aground in fugitive landscapes of subaltern power.”²⁵ Projects at local and nation-state levels often conflicted with one another and prevented any single proposal from being implemented as it was originally designed. Additionally, as the cases of Columbus and Palomas emphasize, local attempts to redefine Luna County as an agricultural paradise based on irrigation and available property collided with discontent and violent rebellion on the other side of the international boundary and served to undermine such operations as well. Thus the fugitive nature of the Lower Mimbres Valley’s landscape was heightened by its legacy of physical and legal violence.

The final contribution to my conceptual framework is the paradigm of the *place myth* as described by geographers Rob Shields, Christian Brannstrom, and Matthew Neuman. In his study of states and peripheries, geographer Rob Shields defines place myths as “stable sets of place images.” Place images are the “various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality.” Such

²⁴ Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 57.

²⁵ Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes*, 9.

images are often the result of “stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups or places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants.” Geographers Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman build on Shields’ work in their recent article “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941.” They argue, “place myths are especially likely to appear when the place is distant from centers of political and economic power, direct experience by travelers and writers with the place is brief, negative stereotypes pervade public perception of the place, and elites provide the strong potential for accumulation in terms of resource valuation. Although distance and brevity of experience make place myths possible, the negative stereotypes and the imperative for accumulation make place myths necessary.”²⁶ Turn-of-the-century Columbus and Palomas met these criteria, and their respective developers attempted to remake their local place myths in order to stimulate migration to their burgeoning townsites. The dialectic of violence at work in the Lower Mimbres Valley, however, caused such attempts to break down. Due to the violence in and around Columbus, no stable sets of place images emerged to define the town and the place myth did not come to fruition. The case of the Lower Mimbres Valley, therefore, illustrates the limitations of the place myth as an analytical model.

In drawing on the concepts of place myths, fugitive landscapes, and landscapes of violence with a critical eye, this dissertation historicizes the violence of capitalist and national development in the transnational Lower Mimbres Valley. The initial concession granted to the German-Mexican capitalist Luis Huller required the Palomas tract (a parcel

²⁶ Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 60-61; Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941” *The Geographical Review* 91, no. 2 (April 2009): 125.

of approximately two million acres adjacent to the New Mexico-Chihuahua border) to be settled by repatriates and Mexican nationals, in hopes of creating a space along the northern border of Mexico that was inhabited by people who were ethnically Mexican yet committed to the land development schemes of Huller's International Company. Similarly, in Columbus, economic and political elites attempted to redefine the town as an attractive place for white, U.S. family farmers and entrepreneurs to build their lives. Boosters of both towns published newspapers that were circulated in the borderlands and throughout their respective nations with the goal of attracting settlers to the area who would help them achieve economic prosperity and solidify local residents' identities as citizens of a particular nation-state. This type of place-myth construction was typical throughout the U.S.-Mexico border region and the American West in the early twentieth century. But, in the Lower Mimbres Valley violent resistance to the new property regimes that were established by capitalist expansion in northern Chihuahua in the 1890s caused such myths to be ephemeral. And raids on Palomas and Columbus in 1908 and 1916, respectively, illustrate the ways in which the Mexican Revolution itself forced dreams of local development along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border into the background.

My study draws on sources from both the United States and Mexico, at the international, national, and local scale. This transnational approach to the archives is indispensable for two main reasons. First, employing historical materials from both sides of the border allows me to reconstruct the history of the Lower Mimbres Valley despite the destruction of much of the local archival material in the Municipio de Ascención during the violence of the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s. Extensive records of the

political and corporate dealings in Luna County are held at the Deming Archive, the Luna County Courthouse, and the personal collection of Richard Dean, president of the Columbus Historical Society and grandson of James T. Dean, one of the casualties of Villa's Raid. Additionally, holdings at the New Mexico State Record Center and Archives in Santa Fe, Rio Grande Historical Collections in Las Cruces, and the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque also provide information about the transnational nature of development projects and resistance around the turn of the twentieth century. These archives, as well as extant copies of local newspapers including the *Deming Headlight*, *Columbus Courier*, and the *Eco de Las Palomas*, provide clues about activities on both sides of the international border—especially regarding commerce and armed insurrections. The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura (ICHICULT), the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), and the Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE) all provided access to the documents relative to capitalist developments and municipal-level political relations. And, the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in Salt Lake City, Utah, add depth to my study. They hold records of the Mormon colonies established in the Municipio de La Ascensión in the mid-1880s. Taken together, these archival sources bridge the gaps caused by the destruction of the municipal archives of Palomas and La Ascensión during the Mexican Revolution.

Second, the use of various sources from both the United States and Mexico allows me to flesh out the history of the Lower Mimbres Valley. Rather than partitioning the region arbitrarily at the border, my transnational approach provides a clear picture of the ways in which people in the region traversed the boundary and also used it at times as a

blockade. Quite often, the border's local significance was the most important clue to understanding which form the line itself might take. In November 1893, to cite one example among many, "*revoltosos*" who attacked the customs house at Palomas found temporary sanctuary in the Florida Mountains and the region north of Deming. Their presence, added to the violent raid on the customs house, caused Mexican consular agents and local community leaders in Deming and Columbus to petition for a U.S. military presence along the border. Troops dispatched from Fort Bayard, New Mexico, near Silver City, held the line through early months of 1894. Most of the insurrectionists managed to reenter Chihuahua prior to the fortification of the line, but the episode illustrated that local concerns and events along the U.S.-Mexico border, even in a place that was considered empty and liminal, had the power to influence regional and national responses. Through a transnational analysis of relations between Palomas and Columbus (as well as their municipal seats), a different, unifying landscape—the Lower Mimbres Valley—comes into focus.

Also at issue in terms of access to archival sources for this project is the current state of *narco* violence throughout northwestern Chihuahua. When I discussed the sources I hoped to access in Chihuahua with Carmen Muñoz Herrera, an archivist at ICHICULT, I mentioned that I would like to try to access the municipal archive in La Ascensión, Chihuahua. She informed me that the area was one of the places to avoid in the state due to the acute threat of violence there. She put me in contact with the *cronista* of La Ascensión, Ramón Ramírez Tafoya. It was he who initially informed me that most of the records held at the municipal archive were destroyed during the Mexican Revolution, but that a few documents remain. These are primarily composed of

correspondence between the local *presidencia municipal* and officials in Ciudad Chihuahua for the years 1890-1940. Similar correspondence has also been preserved in the archivo municipal of Ciudad Juárez (of which there is a microfilmed copy at UTEP). Ramírez graciously shared archival materials, as well as his own books on the history of the municipio and his unpublished works on the history of Palomas. The latter are accessible on ICHICULT's blog, "Archivos Históricos en Chihuahua."²⁷ Tragically, Professor Ramírez himself was a recent victim of violence in his own home in La Ascensión. On 28 October 2012 he was murdered during the course of a robbery (apparently not connected to narco violence). His aid to my project was immeasurable; I hope that this work will in some way honor his memory.

I develop the historical narrative of the Lower Mimbres Valley in five chapters and an epilogue that illustrate its status as a landscape of violence. The story begins in Chapter 2 with an analysis of the Warm Springs Chiricahua Apaches' connection to their homeland, of which the Lower Mimbres Valley was a vital part. Their deep ties to this landscape began centuries prior to the rise of capitalist development and the settlement of towns like Columbus and Palomas in the late 1800s. The Ojo Caliente, Black Range, Florida, Guadalupe, and Blue Mountains, as well as the Palomas Lakes and the Mimbres River all held spiritual and cultural significance for the Chiricahua people. Over the course of about four centuries, from the 1400s to the late 1800s, they translated the region's landscapes into a homeland through a dialectic of violence between themselves and their neighbors. As their story shows, violence was both a destructive and a

²⁷ <http://archivoshistoricoschihuahua.wordpress.com/>; Professor Ramírez was a regular contributor. Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión* (Chihuahua, Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2009) and *Ascensión antes y después de la revolución* (Chihuahua, Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2011).

constructive force. Following the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, pressure from Mexican and American settlers, capitalists, and military officials mounted. These groups considered Apache patterns of economy and land tenure, including communal relations to the land and raiding as a form of economic gain, to be “primitive” and “uncivilized.” Both nations engaged the Apaches in a grueling campaign designed to concentrate them on reservations north of the border. The violence of the resultant Apache Wars ended in the death of key headmen, such as Mangas Coloradas and Victorio, and the removal of the Chiricahua people from their home terrain.

Representatives of the two nation-states and local settlers alike, however, misunderstood the significance of the campaigns against the Apaches. Chapter 3 advances the argument that Chiricahua removal only set the stage for continued, although transformed, violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley—exactly the opposite of its intended outcome. In that specific section of the former Chiricahua homeland, the long established dialectic that pitted different forms of violence against one another took a new shape; it did not disappear. This time capitalist development and colonization schemes, subsidized by the Mexican government, initiated the cycle. Following the defeat of the Apaches, the population of the small towns of northwestern Chihuahua found that their relationship to the Mexican state had been redefined. No longer were they the warriors on the frontier of civilization, battling an indigenous menace. They were instead cast as backward and primitive in terms of their own lifestyles and resource practices. At the same time, in an attempt to hold the northern border against perceived threats from Apaches and Americans, the Porfirian government welcomed investment and colonization. The preferred colonists were to be repatriated Mexicans from the Southwestern United States,

although many foreigners also established colonies in Mexico in the late nineteenth century. In northwestern Chihuahua, the towns of La Ascensión, Colonia Díaz, and Palomas were founded in this context. Mormon colonists at Colonia Díaz supported a proposed railroad that promised to connect Deming to Palomas and beyond into Mexico. Although the project ultimately failed, attempts to build the road illustrate the violent reallocation of land and resources in the region at the expense of both smallholders and landless *medieros* and peasants.

In retaliation for policies of the Mexican government that held up outsiders and newcomers as harbingers of modernity and civilization while denigrating those who had given their lives and forged their communities as Apache fighters, regional insurgents led an audacious raid on the Palomas Customs House in November 1893. Chapter 4 explores the Porfirian government's attempts to silence the message of the violence committed against the customs house. The coordinated attempts of Mexican consuls, ambassadors, governors, and municipal leaders to delegitimize the political and revolutionary nature of the attack exhibit a distinct, contesting form of violence. This episode is one of the clearest illustrations of the dialectic of violence at work; competing violences clashed due to events that unfolded in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Following the raid, the revolutionaries fled into southern New Mexico where they hid and staged the next phases of their movement against the Mexican regime. They also issued proclamations which clearly stated their intent to end the injustices of Porfirio Díaz's rule. Border consuls and the Mexican Ambassador in Washington, D.C., initiated a thorough campaign to silence the American press in the border towns closest to the violence, Deming and El Paso. By the spring of 1894, both sides had dealt devastating blows to the other on the battlefield

in northwestern Chihuahua. Santana Pérez and revolutionary holdouts took the Chihuahua governor's offer of amnesty in May, their resolve broken by the intense violence that Mexican officials enacted against them through military and political means. In the aftermath, however, development of railroads, mines, ranches, and town building all but halted in Las Palomas and Columbus—small towns that seemed to hold great promise for growth only a few years earlier.

During the second half of the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, renewed investment and interest in the Lower Mimbres Valley promised once and for all to halt the cycles of violence. Chapter 5 analyzes what I call the “second founding” of Columbus, which took place in 1907 when the town was relocated three miles to the north in order to be directly on the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad. Although local entrepreneurs and boosters of the Columbus and Western New Mexico Townsite Company attempted to redraw their community's place myth in the process, their efforts were tempered by Mexican revolutionary violence. The company's most concentrated period of activity was bookended by two separate revolutionary movements. In 1908, Práxedes Guerrero led a group connected to the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) in a raid on Palomas. Once again, Palomas was targeted because it stood as a lonely way station that represented the most vulnerable point of the Porfirian regime. In striking Palomas, revolutionaries directed attention to the excesses of the regime without risking a full-frontal attack on its strongholds. The July 1908 attack, however, ended in a rout of Guerrero and his forces. A little over two years later, the Mexican Revolution began in full force. Cavalry units became a regular element of the Columbus community from 1911 through the end of the decade. As agents of the Townsite Company sought to

present Columbus as a quintessentially American town, welcoming of modern conveniences and white family farmers, the violence of the Revolution just to the south was always in the background. In 1912, Palomas and the Mormon colonies were sites of violence; when Mormon refugees fled their homes that summer, many of them ended up in Columbus, Deming, and the small nearby town of Hachita. All the while, the Townsite Company circulated tracts and copies of the town newspaper, the *Columbus Courier*, to attract settlers and businesses to the area. Then, on 9 March 1916, Francisco “Pancho” Villa led 400 soldiers into Columbus to execute his infamous raid.

In all, eighteen Americans were killed during the raid: eight soldiers and ten civilians. Despite attempts to develop and modernize the Lower Mimbres Valley, it had once again been engulfed in violence. Chapter 6 describes the raid itself, as well as the continued attempts of local boosters to salvage their place myth for Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley. During the Punitive Expedition headed by General John J. Pershing from March 1916 to February 1917, Columbus boomed. Its population was at its largest, thanks to the influx of soldiers and National Guardsmen, as well as businesses to support the effort. Newspapermen and Townsite Company agents basked in this unintended consequence of Villa’s actions. They pointed to the military presence as a sign that settlers and enterprises were safe in Columbus. Even following the Punitive Expedition, the U.S. Military maintained Camp Furlong until it was handed over to the Customs Bureau in 1923.

Once again, a dialectic of violence was at work under the surface. The violence and destruction of Villa’s raid created an opportunity for business to grow in town. Yet, as it did, new tensions and conflicts arose. In 1917, Columbus was used as a point of

exile for undesirable groups of people. Those deported from Bisbee as a result of Sheriff Harry C. Wheeler's efforts to disband the Cochise County I.W.W. movement became refugees in Columbus. And, the 24th Colored Infantry was banished to Columbus following its soldiers' role in the deadly Houston Race Riots of the same year. In addition to heightened racial tensions created by the presence of so many refugees, the large number of young servicemen created a demand for vice, in the form of prostitution, gambling, and alcohol. Following the Prohibition amendment, Las Palomas provided for such vices as many locals traveled across the border to enjoy a drink, a cock fight, or illicit sexual encounters. The Columbus Mayor and the Mexican Consular Agent stationed at Columbus during the period managed to address conflicts and mostly kept the peace between various elements of the burgeoning community. But, the decision of U.S. Military officials to abandon Camp Furlong in 1923 caused the Lower Mimbres Valley to revert to a virtually empty space within the space of a few short years.

The Epilogue addresses brief moments of resurgence and resolution since that time for people on both sides of the border in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Following the violent phase of the Mexican Revolution, the Municipio de La Ascensión was the site of land reform efforts initiated by Alvaro Obregón's government. During the early 1920s, the ejidos of Las Palomas, Vado de Fusiles, and Colonia Díaz were carved out of lands that had been tied to the Palomas tract. The land expropriation created tension with the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, the California-based conglomerate that had inherited the territory initially granted to Luis Huller in 1887 and 1888. After a series of legal battles at the regional and international levels, by the 1940s the ejidos' existence was guaranteed; in the process, however, Mexican employees of Palomas Land and Cattle

Company who supported land redistribution faced harassment and loss of employment. The area remained quiet and sparsely populated through the early 1960s when Luna County politicians spearheaded the creation of Pancho Villa State Park at the former site of Camp Furlong. Dignitaries and officials from both New Mexico and Chihuahua, including both states' governors, gathered at the dedication of the park and christened it a symbol of healing and cooperation between the two states. Yet, many residents of Columbus—especially those whose families had been directly impacted by Villa's raid—protested the park because it seemed to glorify the man who had violently destroyed the town in 1916. The State Park, the addition of “de Villa” to the official name of Las Palomas (it has been called Puerto Palomas de Villa since the early 1990s), and legacies of land reform stand as constant reminders that many forms of violence have long characterized the Lower Mimbres Valley.

Chapter 2: Remaking Indigenous Space: Chiricahua Apache Land Dispossession in the New Mexico-Chihuahua Borderlands

“Victorio was badgered, ‘removed,’ bullied, stolen from, shifted about, lied to and betrayed, separated from his family, starved, threatened, cajoled, made the object of bureaucratic insensitivity at its most obdurate until, frightened by suspicions he found no honest man to quiet, he fled to his mountains and began the dazzling campaign that was to end, a year later, at blood-soaked Tres Castillos.” –**Dan Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches***¹

The Lower Mimbres Valley and the corridor between the Palomas Lakes and the Sierra Madres comprised a portion of the Chiricahua Apache homeland through the end of the nineteenth century. Although scholars continue to dispute the exact date of arrival of the Athapaskan-speaking ancestors of the region’s Apache bands, by the 1540s (also the era of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado’s Spanish entrada into New Mexico) the Athapaskans had already identified the area that would become the Chihuahua-New Mexico border region as their terrain. According to Chiricahua tradition, Ussen, the creator, led the people from a site somewhere in present-day southern Canada to a chosen landscape that held sacred power for the benefit of each local band. Warm Springs, called Ojo Caliente by the Spanish, was the site where various groups of Athapaskan speakers “truly became Chiricahua.” At Warm Springs, Ussen acted through White Painted Woman and Child of the Water (two other key Chiricahua deities) to hand down key lessons about creation and life. As they grew to adulthood, each Apache boy and girl learned the sacred rites, rituals, and stories that had been transmitted to their ancestors at

¹ Dan L. Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), ix.

Warm Springs; the values rooted in that place set them apart as a people and gave them their identity. As historian Kathleen P. Chamberlain has argued, it was “where they became Apaches.” Chiricahua claims on their homelands were rooted not only in Ussen’s blessing, they were forged through cycles of violence that pitted Apache peoples against sedentary Native peoples as well as Spanish, Mexican, and then American settlers.²

In this chapter, I describe the long-term historical context of Chiricahua connections to this landscape. Their claims to the land were forged throughout centuries of physical violence. At times, such violence served to create economic and social bonds between Chiricahua people and their neighbors; on other occasions, violence was destructive. In the 1880s, their connection to the land was violently wrested from them through binational efforts to confine *indios bárbaros* to reservations north of the international boundary. Although representatives of each nation-state and local developers and boosters believed that the forced removal of Apache people had ushered in a new age of peaceful, modern development, their efforts instead only changed the terms of a dialectic of violence that had long been in play. Within a narrative that categorized indigenous peoples’ lifeways, including their communal and often

² Kathleen P. Chamberlain, *Victorio: Apache Warrior and Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 5-11 (quotes pp. 10-11). In a departure from earlier biographies of Victorio, Chamberlain draws heavily on oral histories and ethnographic material to supplement the records of U.S. Indian Agents and Military Officers. For a work that exemplifies the earlier historiographic reliance on American sources, see Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*. Thrapp worked to present a Chiricahua perspective of Victorio’s life and times, but he was greatly limited by his sources. For a pioneering works on Apache history that draw almost exclusively on Chiricahua oral histories, see Eve Ball, *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey*, with Nora Henn and Lynda A. Sanchez (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) and *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache*, with James Kaywaykla (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970). For a discussion on the controversies over Ball’s uses of Apache oral histories, see Sherry Robinson, *Apache Voices: Their Stories of Survival as told to Eve Ball* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), xi-xiv.

For the debate over the time that Athapaskans first appeared in the region, see Chamberlain’s discussion, *Victorio*, 8-10, 14; and Morris E. Opler, “Chiricahua Apache,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 10: *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 401-402.

seminomadic basis for land holding, as “savage” or “primitive,” their dispossession was considered necessary to capitalist Progress. Justified by law, technology, and conceptions of space that favored a private property regime, the violence of such dispossession was erased and distorted. Whenever bellicose actions occurred they were blamed on the backward and savage nature of the Apaches; the idea that their actions were an attempt to protect their home never occurred to agents of modernization. From the indigenous perspective, however, Apaches fought to maintain their place in a landscape that provided them with identity, strength, and vitality. Far from ending violence, then, the redefinition of Apache space on both sides of the New Mexico-Chihuahua border ensured its continuance.

Apaches were divided into several tribal groups, including Jicarillas, Mescaleros, and Chiricahuas. They shared linguistic patterns, beliefs, and cultural characteristics, although they saw themselves as distinct peoples. The Chiricahua group was further subdivided into three bands. The group that inhabited the area that became southwestern New Mexico has been called Eastern Chiricahua, Mimbres, Mimbrenño, Mogollon, and Warm Springs Apaches by different observers. Their name for themselves was Chihene (also spelled Chihenne), or the “Red Paint People.” They claimed Warm Springs as the center of their sacred homeland, and their range extended to the Rio Grande on the east, the Florida and Tres Hermanas Mountains on the south (near present-day Columbus), and the Gila River on the north and west. In terms of the region’s human geography, they were bordered on the east by the Mescaleros, on the South by the Nednhis (or Southern Chiricahuas), and on the west by the Chokonens (or Central Chiricahuas) and

Bedonkohes (also designated as a Chiricahua band).³ The Nednhis had lived in the same area as the Chihene until some point in the nineteenth century, when they relocated to the “rugged and forbidding Sierra Madres of northern Mexico, which they called the Blue Mountains.”⁴

Mountain ranges held deep significance for the Chiricahuas. Ussen also designated the Guadalupe Mountains (where the present day states of Arizona, New Mexico, Chihuahua, and Sonora meet) as a central site to all of the Chiricahua people. There resided the Mountain Spirits, beings who possessed the ability to bestow certain blessings, powers, and privileges on the people. Upon the arrival of the Chihene to their sacred homesite, set aside for them by the Creator, the region had been lately abandoned. Vacated villages and shards of black-on-white pottery indicated the recent presence of Mogollon peoples in the vicinity of the Gila River and the Mimbres peoples along the river that still bears their name. It is possible that some Mogollons were still present in the area when the Apaches first arrived; they may have migrated northward or intermarried with the newcomers. The Mimbres peoples had already relocated to settlements to the south of the present-day U.S.-Mexico border.⁵

³ My focus is primarily on the Chihene band, although I do discuss their connections to other Chiricahua peoples. To avoid constant repetition, I refer to them alternately as Chihene, Warm Springs, or simply as Chiricahuas. When I discuss members of other bands, I use their band affiliation to identify them. Although the Spanish referred to them as *mimbrenos* and Thrapp used the term “Mimbres Apaches” for this group, I avoid the use of the term to prevent confusion with the indigenous group known as the Mimbres people that also inhabited the region during an earlier period.

⁴ Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 13; Thrapp, *In the Days of Victorio*, 3; Opler, “Chiricahua Apache,” 401; Lance R. Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680 to 1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 5-6; and William B. Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750-1858* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 5.

⁵ The Mimbres people have been the subject of much archeological study. See, for example, Margaret C. Nelson, Michelle Hegmon, Stephanie Kulow, and Karen Guest Schollmeyer, “Archaeological and Ecological Perspectives on Reorganization: A Case Study from the Mimbres Region of the U.S.

The Chihene filled the subsequent territorial vacuum and created from sparsely inhabited space a place that was intricately interconnected with their worldview and identity as a people. The Mimbres, Black, Sierra Negretta, San Mateo, and Florida mountain ranges and valleys contained their sacred sites and homes. Spanish observers consistently failed to comprehend their social organization or their deep rootedness to place. Part of the reason for this misunderstanding was that the Warm Springs peoples did not travel or live as a single, coherent whole. Instead, they organized themselves into local groups that ranged in size from 35 to 200 people that “had exclusive rights to certain farm sites and hunting localities, and each was headed by a chief who directed collective enterprises such as food-gathering expeditions, farming projects, and activities involving other local groups and tribes.” Their campsites, at times temporary, at others more permanent, were dubbed *rancherías*.⁶

By the days of Ojos Colorados (or Yagonxli), one of the first specific Chihene headmen mentioned in Spanish records whose term of leadership encompassed the 1780s and 1790s, the Warm Springs people struggled to maintain their niche in “a region of borders,” as anthropologist Edward Spicer has argued. By the 1740s, the Comanche people had expanded into the traditional homeland of the Jicarilla and Mescaleros, forcing them to migrate from present-day northeastern New Mexico across the Rio

Southwest,” *American Antiquity* 71, no. 3 (July 2006), 405-408; Margaret C. Nelson, Keith Kintigh, David R. Abbot, and John M. Anderies, “The Cross-scale Interplay between Social and Biophysical Context and the Vulnerability of Irrigation-dependent Societies: Archaeology’s Long-term Perspective,” *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 3 (2010), <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss3/art31/>, accessed 13 November 2012; Michael E. Wahlen and Paul E. Minnis, “The Local and the Distant in the Origin of Casas Grandes,” *American Antiquity* 68, no. 2 (April 2003), 314-323; and Virginia Measday and George Pete Measday, eds., *History of Luna County, New Mexico, Supplement One* (Deming, N.Mex.: Luna County Historical Society, 1982), 1-2.

⁶ Grenville Goodwin, *Western Apache Raiding and Warfare*, ed. Keith H. Basso (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971), 14; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 11-13, 19.

Grande toward the Warm Springs territory to the southwest. Due to the pressure placed on Apache peoples by the militarily and economically dominant Comanches, the Apache bands fought for their very existence. The Chiricahuas found themselves wedged between Mesclaeros, Comanches, and Spaniards.⁷

In truth, the Chirichahua homeland had been contested space since the arrival of the Spaniards (and perhaps the Apaches themselves) in the period between the mid-1500s and the early-1600s. Spanish records indicate that a variety of different native peoples inhabited the region that centered on Casas Grandes, stretching from the Bavispe valley in the west to the plains east of El Paso del Norte. Prosperous Opata villages dotted the landscape of the Bavispe and Montezuma valleys, “surrounded by some of the most rugged mountains in all of New Spain.” To the east, the rancherías of the Conchos people occupied the area near Casas Grandes. The communities of both groups experienced a trade boom during the early years of Spanish rule. To the north of the Conchos lived the semi-nomadic Suma peoples, characterized by the Spanish as “wild.” In the same general area were a people that the Spanish called the Janos; Spicer argues that these people may have been a band of Central Chirichahua or Chihene Apaches. To the east, near the Palomas Lakes, lay the ranges of the nomadic Manso peoples and further east still, near the Rio Grande, were lands inhabited by the Jumano people. In this region that would become the meeting place between the modern states of Arizona, Sonora, New Mexico, Chihuahua, and Texas, characterized by “rugged mountains and not very productive

⁷ Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest*, 230-231; Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 13. Chamberlain refers to this Chihene leader as Ojos Coloradas, but William B. Griffen uses Ojos Colorados. I use the latter because, due to its Spanish grammatical correctness, it seems as though Spaniards of the day would have done so as well. Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750-1858* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 57.

desert in the north and fertile narrow river valleys in the south there were six or seven distinct groups at the time the Spaniards entered it.”⁸

Rivalry over scarce resources, competition between Franciscans and Jesuit missionaries for souls, and an atmosphere of upheaval following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 ignited a tinderbox of violence throughout the inhabited areas of northern New Spain. The Sumas were singled out as the agitators in the region to the south of Chihene. In response, Spaniards brutally suppressed Suma peoples. In 1684 fifty-two indigenous agitators were executed at Casas Grandes and another twenty-five in the region of the Sonora missions. Spaniards established the presidio of Janos the following year in an effort to keep the peace and shore up their control of the region. Spicer argues that in so doing, “the Spaniards lost rather than gained control of northeastern Sonora” and the region surrounding Janos. Between 1685 and 1705, Spanish records ceased to record a diversity of Native peoples in the area. Instead, they began to speak of a new people, labeled Apaches, who dominated the area between the Opata villages of Sonora to the Zuni Pueblos of New Mexico. By 1700, Apache bands controlled a 250-mile-wide corridor from Casas Grandes to Zuni, an area the Spaniards dubbed the *Apachería*.⁹ This was a zone with no Spanish settlements nor any measure of Spanish domination. The Chiricahua claim to their homeland, therefore, was grounded in struggle and conflict as much as through the will of Ussen.

⁸ Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest*, 231.

⁹ Ibid., 232-236; and Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 25.

Apache bands' deep connections to specific landscapes in the future U.S.-Mexico borderlands were forged through violence. Yet, different scholarly conceptualizations of violence result in distinct interpretations of Apache-Spanish relationships from 1685 (the establishment of the Janos presidio) through 1821. Spicer envisions violence as a destructive, chaotic force that unmade Spanish efforts to civilize and colonize Apache space. More recent scholarship, however, emphasizes both the constructive and destructive aspects of violent relationships between peoples in border contexts. Building on historian James F. Brooks' notion of violence as not merely a destructive force, but one that "produced enduring networks of economic and social relations," historians Lance R. Blyth and Kathleen P. Chamberlain argue that violence between Apaches and Spaniards built the borderlands economy and communities.¹⁰

Key to understanding violence in this way is the prerequisite that neither Apache nor Mexican communities, such as the garrison at Janos, held a monopoly on violence. Thus, either group could (and did) employ violent actions as one of the many social or economic tools at their disposal to help them build power and dominance in the borderlands. Additionally, each group attempted to construct regional power by

¹⁰ Ibid. James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2002), 35. In his Introduction, Blyth (*Chiricahua and Janos*, 5-11) develops his conceptualization of "communities of violence," borrowing from the ideas of David Nirenberg's history of violent relations between Christians, Jews, Muslims, and lepers in the Spain-France border region during the Middle Ages. Nirenberg argues "that violence was not a sign of intolerance but was, instead, 'a central and systematic aspect of the coexistence of majority and minorities in medieval Spain' and that a 'constructive relationship between conflict and coexistence' prevailed" (Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). Blyth applies these insights to the communities that developed at the Janos presidio and among the Chiricahua peoples (he does not distinguish between the different bands) from 1685 to the 1880s. Chamberlain discusses the role of violence in the creation of the regional "raid and trade economy." The main actors in this economy were the Chiricahua peoples and the Spanish settlers of frontier military colonies, such as Janos, during roughly the same period examined by Blyth. The main idea is that violence was simultaneously a destructive and constructive force.

expanding its size. As Blyth notes, “the low population of both communities meant they especially required a critical resource: people, particularly women and children.” Both Spanish military colonies and Chiricahua bands worked to incorporate each other and other indigenous peoples into their local communities. Through violent processes of “Apacheanization” and “Hispanization” based on warfare, captivity, fictive kinship relationships, and social stratification, Chiricahua and Spanish military communities grew during the 1700s. Indeed, violence became a means of acquiring honor and status within each community and was a rite of passage. Those men who proved to be particularly adept warriors illustrated their capacity to take captives as well as protect their wives and families.¹¹

“Apacheanization” also occurred as Chiricahua bands incorporated and assimilated Suma, Janos, Manso, and Jcome peoples from the surrounding region. In the mid-1690s, the Chiricahua leader called El Salinero listened as Jcome headman El Tabovo recounted the misfortunes of his motley band comprised of Janos, Manso, Suma, Chinarra, as well as Jcome people. His group, which numbered about 100, banded together for protection and to enhance their raiding ability against Spanish settlements in eastern Sierra Madre. En route to the mountains, the group was discovered by Spanish forces. During the ensuing battle along the Natives’ path of retreat, nearly half of El Tavobo’s band was killed. Despite a week’s worth of negotiations with the Spaniards, the group was not able to secure the return of their women and children taken captive during the battle. When the Spaniards abruptly retreated, El Tavobo led those who remained

¹¹ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 18-19. For the notion of “Apacheanization” in the borderlands, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *Indian Southwest: 1580-1830, Ethnogenesis and Reinvention* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), especially Chapter 5.

with him to the Chiricahua rancherías along the Gila River with the purpose of joining the Apaches. Upon hearing their plight, El Salinero invited the group into his own band, offering protection from the Spaniards. Although the assimilation of El Tavobo's band into that of El Salinero was nonviolent and somewhat indirect, more often than not Chiricahua groups grew through warfare or active trading. Evidence from oral histories and Spanish documentation indicate that women from outside groups regularly married into Apache kinship networks. Other indigenous groups were thus acculturated into Apache lifeways through intermarriage. More Athapaskan-speaking men than women initially arrived in the border region, indicating that Chiricahua bands required intermarriage in order to construct viable communities of their own.¹²

The Janos and Fronteras presidios, established in 1685 and 1692, respectively, were among the first Spanish garrisons intended to hold the frontier of New Spain against the various independent native groups that inhabited the Apachería. Spicer's observation that the militarization of the area caused it to paradoxically slip from Spanish dominance is not completely accurate. His conclusion is based on the assumption that Spaniards held a monopoly on power and violence (or at least had the upper hand). Yet, the position of Spanish settlements in the northern frontier was always precarious in the late 1600s. As historian Samuel Truett has characterized the situation, "Presidios evoked the authority of the state, but just barely." The Janos presidio was erected by refugees from Santa Fe who had settled in the Casas Grandes valley of northwestern Chihuahua after fleeing the violence of the Pueblo Revolt only a few years previously. The garrison was to stand as protection against the rebellions of the local Janos and Suma peoples who killed the priest

¹² Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 39-41.

at the mission of Nuestra Señora de Soledad on 6 May 1684. The Chiricahuas were not involved in the skirmishes that led to the creation of the presidio, but they did watch the situation attentively. Once the initial threat had passed and many of the refugees near Janos and Casas Grandes had begun to embrace their status as civilian soldiers on the front lines of conflicts against Natives, Chiricahuas filtered into the settlement to trade deerskins and raid for horses. In the spring of 1691 a Chiricahua party successfully took 50 horses from Janos.¹³

According to Chamberlain, in this manner the Spaniards and Chiricahuas initiated a “raid-and-trade” economy. Over the next century, Apache bands became an essential link in trading networks that included Spanish, Pueblo, Comanche, and other Apache peoples and extended to French settlers along the Mississippi corridor and to Plains peoples. In the process, Chihene and other Apache bands sought to create the arrangement that was most advantageous to them as a group. They also actively worked to promote and protect their own autonomy. For this reason, they tended to avoid missions; their independence was based on their nomadic lifeways. Catholic beliefs also contradicted their worldview. Ussen had not given them dominion over the land, but had instead entrusted it to their care. Those who subjected themselves to mission life were made dependent on sedentary agriculture and handouts from the priests. Chiricahua bands utilized the availability of missions to their own benefit. In winter or periods of drought, they sought the refuge of sedentary life. When the crisis passed, however, the people then abandoned the missions for their traditional patterns of hunting and gathering. Missions and Spanish farms offered a ready supply of food and supplies and Apaches regularly

¹³ Ibid., 24-25, 28, 35; Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes*, 27; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 18-19.

traded meat, tallow, hides, and blankets for such items as horses, tools, knives, guns, metal pans, as well as for slaves. Depending on current needs and relations with Spanish settlers, such items might also be procured through raiding.¹⁴

Although Spanish accounts abound with complaints of Apache thievery and brutality, raids were often enacted by each community against the other. Patterns of alternate trading, raiding, and warfare developed between Chiricahua communities and military colonies in the northern frontier. Through such activities, both groups were able to expand in economic and political influence in the region. It was thus these raiding and trading patterns, often violent, that defined the regional economy and solidified each group's ties to the landscape. Although the Spaniards did not understand, Apaches made very clear distinctions between raiding and warfare. The translations of the native terms for each concept, respectively, are "to search out enemy property" and "to take death from an enemy." The terminology indicates more than a simple linguistic distinction. Each activity served a unique purpose for the local community; raids were enacted to stave off a shortage of food whereas warfare was reserved to avenge the death of a kinsman slain on the battlefield. From the mid-1700s through the late-1800s more often than not the targets of both raiding and warfare were Mexican military colonists. Over time, the economy of trading and raiding cast the two groups as mortal enemies who could, at times, set aside their differences for advantageous economic and social exchanges.¹⁵

¹⁴ Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 19-21.

¹⁵ Ibid.; Goodwin, *Apache Raiding and Warfare*, 16-18, quotes on 16; and Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace*, 11.

The establishment of the Janos and Fronteras presidios in northern Nueva Vizcaya¹⁶ and Sonora in the late 1600s indicated the Spanish Crown's preoccupation with subduing Apaches and other nomadic peoples in the northern frontier of New Spain. Despite such a lofty goal, Spanish forces did well to simply protect their small garrisons, missions, and villas in the Nueva Vizcaya-New Mexico region through the late 1700s. Violence defined both Chiricahua and Spanish colonial society. Over the course of the 1700s, as anthropologist Ana María Alonso has illustrated, these frontier communities were settled first by both full- and part-time "specialists in violence." Distinctions were heaped upon those leaders who successfully waged war in the northern frontier; career soldiers with little experience in frontier regions tended to be ill-suited for the style of warfare needed to combat Apaches. Indeed, famed governors of New Mexico, including the re-conquistador Diego de Vargas and Comanche fighter Juan Bautista de Anza, as well as heads of Nueva Vizcaya received their posts due to their proven reputations as soldiers in the context of frontier Indian fighting. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Spanish authorities augmented the number of "full-time military specialists" in Nueva Vizcaya and New Mexico. Yet they were a motley group compared to Spanish regulars elsewhere in New Spain. Drawn from the frontier provinces themselves, military service in the north was not limited only to men of "honorable" descent. Instead *mestizos*

¹⁶ Nueva Vizcaya was a large, amorphous province in the northern section of New Spain that later became the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, and León following Mexican independence. See Florence C. Lister and Robert H. Lister, *Chihuahua: Storehouse of Storms*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1960), 21, 67, 88.

and *mulatos* generally filled the ranks and Indian auxiliaries often augmented presidial forces.¹⁷

Participation in frontier warfare was advantageous for men of lower status in Spanish colonial society. Through their service they could gain leadership positions as well as access to land grants in the communities they served. Access to land, in turn, helped them to improve their class standing. Yet, military and government officials who surveyed the situation in the north derided the lack of discipline and training of such military contingents. Viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez commented in the late 1780s that frontier troops held “a contempt for [royal] regulations insofar as these bind and subject. The laws, the pragmatics, the prohibitions have no force or are lukewarmly observed. . . . This is an evil difficult to remedy today because these people, reared in liberty and used to independence, are no longer in a state to suffer with resignation the rigor of the laws.” The indifference to law that troubled Gálvez in the 1780s was his reference to the independent attitudes of many settlers along the northern frontier who defined their identities and their place in society through their ability to enact violence against Apaches. Not only those who ascended the ranks to become officers developed this type of self-perception; peasant forces that also became a key element of frontier defensive (as well as offensive) brigades did as well. The regular military contingent was consistently outnumbered by Apache and Comanche warriors during the eighteenth century. In the 1770s, for example, Apache strength was estimated at about 5,000 warriors compared to nearly 3,000 regular presidial forces. Additionally, the guerrilla methods employed by

¹⁷ Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 30-31.

Apaches meant that virtually all points along the northern frontier needed defense. To address the situation, Spanish officials made the decision to transform all frontier settlers into “part-time specialists in violence.”¹⁸

The far-reaching Bourbon Reforms that reshaped the Spanish Empire during the mid to late 1700s arrived in the northern frontier in the form of additional presidios with a string of “military settlements,” as Teodoro de la Croix, military governor of the Internal Provinces from 1776 to 1783, dubbed them. The innovations of Croix, as well as decisions issued from Madrid by King Carlos III, had been informed by the Marqués de Rubí. Rubí had been tasked with the arduous responsibility of surveying the entire northern frontier of New Spain. His express purpose was to assess the reasons that Apache and Comanche bands were able to dominate the Spanish soldiers in the region, and his reports and recommendations formed the basis of the official vision for strengthening Spanish control over the frontier. Chamberlain speculates that perhaps “Victorio’s direct ancestor Chihenne chief Ojos Colorados, watched Rubí as he entered Apache country.” During his tour of twenty-three presidios that stretched from Texas to California, Rubí encountered conditions that were indeed troubling. The presidios were undersupplied, with commanders often trading the best firearms to local Apache groups for personal profit. Such activities fueled the “raid and trade economy” of the region, but worked against Spanish administrators’ desires to subdue the nomadic bands. As a result, Apaches and Comanches confronted presidial forces armed with European rifles while

¹⁸ Ibid. Bernardo de Gálvez quoted on 31-32.

the Spaniards attempted to hold their ground with bows and arrows. Additionally, other supplies, including uniforms, horses, and soldiers' pay were in short supply.¹⁹

The *Reglamento de 1772* was designed to address many of these issues. Supplies and pay for soldiers were placed in the hands of a new groups of commanders who presided over a “rational line” of presidios that were constructed about 100 miles apart, spanning the distance from Texas to California roughly along the 31st parallel. To complement the new spread of presidios Croix established settlements in some of the spaces in between and offered incentives geared to attract peasant colonists. In a 1778 decree the military colonies of Janos, Casas Grandes, Galeana, Cruces, and Namiquipa were established in northwestern Chihuahua—the site of intense Chiricahua raiding. Each peasant military colony was created with the purpose of attracting settlers who would be willing to take on the risks associated with holding the frontier against Apaches. Each colony was granted community rights to 112,000 hectares, and *originarios* were invested with rights to share pasture and woodland areas in the grant. Founding charters named those who were considered joint possession of the lands, and male heads of household received individual *derechos de posesión* (rights of possession) for family plots; their property rights were recognized legally in terms of corporate, rather than individual, possession. Over time as the communities grew, *usos y costumbres* (traditions and customs) rather than legal titles, as well as physical possession of and labor on the land coupled with military obligations, defined the military colonists' rights to their lands. In the process, then, “by linking military obligations to land rights, the state was able to

¹⁹ Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 23.

militarize the peasants of communities such as Namiquipa [and Janos, etc.] to transform them into part-time specialists in violence.”²⁰

Additionally, in the late 1780s, following on the heels of Governor Anza’s peace settlement with Comanche, Ute, and Navajo peoples, Gálvez initiated a system of *establecimientos de paz* (peace establishments) alongside the borderland presidios in an effort to also pacify Apache groups. Officials believed that the time was ripe for solidifying peace with Apache peoples. In early 1786 Apache-Spanish raiding and violence had diminished, although small engagements continued infrequently. To entice them to settle at the new peace establishments, Apaches “received food, liberal quantities of liquor, and weak-barreled rifles, which frequently misfired and required constant Spanish-provided maintenance.” The idea was to create a situation of dependency that would force Apaches to live “civilized” Spanish lifestyles. Gálvez made this point explicit by arguing that the establishments and the trade terms he wished to establish were intended to create a system of supervised bartering between indigenous peoples and Spanish settlers. Specifically, he hoped to create Spanish supremacy in terms of access to horses, rifles, and ammunition. He argued that the Natives receive weapons with extra-long barrels to limit their ease of use—especially on horseback. Such weapons were to include “superficial adornments which delight the sight of ignorant persons,” but be

²⁰ Ibid.; Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace*, 22; and Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 33-36, quote from 36. For *usos y costumbres*, see María Aparecida de S. Lopes, *De Costumbres y Leyes: Abigeato y Derechos de Propiedad en Chihuahua durante el Porfiriato* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2005), 19-23; and José Rabasa, *Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier: The Historiography of Sixteenth-Century New Mexico and Florida and the Legacy of Conquest* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 11.

constructed of steel of inferior temper to make them unreliable. The goal was to make Apaches dependent on the Spanish for ammunition, repair, and gunpowder.²¹

As with the missions, however, Apaches either avoided the peace establishments or adapted them to their own purposes. On 21 March 1787, for example, Ojos Colorados fled one such establishment at San Buenaventura (near Casas Grandes) with seven other Mimbrenño (as the Spanish then referred to the Chihene) chiefs at the head of somewhere between 800 to 900 people. As they fled, they killed several Spaniards and three Chiricaguis and they took one other Chiricagui captive. From the Spanish perspective, this incident was a prime example of Apache treachery. Officials ordered a few hundred troops into the field to counter the terror inspired by Ojos Colorados and his people. The two-year campaign fed the population of the military colonies in northwestern Chihuahua as Spanish men proved their valor and were rewarded with land and status through war against Apaches. Then, just as abruptly as they had fled, Ojos Colorados led his people to seek peace at the Janos presidio in late 1789. Such actions indicated that his Chihene band treated “Janos as a headquarters and not a prison.” In following this pattern of fleeing and returning to sue for peace at advantageous moments, Apaches worked to maintain their independence as well as trade ties with the Spanish. Thus, the situation of peace proved to be ephemeral in the raid-and-trade economy of the colonial borderlands.²²

²¹ Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 24; Charles L. Kenner, *The Comanchero Frontier: A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 50-56; and Pekka Hämmäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2009), 108-113.

²² Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 24; Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace*, 57-64.

By the time of Victorio's birth such patterns of economic and political life were a well-established fact for Chihene and Spaniards alike. Victorio rose to become the last great headman of the independent Chihene, although no one in his clan or kinship circles could have known that about him when he was born sometime around 1825.²³ Tales told of the possibility that Victorio was not Chihene by birth, but that he instead was a Mexican boy who was taken captive by the band at a young age. Although descendants of Victorio's people consistently denied the charge, the existence of such a rumor speaks to the violence of the established economy in the early nineteenth century. Through the violence of raid and trade cycles, women, children, and some men from both Apache and Spanish settlements were taken captive. Apache men were sought after for their potential to labor in Spanish mines and fields, whereas women and children were often incorporated into Spanish households as servants, known as *criados/as*. Yet, very few male captives were taken by either group because they were viewed as potentially dangerous and rebellious. Most often, these men were killed during battle. In Chiricahua bands, boys were considered to be the prime candidates for captivity. As the young Hispanic boys worked and associated with other members of the band, the "feeling of captivity" dissipated. Captives were typically adopted into the family of their captors; eventually they married and their children were accepted as full members in the band. As Blyth suggests, through such cycles of violence, captivity, and integration into the enemy society "the men of both Chiricahua and Janos used violence to establish themselves as married adults." Men in each society proved their ability to lead others and provide for a

²³ The exact year of Victorio's birth is unknown, but as an older man observers estimated his birth year based on his approximate age. Those who knew him estimated that he was about 55 years old at his death in 1880; Chihenne histories place his birth in 1820. See Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 27.

wife and family by constructing a reputation through violence. In the process they perpetuated the simultaneous processes of “Apacheanization” and “Hispanization.”²⁴

The world into which Victorio was born had also been drastically altered by decisions and actions of political leaders far from the Chihene homeland. The fragile peace arrangements that were brokered through previous cycles of violence and intermarriage, as well as through the guileful institution of the peace establishments, disintegrated following Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the peace establishment system had been adapted to the realities of Apache desires to receive rations and maintain trade with Spanish settlements, while simultaneously maintaining their independence as a people. To this end, presidial commanders distributed rations to headmen and others “*in absentia*.” Throughout the 1790s, Spanish officials spent an average of 23,000 pesos per year to subsidize the rations provided to Apaches in the northern frontier. Following Mexico’s independence, however, such funds were no longer available. The national government in Mexico City was occupied with the task of rebuilding a war-torn country following the wars for independence that had flared intermittently for over a decade. And, although the Mexican Constitution of 1824 granted citizenship to all people born within the declared boundaries of the Mexican nation-state, whether or not they cared to have it, political instability and

²⁴ Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 6-7; Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 21; and Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 50-52, 55. Blyth uses the communities of Chiricahua and Janos as a case study in relations between Apaches and the military colonists of the Spanish, and then Mexican, frontier. He groups the three main bands of Chiricahua together as a single community in his study and he focuses on Janos as an example of a typical military community. This focus allows him to develop the notion that the communities grew and developed socially, politically, and economically through violence enacted against the other.

factionalism ensured that relations with independent Native peoples in the north were generally placed on the back burner.²⁵

By the late 1820s, Apaches grew increasingly wary and suspicious of the transformations that accompanied Mexican independence. For headmen like Juan Diego and his brother Juan José Compá, whose bands inhabited the region between the newly christened state of Chihuahua and the New Mexico territory, the most troubling sign of change was the diminishing quality and quantity of provisions provided at the presidios. As local Mexican military commanders and elites well knew, the fragile peace between their own people and Apaches had been constructed on a foundation of rations. The situation was further complicated with the reorientation of the economy of Mexico's Far North toward the rapidly expanding United States. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the U.S. capitalist economy grew by leaps and bounds bolstered by innovations in transportation technologies. As historian Andrés Reséndez has shown, the Mexican North "became the outermost perimeter of this same economic revolution." With the lifting of Spanish trade restrictions and the opening of the Santa Fe Trail in 1821, New Mexico became the point of contact for U.S.-Mexican trade relations. In the early fall of 1825, Governor Antonio Narbona expanded American economic activity in the region by issuing hunting and trade permits to fur trappers from the east. Such

²⁵ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 114-118; and Brian DeLay, *War of A Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 23-26.

developments oriented the region's early commercial growth toward the United States, rather than toward Mexico City.²⁶

Tensions between Mexicans and Apaches heightened in the context of such transitions. The experiences of James O. Pattie and his father Sylvester in Chihene territory are illustrative. The father and son team arrived in the vicinity of the Gila River in the early 1820s, and soon thereafter acquired a lease on the copper mines at Santa Rita. When the pair first ventured to explore the Gila in search of beaver, they were met by a band of Apaches who reacted to their presence with a mix of hostility and surprise. For the Chihene, the Patties were perhaps the first Americans they had encountered. By James's account the Natives initially mistook them for Spaniards, but then apologized for the mistake because they were "too brave and too good marksmen, to be Spaniards." A few years after they began operating the mines, James Pattie and a small group of Americans kept regular vigilance over their operations in order to hold off Apache raids. When four Chiricahua headmen expressed their willingness to make a peace agreement with the American miners, they also asserted their utter refusal to make peace with Mexicans (to whom Pattie referred as "Spaniards"). Pattie asked them their reasons and they replied that, although "they had taken a great many horses from the Spaniards" they had been treated with treacherous violence above and beyond the allowable retribution for raiding. They explained that on one occasion a party of Mexicans had approached them under the pretext of establishing peace. Once the Apaches had entered the walls of the town under such pretexts, however, the Mexicans "commenced butchering them like

²⁶ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 117; Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 25-26; and Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 93-96, quote on p. 96.

a flock of sheep.” The few who escaped were hell-bent on revenge from that moment forward.²⁷

Pattie’s anecdote is indicative of Apache-Mexican relations from the 1830s through the 1850s. Historian Brian DeLay has argued convincingly that by 1846 hostilities with Apaches, Comanches, and Kiowas, had already crippled the Mexican North just as U.S.-Mexican War began. The level of distrust and suspicion between Apaches and Mexicans escalated to the extent that a cycle of fierce retributive violence became the norm for communities on either side. Hostilities ran especially high in Sonora during the 1830s. The lieutenant governor, Ignacio de Bustamante, rejected the pleas for peaceful negotiation that came from the commander general of military operations in northwestern Mexico, Colonel Ignacio Mora. In an exchange of correspondence, Mora argued that Apaches “are men similar to us,” but a people who were limited due to their lack of law and civil government. Bustamante refused Mora’s proposal that Sonoran officials cooperate with their counterparts in Chihuahua to coordinate and normalize relations with Apaches. Instead, Bustamante recalled the seemingly countless (from his perspective) treaties that Apaches had broken and concluded that they were “a nation always wandering, always barbarous, that knows no society, that is morally impotent to celebrate treaties, to make agreements, or to promise a political loyalty that they do not possess.” The result was conflicting policies toward Apaches in Sonora and Chihuahua. While officials in Chihuahua attempted to negotiate with Apache bands, Sonoran leaders ratcheted up military actions. In 1834, for example, a Sonoran campaign resulted in the

²⁷ James Ohio Pattie, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie, of Kentucky* (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark, 1905), 113-114; cited in Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 117; and Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 18-19.

capture of the prominent Chiricahua leader Tutije (in the Mogollon mountains, geographically within the jurisdiction of Chihuahua). Other Chiricahua headmen, including Bedonkohe leader Mangas Coloradas, resolved to respond with violent retaliation after Tutije's public execution in Arizpe.²⁸

By the late 1830s, Chihuahua's officials and inhabitants took a harder line against Apaches as retributive violence and warfare escalated under the leadership of Mangas Coloradas and likeminded chiefs. While the national line from Mexico City reiterated the inclusive policy that independent indigenous peoples were to be treated as citizens of the nation, as per the Constitution of 1824, Chihuahua enacted several different plans that called for scalp hunting. One such plan initiated in 1835 offered 100 pesos for the scalps of Apache males, 50 for Apache women, and 25 for captive Apache children younger than 11 years old. The "Fifth Law" of 1849, enacted following the U.S.-Mexican War, increased the bounty to 200 pesos for adult warriors, and 150 for female or child captives. DeLay argues that frustrated Chihuahuenses "therefore looked to the market to do what government could not or would not do." Indeed, the impoverished state of the descendants of the once-illustrious military colonies and surrounding towns in northwestern Chihuahua ensured their participation in the bounty system. Parties and individuals motivated by the promise of payment often submitted for bounty the scalps of Mexicans or other Native peoples, such as the Tarahumara of the Sierra Madre. Instead of settling the cycles of violence that had long characterized the raiding and trading

²⁸ The exchange between Mora and Bustamante is recounted in DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 155-157.

economy of the North, a bloody feud inspired by hatred spun far afield from the earlier violence of “Apacheanization” and “Hispanization.”²⁹

Opportunism also factored into the equation as trappers and traders from the United States rose to notoriety as the most prominent scalpers. In the early 1830s, Juan José and Juan Diego Compá moved with their bands between the seasonal refuge of the diminished garrison at Janos and their favored mountain campsites in New Mexico’s Black and Animas Ranges. Their peoples narrowly escaped a smallpox epidemic at Janos in the late spring of 1831, and they reestablished an oscillating raiding and trading cycle due to their inability to secure consistent and plentiful rations at the presidio. The Chiricahua bands as well as the military colonies were in a weakened state due to the economic and political transformations of the 1820s. According to Blyth, their weakness made violence an increasingly viable option. Neither the Mexicans nor the Apaches could maintain a position of relative power over the other, especially in the atmosphere of heightened scalping expeditions. Within this context, one of the greatest atrocities committed against the Chiricahua people, from their perspective, transpired. John James Johnson, a Kentucky native and scalp hunter in Sonora, arranged to trade supplies with the Compá brothers’ bands in late April 1837 near their ranchería in the Animas Mountains. Initially suspicious of the *extranjeros* (Americans living in Mexico), Juan José accepted an invitation to dine with Johnson and his men. The following day, as Juan José, Juan Diego, Marcelo, and a few other leading warriors examined the sacks of flour, sugar, and gunpowder they were to receive in exchange for Johnson’s safe passage to Santa Rita and a Chihene guide, Johnson opened fire on them at close range with a swivel

²⁹ DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 159-160; and Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 19.

gun. The blast nearly ripped Juan Diego's body in half and nineteen other Apaches, including Juan José and Marcelo, were killed in the attack. Within the next few years Chiricahua attacks on Mexicans and American mercenaries intensified to the extent that the Santa Rita mines were abandoned.³⁰

This type of combat was not limited to Apaches, Mexicans, and American mercenaries; it also involved independent Comanche and Navajo groups as well. Retributive violence was so intense during the 1830s and 1840s that DeLay has characterized the period as the "War of a Thousand Deserts." Mexican participants in the violence, as well as Mexican political officials, soon realized that the war against peoples who they deemed *indios bárbaros* had resulted in the creation of "man-made deserts where there had been thriving Mexican settlements." As DeLay indicates, "in this context the term referred not to aridity, but to emptiness, silence, fruitlessness, desolation, to the absence of industry and improvement and of human mastery over nature." From the Mexican perspective, Native peoples had successfully turned back the clock of civilization in the North. The poorly funded military colonies, such as Janos, Namiquipa, and their contemporaries, were expected to hold the line against such incursions but increasingly fell short. U.S. expansionists, including President James K. Polk, understood the situation in similar terms, although they drew different conclusions about the war's significance. Buoyed up by a coalescing sense of Manifest Destiny, American officials decided to exploit the situation to achieve their goal of extending the United States to the Pacific Ocean. Once the conflict remembered as the U.S.-Mexican War or the War of

³⁰ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 130-131; DeLay, *War of A Thousand Deserts*, 160; and Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 19-20.

North American Invasion began, however, Americans quickly realized that they could in no way control the violent actions of independent Indians. Initially, many Apaches viewed the United States as a potential ally in their hostilities against Mexico. Some Mexican people in the North alternatively thought that the U.S. invaders would provide protection against Native raids. The convergence of the two conflicts in the Mexican North resulted in gains for both Chiricahuas and Americans, at least initially, at the expense of Mexico. Yet, the shaky alliance between Native peoples and Americans proved ephemeral once the United States officially made its peace with Mexico in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.³¹

Within this context, Mangas Coloradas first met Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny near the Santa Rita mines on 18 October 1846. Although the news of three Apaches on horseback approaching camp caused some excitement among Kearny's men, the initial conversations between the two leaders proceeded quite smoothly. They quickly realized that their respective peoples had a common enemy in Mexico. Even more than other Chiricahuas, Mangas Coloradas held a profound animosity against Mexicans. Two of his wives were killed in Johnson's April 1837 ambush, an event that served to intensify his already deep hatred toward Sonoran settlements. Chihuahua's scalp-hunting policies further fueled his wrath, especially after James Kirker, a Missourian who "made a career of killing Apaches," led an attack against Pisago Cabezón's Chiricahua band in

³¹ DeLay, *War of A Thousand Deserts*, xv-xvi, 253-254. For a discussion of the characterization of the war as the War of North American Invasion (or, alternatively, Intervention), see Michael Scott VanWagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S.-Mexican War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 93. Much has been written, both scholarly and popular, about the idea of Manifest Destiny. For a recent treatment by a leading scholar on the subject, see Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Knopf, 2012).

which fifteen were killed and another twenty taken prisoner, including one of Pisago Cabezón's sons. Despite Pisago Cabezón's resolve for peace with Mexicans, finally achieved through a formal treaty at Janos on 4 July 1842 which also included headmen Manuel, Vicente, and Ponce, Mangas Coloradas continued to cultivate his anger and he remained at war. Over the next several years, Mangas Coloradas led many successful raid and attack expeditions against settlements in both Chihuahua and Sonora. In the process, he gained enough notoriety to become the leading war chief of all four Chiricahua bands. Chihene groups headed by Victorio and Chief Elias often sought out his leadership and his bond to the Chokonens was solidified through the marriage of his daughter to Cochise, then a young man. Upon meeting Kearny, he expressed his feeling that the Americans were in no way his natural enemies. On the contrary, he looked to them as strong potential allies in his blood feud against northern Mexico.³²

The initial cooperation between Mangas Coloradas and Kearny did not predict future relations between Apaches and Americans, although friendly dealings with Americans persisted through the decade of the 1850s. Mangas Coloradas made an impression on John Russell Bartlett when he visited the headquarters of the U.S. Boundary Commission at Santa Rita in the summer of 1851. Bartlett characterized the Bedonkohe leader as possessing "strong common sense and discriminating judgment." Mangas Coloradas also maintained a respectful relationship with Michael Steck, appointed Indian Agent to the Chiricahuas of southern New Mexico in late 1854. By that time, the chief began to find that his traditional raiding patterns into Mexico had become

³² Edwin R. Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Conflicts," in *New Mexican Lives: Profiles and Historical Stories*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 131-132, 152-153; Delay, *War of A Thousand Deserts*, 160 (source of the quote); and Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 134-136.

quite burdensome due to his advancing age. Accordingly, he expressed his decision to settle into reservation life and accept the rations provided there, much to Steck's surprise. Only two years previously, he had nearly brought a treaty negotiation with Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Vose Sumner to a screeching halt when he learned that Americans intended to end his expeditions against Sonora and Chihuahua. According to Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, U.S. authorities were required to prevent Indian raiding parties from crossing the newly established border into Mexican territory. Mangas Coloradas, however, could not fathom the idea that the common ground he shared with Americans, their mutual enemy, had evaporated. Sumner was only able to pacify his angry tirade by offering his private, tacit assurance that the Apaches could continue their raids into Mexican territory despite the treaty's terms.³³

Such ominous signs multiplied after the late 1850s as increasing numbers of Americans and Mexicans migrated to Chiricahua territory. Mangas Coloradas tolerated the men that established several stations for the Butterfield Overland Mail Company, as well as farmers and ranchers that settled near the Mimbres and Gila Rivers near the center of both the Bedonkohe and Chihene homelands. Even when he lost two of his sons to a skirmish with Sonoran troops in 1858, Mangas Coloradas resolved to maintain the peace. Yet, in early 1861, as the U.S. Civil War began in the East, his hand was forced, as he remembered it, due to the increasing numbers of his people that had been assaulted by American settlers and miners. Specifically, he was outraged when American miners from Pinos Altos attacked Chihene Chief Elias's temporary camp as he waited for a meeting

³³ Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas," 155-156 (Bartlett quoted on p. 155); and DeLay, *War of A Thousand Deserts*, 294-295.

with Agent Steck. Elias and three others were killed. Then in February 1861 Lieutenant George N. Bascom led troops against Cochise's people on the mistaken assumption that they were responsible for a raid that had been committed by a band of Pinals. When Bascom invited Cochise to his tent to negotiate, the latter narrowly escaped a surprise ambush in which six of his companions were taken captive. The situation devolved into a hostage standoff between Bascom and Cochise; when the frustrated Chokonen leader killed his hostages Bascom retaliated in kind. From Mangas Coloradas's viewpoint, such treacheries were too much to bear. He and his son-in-law united their bands in an open war against Americans throughout 1861 and 1862. Their efforts, coupled with the abandonment of the garrisons in southern New Mexico as soldiers were reassigned to the conflict in the East, resulted in Apache control of the border region for the next year or so. Victorio and Nednhi chief Juh also joined in the effort. Chiricahuas of all bands once again travelled freely in the region that Ussen had allotted to them, they made irregular trips to Janos to trade once again, and raided the few remaining American settlements.³⁴

Although the Chiricahua headmen believed that the Americans had fled their homeland for good, such was not the case. In the summer of 1862 General James H. Carleton led a group of 2,300 volunteers, known as the California Column, through the heart of Chiricahua territory. His assignment was to reinforce Union troops under Colonel Edward Canby at Fort Craig along the Rio Grande and to put an end to Confederate domination of southern New Mexico. Carleton was also known to despise Indian peoples. Chamberlain describes him as "a staunch, no-nonsense Christian, a domineering leader, and an avowed Indian hater." Indeed, he was the architect of the ill-

³⁴ Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas," 157; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 95.

fated Bosque Redondo reservation on the Pecos River that required the forced relocation of Mescalero and Navajo peoples to the inhospitable desert of eastern New Mexico between 1863 and 1868. After a late-July 1862 engagement between the Chiricahuas and the lead brigade of the California Column left Mangas Coloradas gravely wounded, the Bedonkohe leader petitioned Carleton for a peace settlement. Carleton responded with contempt; he seemed unaware of Mangas Coloradas's earlier history of peace with Americans and he ordered Brigadier General Joseph Rodman West to lead a campaign to subdue the Apaches. On 17 January 1863, against the objections of his people, including Victorio and Nana, Mangas Coloradas approached Pinos Altos in hopes of negotiating with West. Instead he was imprisoned by the townsfolk and transported to Fort McLane on 18 January. West levied various charges of raiding and depredations against the aged Chiricahua chief and informed his men, in private, that he did not want Mangas Coloradas alive the next morning. As the Native leader attempted to sleep shortly after midnight, his guards tortured him by prodding him with their bayonets after heating them in the fire. After about an hour of such treatment, Mangas told the sentinels in Spanish that "he was not a child to be played with." At that, two of the guards leveled their rifles shot him; another rushed over and fired another shot through the back of his skull.³⁵

The brutal murder of their beloved and respected elder ignited a new cycle of hatred and retributive violence. According to historian Edwin R. Sweeney, Carlton and West miscalculated. Rather than breaking the Apaches' will, Mangas Coloradas' death heightened their resolve to use violence against Americans, especially because the

³⁵ Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas," 157-158; Edwin R. Sweeney, *Mangas Coloradas: Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 454-458; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 99-103.

soldiers had defaced and decapitated the corpse after the shooting. Apache beliefs dictate that a person's body will continue into the afterlife in the same condition that it left mortality. As Chihene James Kaywaykla commented to Eve Ball, "The killing of an unarmed man who has gone to an enemy under truce was an incomprehensible act, but indefinitely worse was the mutilation of his body. . . . Little did the White Eyes know how they would pay when they defiled the body of our great chief!" Another Chihene, Asa Daklugie, remembered that at that point Apaches began to retaliate in kind by mutilating the bodies of Americans killed in battle. Victorio, Cochise, Juh, and Geronimo (a young Bedonkohe leader who rose to greater prominence in the 1860s) led the Chiricahuas for the next three decades in brokering war and peace with Americans and Mexicans in the border region. Victorio and Juh's people inhabited the corridor between the New Mexico Black Range and the Chihuahua Sierra Madres, the Nednhi's sacred Blue Mountains, although the various Chiricahua bands often came together in various places on both sides of the international border as they sought to defy American and Mexican attempts to push them away from lands they considered central to their very identity and onto reservations.³⁶

By the early 1870s, Victorio also grew weary of conducting constant raids into Mexico and the burden of leading his people on the run, far distant from their beloved Ojo Caliente. They ranged between the Blue, Florida, Black, and Mogollon Mountains, and sometimes far beyond. Just as the Chihene leader began sincere attempts to negotiate with U.S. Indian Agents for a reservation at Ojo Caliente, now called Warm Springs,

³⁶ Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas," 185; Sweeney, *Mangas Coloradas: Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches*, 461-462; James Kaywaykla and Eve Ball, *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970), 48; and Eve Ball, *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 20.

another group of people settled territory that had long been part of the Chihene and Nednhi range along the Casas Grandes River in northwestern Chihuahua, east of the Sierra Madres. These newcomers had been residents of the civil colony of La Mesilla which was founded in 1850 following a change in the course of the Rio Grande. Most of them “spontaneously” migrated from the town of Doña Ana in an effort to assert their right to retain Mexican citizenship and to receive pledged land concessions and subsidies promised by officials in Mexico City (rather than become U.S. citizens by default, as per the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo).³⁷ Although the administration of President José Joaquin Herrera issued a decree geared to facilitate such repatriation in August 1848, historian José Angel Hernández has shown that the repatriates themselves bore most of the burden of relocation to northern Mexico. Governor Angel Trías of Chihuahua welcomed the prospect of additional settlers to hold the northern frontier of his state against the raids of Apache peoples, but he was only able to provide lands for their resettlement. Subsidies promised by the government through the decree arrived in a piecemeal fashion when they arrived at all. The Gadsden Purchase, solemnized in the La Mesilla Treaty of 1853, however, made the point moot for those families that had settled in the purchased territory. Due to the lack of support from Mexican officials for their

³⁷ Martín González de la Vara, “The Return to Mexico: The Relocation of New Mexican Families to Chihuahua and the Confirmation of a Frontier Region,” in Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel, eds., *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 51. In late 1849 the Rio Grande shifted into a different channel (as it had a history of doing) which meant that, in effect, the border established by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had moved. The Chihuahua towns of San Elizario, Isleta, and Socorro were then north of the river. U.S. troops occupied the towns and their inhabitants moved across the river to the colony of Guadalupe, established for repatriates. La Mesilla was founded shortly thereafter, also as a repatriate colony.

resettlement, as well as “irregularities in their relocation and the allocation of lots,” some *mesilleros* favored the official transfer of their colony to U.S. jurisdiction.³⁸

Whatever their feeling about the Gadsden Purchase, *mesilleros* settled into their lives as American citizens in southern New Mexico. They actively participated in the religious and political culture of Doña Ana County. In August of 1871 an electoral contest between Democrat José Manuel Gallegos and Republican José Francisco Chávez resulted in a bloody riot that left 8 or 9 people dead (reports varied) and scores of others wounded. Electoral politics were also deeply intertwined with Catholic belief in southern New Mexico. In the days leading up to the conflict, Padre José Jesús Baca, senior Catholic priest in La Mesilla, communicated the idea that Gallegos’s affiliation with the Democratic Party and his sympathetic stance toward the U.S. government and legal system posed a threat to Mexican Catholics. An extension of the conflicts between U.S. clerics and *nuevomexicano* priests that characterized religious life in the northern part of the territory, Baca had requested to retain his affiliation with the Diocese of Durango and was thus assigned to a parish in southern New Mexico. In doing so, he signaled his continued loyalty to the Mexican nation. His declaration on the election brought *mesilleros*’ religious and political loyalties into sharp relief. Additionally, both Gallegos and Chávez were seasoned politicians. Each accused the other of perpetrating electoral fraud, further inciting their respective partisans. On 27 August both Democrats and Republicans held simultaneous rallies in the town plaza. The scene reflected the culture of nineteenth-century American electioneering, complete with free whiskey and live

³⁸ De la Vara, “The Return to Mexico,” 47, 53-54; and José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially Chapter 3.

bands that taunted the opposition party. Violence broke out as the two groups came face to face in front of San Albino's church. As reported in the *New York Times*, "the Plaza has been literally drenched with human blood." Troops from Fort Selden flooded the town to put an end to the unrest.³⁹

Once the dust had settled, Gallegos claimed victory in the election. Shortly thereafter a group of Republican mesilleros decided to abandon their homes in southern New Mexico and resettle in northwestern Chihuahua. Historian Anthony Mora postulates that these people "took the Republican defeat as a bad omen for their future in the valley, perhaps taking to heart Baca's earlier warnings about the Democratic Party." Alternatively, Hernández argues that the exact motives of the migrants remain unclear based on the documentation. However, "it seems that the opportunity to head south deeper into Chihuahua provided an effective outlet for the disgruntled. And perhaps it provided an avenue for historical silencing, something common to the experience of dissenters forced into a migratory and refugee status."⁴⁰ Whatever their reasoning, the international border provided a barrier of refuge. Ninety-six families initially followed the lead of Ignacio Orrantía (who had served as U.S. deputy marshal for Doña Ana county), and Fabián Gonzales (Doña Ana County Sheriff). Orrantía and Gonzales petitioned for official land grants from the Mexican government, but began the migration before any land had been formally issued to them. The group of migrant mesilleros looked to create new opportunities for themselves and their community in the isolation of

³⁹ Anthony Mora, *Border Dilemmas: Racial and National Uncertainties in New Mexico, 1848-1912* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 113-114; Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 174-177; and *New York Times*, 4 September 1871.

⁴⁰ Mora, *Border Dilemmas*, 114; and Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 178.

northern Chihuahua. In the process they reasserted their Mexican citizenship rights and called on both the federal government and state officials in Chihuahua to support and legitimize their efforts. Although Mexican policymakers at both levels of government had actively pursued repatriation programs during the 1850s (in the direct aftermath of the U.S.-Mexican War), by the 1870s such concerns had largely dissipated. They had to be reminded, it seemed, of the value of bringing Mexican Americans back into the fold of the nation.⁴¹

Such were the circumstances of the founding of the repatriate colony of La Ascensión, first settled by 150 families from La Mesilla, New Mexico, in 1872. Conflicts between liberal factions in Mexico City, coupled with wars meant to subjugate once and for all the *indios bárbaros* of the North, meant little-to-no government support for their migration and resettlement.⁴² Yet, just as they and their immediate forebears had done in La Mesilla twenty years earlier, settle they did. The location of their new community near the Ojo (spring) de La Ascnsión (also known as el Ojo de Federico) was squarely within the homeland of Chiricahua Apaches, a fact that at least some of the repatriates understood. Indeed, the first exploring party from La Mesilla had been disbanded in late 1871 by hostile overtures from Apache bands in the area along the Casas Grandes River. The Ojo de La Ascensión made the nascent townsite attractive; as early as the 1850s members of the Mexican Boundary Commission had recommended the region as a potential colonization site due to the springs. The commissioners also argued that the

⁴¹ Mora, *Border Dilemmas*, 114; and Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 180-181.

⁴² For an overview of the political situation in central Mexico, see the Introduction to Guy P. C. Thomson and David G. LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

placement of a colony so near the international border would shore up Mexico's claims to northwestern Chihuahua by acting as a buffer between it and the United States.

Specifically, such officials were thinking in terms of the longstanding conflict between colonists in the North and Apache peoples. Powerful oligarch and governor Luis Terrazas supported the petitions of Ascensionenses for legal title to their lands and improvements.

In so doing, his reasoning mirrored that of the Boundary Commission, as well as the generation of Spanish officials that had initiated the line of northern presidios. As Hernández points out, "Chihuahua's foremost Indian fighter, Governor Terrazas represented the common belief about the benefits of repatriate colonization: settling repatriates along the extensive deserts would achieve a number of mutually beneficial goals for all concerned parties, particularly the state of Chihuahua where the social context between the state and its military colonists was the key to civilizing the frontiers against the Indios Bárbaros." A little over two decades following the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, official Mexican policy still viewed repatriation as the key to final pacification of Apaches and other indigenous groups in the North.⁴³

In their petitions for legally sanctioned land grants, the leaders of the infant community of La Ascensión framed their claims in similar terms. In a 4 May 1872 letter to the President of the Republic, Benito Juárez, *vecinos* Cesáreo Durán and Julián Apodaca reminded Juárez that their colony was "the closest to the frontier where the Gila Apaches frequently made their incursions." The implication was that the presence of their town would fortify the border region against the seemingly unchecked movements of

⁴³ Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 183-189, quote on 187; Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión* (Chihuahua, Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2009), 37, 40; and Jesús Ramírez Caloca, "Ascensión" *Boletín de la Sociedad Chihuahuense de Estudios Históricos* 5, no. 1 (20 Diciembre 1943), 245-247.

Apache peoples. Additionally, they informed Juárez of their state of poverty and the many sacrifices they had made to rejoin the Mexican nation. Their petition was also considered in the Mexican Congress that same year. The official statement from the congressional Commission on Colonization supported their claims on the basis of the colony's proximity to Apache rancherías and the debt owed to potential Mexican repatriates by the federal government. The Commission reported that because "the colony of La Ascension is situated directly adjacent to the hordes of the bárbaros, and indeed within their range, it is readily understood that the colony will be an advanced guard to contain their invasions, and perhaps the first victim of their continued depredations." The Ascensionenses status as "Mexicans by birth" who "of no fault of their own became subjects of another nation" made them ideal colonists to hold the line against the Apaches and represent the interests of the Mexican nation, according to the Commission.⁴⁴

The Ascensionenses' Mexican heritage thus played an important role in their efforts to establish the colony. In a 7 May 1872 letter to the Ministerio de Fomento, Governor Terrazas emphasized that the Ministerio ought to consider the normalization of the colonists' lands "as a debt of justice to the petitioning colonists given that they were segregated from the republic by the Treaty of La Mesilla but have returned to become a part of the Mexican family." He went on to argue for the colonists' high levels of patriotism to the nation. Such nationalism qualified them for title to the five *sitios de ganado mayor* that they sought as the footing for their community.⁴⁵ As Alonso has

⁴⁴ Letter quoted in its entirety in Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión*, 42. Sexto Congreso Constitucional de la Unión, *Diario de Los Debates, Tomo III, Correspondiente al Tercer Periodo de Sesiones* (México, D.F.: Imprenta de José Mariano Fernández de Lara, 1873), 564.

⁴⁵ As Hernández points out, "one *sitio* equals one square league or 4,338 acres." The total of five *sitios* was 21,690 acres. *Mexican American Colonization*, 191, 201 n. 8. Additionally, the Ascensionenses'

shown, the residents of the presidial military colonies at Janos, Namiquipa, and San Buenaventura played the vital role of Apache fighters. As “part-time agents of violence,” they forged their places as “civilized” members of the Spanish Empire and then the Mexican Republic. Ascensionenses thus used similar discourse to carve out a place for themselves in northwestern Chihuahua. Yet, their land claims remained in limbo until an 1883 law granted them the five sitios they had worked to gain through legal and political channels. In the meantime, they received the lands that formed the physical basis for their community through *arrendamiento* (rent or lease).⁴⁶

The story of La Ascensión’s founding indicates that despite the similarities, its residents maintained a different relationship with the Chihuahuense and national governments than did the military colonists of the centuries’ old communities that surrounded it. All began as colonies, but Janos, Namiquipa, and those like them had been originally founded as garrisons to combat Apache peoples directly. War with the Chiricahuas and others, then, allowed their residents to gain honor, prestige, and land that they could hand down to their progeny. The Ascensionenses, on the other hand, used the more modern constructions of the border, land *deslindes* (surveys), and legal purchase of federal lands to build their community. Additionally, although they could not have realized it in 1872, their arrival in northwestern Chihuahua came just as the dominance of the bárbaros was waning. Conflicts with Apaches did impact their relationship to the land, including the types of improvements they made, but community identity was not

petition was not for a concession of land from the Mexican government; they intended to purchase federal lands through a series of payments that were to begin once they had their first successful harvest on the land. See, Sexto Congreso, *Diario de Los Debates*, 564.

⁴⁶ Terrazas’ letter quoted in its entirety in Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión*, 45; Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 184-189; and Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 139-142.

based on its people's ability to enact violence against the Chiricahuas. As Blyth argues in his study of Chiricahua peoples' relationship with Janos, such changes accompanied the imposition of the international border and they spelled the beginning of the end for the communities of violence that had fed off of each other for centuries. By the late 1860s, due to the Wars of the Reform and the imposition of Emperor Maximilian, presidial military colonies received very little from Mexico City in terms of funding and other support. In the absence of a well-maintained garrison, during the 1870s and 1880s, northwestern Chihuahua society increasingly militarized. Officials encouraged the residents of northern communities to wage war against Apaches. Many Ascensionenses thus participated in campaigns against Apaches during that period as Chihuahua officials continued their drive to pacify indigenous peoples through military violence.⁴⁷

Despite their immediate failure to secure clear legal title to their community lands, Ascensionenses began to demarcate homesites, fields, and irrigation projects upon their arrival in 1872. As they worked to construct canals, they quickly learned the water from the Ojo de Ascensión would not reach their fields. To remedy the situation, they petitioned the President for access to the water of the Rio de Casas Grandes and La Palotada spring; such petitions were only approved years later after locals had already tapped into the water supplies. During the first decade of town construction, conflicts with adjacent land owners and Chiricahuas periodically impeded such projects.

According to La Ascensión local historian Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, "Apache vandals" overpowered the settlers on two separate occasions in 1872. In 1873 the first brush with Apaches recorded in any detail occurred. Young boys Pantaleón Rocha, Juan Arroyos,

⁴⁷ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 186, and Chapter 7.

and Juan Holguín were surprised, but unharmed, by a group of Apaches who scattered the sheep they attended. Reportedly, the stolen sheep were sold on the San Carlos Reservation in southeastern Arizona. In 1878, as Victorio led his Chihene people in what proved to be the final campaigns to preserve their autonomy against U.S. and Mexican military efforts, Juan Zuloaga was assaulted by a group that reportedly formed part of Victorio's band. Zuloaga and his party were transporting "important cargo" to Corralitos by way of Guzmán when they were attacked. Several members of the group were wounded and the Apaches made off with the merchandise. In response, a hastily formed militia was raised in La Ascensión to pursue the raiders; however, the Apaches were nowhere to be found (and the militia did not long maintain the search). A similar situation faced another La Ascensión posse following an assault that left Encarnación Salais dead; the local pursuit of the Apaches was again for naught. Finally, Ramírez Tafoya recounts the kidnapping of a local boy "with the last name of Chávez." Whatever his experiences with the Chiricahuas, he was later taken in and adopted by a family in Santa Fe. All in all, the first generation of Ascensionenses were well aware that their town was taking shape on lands that Apaches had long dominated.⁴⁸

By and large the families who arrived in La Ascensión after 1872 were of *mediero* status. According to historian Jane-Dale Lloyd, "the term *mediero* describes a more impoverished rural farmer who works to provide for family consumption. He participates in the regional and local market on a small scale and owns his own farm implements. He may own a small plot of land; more likely the *mediero* enjoys access or usufruct to land

⁴⁸ Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión*, 34; Ramírez Caloca, 'Ascensión,' 253-254; and Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El proceso de modernización capitalista en el noroeste de Chihuahua (1880-1910)* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1987), 31.

through relations of kinship or *compadrazgo*.” Additionally, medieros were often engaged in wage labor in the region’s ranches, mines, and railroad projects. Yet, such people had “no permanent salary that supplements household income.” They also tended to be illiterate, unskilled laborers. The economic livelihood of such people, therefore, was quite tenuous and was often threatened by land and development legislation at the national and state level. In La Ascensión there were also several independent *rancheros*. These were “small-scale landowners who engage in agricultural production for local, national, and even international markets.” They employed medieros on their lands and they often provided them with usufruct land access.⁴⁹ Due to the slow process of legalizing the colony’s land and water claims, La Ascensión’s *rancheros* and medieros established their own system of resource usage as they constructed the town. The requirement of militia service to confront Apache bands placed a further burden on their economic situation.

Although the colonization of northwestern Chihuahua and U.S. policy to confine them to reservation plots placed great stress on the Chihene, for a time they were able to use the border to their advantage. By crossing back and forth between the United States and Mexico they could avoid the persecution of troops from both nations due to the two states’ inability to establish transnational cooperation prior to 1882. Despite the fixed international border that was intended to reorganize Apache space into the respective domains of the two nation-states, the Chiricahuas continued to dominate the area they

⁴⁹ Jane-Dale Lloyd, “*Rancheros* and Rebellion: The Case of Northwestern Chihuahua, 1905-1909, in Daniel Nugent, ed., *Rural Revolt in Mexico and U.S. Intervention* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1988), 89; and Jane-Dale Lloyd, *Cinco ensayos sobre cultura material de rancheros y medieros del noroeste de Chihuahua, 1886-1910* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2001), 3-4.

considered to be their homeland. The only reason they recognized the border at all was to use it as a means of playing U.S. and Mexican military forces off of one another. Yet, as leaders like Victorio and Juh understood by the late 1870s, Chiricahua methods of dominance were increasingly losing ground to the land regimes imposed by both Mexico and the United States. As historian Rachel St. John has observed, “the Apaches did not follow up their military domination with the creation of a formal boundary survey. Instead of maps and surveys, place names and patterns of movement demarked the landscape of Apache authority.” The military efforts of both governments focused on forcing Apache peoples to remain on reservations north of the international boundary. However, continued raiding remained a hallmark of Apache authority in the region. From the perspective of American newcomers, the ability to end raids and restrict Apaches’ movement to the reservations of southern Arizona and New Mexico promised to usher in an era of modern development that would be impossible so long as Apache “depredations” remained a fact of life in the region.⁵⁰

Such efforts to confine Chiricahuas to reservations resulted in Victorio’s break with American officials. During the late 1860s and the early 1870s, his Chihene band had been allowed to occupy the Warm Springs Agency, a reservation that centered on their

⁵⁰ Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 50-51, 57; and Thrapp, *Victorio*, 218. Although Apaches realized that their continued ability to evade capture depended on the lack of cooperation between the United States and Mexico, the two governments were slow to see the value of concerted efforts against the Chiricahua people. Several small-scale, informal agreements were reached during the 1870s that allowed forces from both sides to cross into the other nation while in pursuit of Apaches. During the campaign against Victorio’s people, for example, the Mexican government made a temporary allowance for U.S. troops to cross into Chihuahua to pursue the Chihene leader. Victorio’s death and the capture of many of his people at Tres Castillos in October 1880 underscored the value of such arrangements. In the summer of 1882 diplomats from the two nations signed an agreement which allowed that “regular federal troops of the two republics may reciprocally cross the boundary line of the two countries when they are in close pursuit of a band of savage Indians” (St. John, *Line in the Sand*, 58-59).

traditional homeland. Although Warm Springs warriors continued raids into Mexico (Victorio himself at times participated), Chiricahuas worked closely with several U.S. Indian Agents to maintain peace. An inconsistent national-level policy, however, switched back and forth between civilian and military oversight of the Apaches. The lack of coherent policies for the maintenance of Apache relations meant that different approaches toward reservation organization also came and went with the various U.S. agents and officers who presided over the Chiricahua people. Due to the ease with which many Apaches staged raids from the Warm Springs and the Chiricahua reservation, in southeastern Arizona near the border with Sonora, Agents John P. Clum and John Shaw backed a policy of concentration beginning in late 1876. Their plan was to round up Chiricahuas of all four bands and place them together at the San Carlos Reservation in southeastern Arizona.⁵¹

Victorio was hostile to the idea that his people should be forced to leave the lands that Ussen had bestowed to them, but he also desired to keep the peace. So, in the summer of 1877, he led his people to a site near Camp Goodwin on the designated San Carlos reservation, a place that Lieutenant Britton Davis referred to as “Hell’s forty acres.” Due to lack of water, sparse vegetation, extreme temperatures, and hostilities with other bands, Victorio quickly resolved that his people must leave San Carlos. By September malaria had afflicted both the young and old; Victorio reasoned that the only reason officials had sent them to San Carlos was “So that we will die.”⁵² On 2 September Victorio and Loco stole horses from White Mountain Apaches who were also at the

⁵¹ Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 186-191; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 145-147.

⁵² Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 141, 153.

reservation and made their escape. Although they longed to return to Warm Springs, where they had cached weapons and supplies in anticipation of an eventual return, they remained on the go in eastern New Mexico in order to evade capture. Finally, after a series of negotiations with military and Indian Department officials at Fort Wingate in the fall of 1877, they were allowed to return to Warm Springs for a time. Yet, due to headmen Geronimo's and Pionsenay's continued raiding throughout the border region, by the late summer of 1878 the Indian Department once again ordered the Chihene relocation to San Carlos. Instead of returning, however, Victorio led the bulk of his people, except for a few who were captured and taken to San Carlos, south into Mexico. By the following summer, Victorio once again attempted to negotiate with U.S. authorities for his people's return to Warm Springs. This time he brought his band to the Mescalero Reservation east of the Rio Grande in the Tularosa Mountains. It was there, however, that he made his final break with American authorities. When he heard rumors that he was to be arrested on charges of murder and horse theft, he led his people away from the reservation never again to submit to American (or Mexican) authority.⁵³

During the fall of 1879, U.S. military officials lost track of Victorio and his people. In Chihuahua, Governor Luis Terrazas complained to the U.S. Consul at Ciudad Chihuahua of Apache raids that had supposedly been facilitated by supplies received in the United States. Indeed, the people of the New Mexican town of Monticello (also referred to as Cañada Alamosa) had long maintained a trading relationship with Victorio, and they continued to supply his people after their flight from the reservation system.

⁵³ Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 195-212; Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 149-163; and Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 189-190. As Thrapp points out, one of the tragic ironies of the situation was that just as Victorio fled and others Chihenes were relocated to San Carlos, a plan to grant the Warm Springs to the Chihene once again had been finalized (p. 220).

Alternatively, however, many American settlers held that “the Apaches were armed and supplied by unscrupulous Mexican traders south of the line.”⁵⁴ Major Albert P. Morrow, one of the officers who pursued Victorio, quickly realized that due to the Chihene’s intimate knowledge of the landscapes of southwestern New Mexico, their capture was a near impossibility. In October, Victorio eluded Morrow’s pursuit and won several skirmishes with the American forces. By the middle of the month, their cat-and-mouse game led to the Lower Mimbres Valley; Morrow’s forces scoured the Florida and Tres Hermanas mountains and they cautiously crossed the border to explore the region near the Palomas Lakes. After a skirmish with Victorio’s band in the foothills of the Sierra Madres, Morrow led his men back to American territory. During the battle and the troop’s desperate search for water in the inhospitable Chihuahuan desert, one soldier was killed and two others wounded, according to the official report.⁵⁵

As word of Victorio’s presence in Chihuahua circulated, Colonel Joaquín Terrazas was called out of retirement by his cousin Luis to lead his state’s efforts against the Apaches. Joaquín gained a reputation as a hardened Apache fighter and an able leader during campaigns of the 1860s and early 1870s. During that time, he organized civilian residents of northwestern Chihuahua into a “Chihuahua-Colony Squadron” and successfully campaigned against the bárbaros. In November 1879, he learned that Victorio’s warriors had perpetrated a “double massacre” in the Sierra de la Candelaria north of Villa Ahumada. Following the engagement with Morrow, the Chihenes moved eastward toward the town of Carrizal. Sánchez, one of the Apaches who could pass as a

⁵⁴ Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 139, 172-173; and Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 239.

⁵⁵ Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 245-250.

Mexican because he had formerly been a captive in Chihuahua, entered the town dressed in the clothes of a *vaquero* he had killed. In town, he learned of plans to lure in Victorio's people through overtures of peace, get them drunk, and then massacre them. Instead, Victorio organized an ambush deeper in the Sierra; two separate parties from Carrizal followed the Apaches' trail directly into the ambush. All eighteen in the first group were killed, as were fifteen of thirty-five in the second. Victorio's men collected badly needed supplies, including horses, weapons, and ammunition, and set out toward the small lakes near the border. Colonel Terrazas viewed the massacre in the Sierra de la Candelaria as further evidence of the Apaches' cruel, barbarous nature.⁵⁶

With his second-in-command Juan Mata Ortíz, jefe político of Janos and an experienced Apache warrior himself, Terrazas prepared a campaign that persisted for almost a year, from November 1879 to October 1880. Shortly after the Candelaria massacres, as Mata Ortíz set out to recruit men for the impending hostilities, he learned that Asensionenses had been assaulted by Chiricahuas near the Lago de Guzman. Mata Ortíz rode to their aid; although the Ascensionenses had been saved, he reported that the Apaches fled with "a great, stolen, herd of horses and mules" toward the Palomas Lakes. Over the next several months, Victorio eluded Terrazas by crossing back into southern New Mexico, where he was able to hide in his people's beloved mountains and receive supplies from friends in Monticello and other towns. For a time he split his forces, and

⁵⁶ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 189-191; and Joaquín Terrazas, *Memorias: La guerra contra los Apaches* (1905, repr., Chihuahua: Centro Librero La Prensa, 1989), 92-93, 103-104.

one group of Chihenes, headed by Nana, engaged Texas Rangers in the Big Bend region.⁵⁷

By the summer of 1880, however, pressure from all sides began to multiply. Due to the continued allegations levied by officials in both Chihuahua and New Mexico against the other for allowing Victorio's band to resupply in their respective territories, the U.S. Consul at Ciudad Chihuahua suggested that Governors Luis Terrazas and Lew Wallace create a "private arrangement . . . for a mutual crossing of the border in order to pursue and fight the Apaches, who, according to the general impression in northern Mexico, 'have killed one hundred and fifty persons within the past six weeks.'" The limited, informal cooperation that the governors arranged proved to be quite successful. By the end of the summer, Mexican federal troops under Colonel Adolfo Valle withdrew from the campaign after several intense engagements with the Apaches. Terrazas and Mata Ortíz had grown accustomed to a lack of federal support for the wars against the Apaches and they continued the campaign with their volunteers from Janos, La Ascensión, Casas Grandes, and other northwestern Chihuahua towns. This time, however, Terrazas had aid from U.S. forces. Colonel George P. Buell provided reinforcements near Laguna de Patos, Lieutenant Charles Schaeffer did so in the Pinos Mountains, and Colonel Eugene A. Carr led his forces in the country between Corralitos and Janos.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 195; Terrazas, *Memorias*, 105; and Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 284-286.

⁵⁸ Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 257, 260, 299; and St. John, *Line in the Sand*, 58-59.

Yet, it was the Mexican forces under Terrazas and Mata Ortíz who conducted the siege against Victorio's people at Tres Castillos in October of 1880. Although the summer had passed, conditions in northern Chihuahua were still amazingly hot and dry. Victorio's band and Terrazas's forces alike were forced to travel in highly difficult conditions, constantly in search of watering holes, or *tinajas*. Many of these contained so much alkali that those who quenched their thirst suffered afterward from stomach pain and headaches. Due to such conditions, Victorio decided in council with Kaytennae, Nana, and Mangas (Mangas Coloradas's son) to seek temporary refuge at Tres Castillos, about 90 miles north of Ciudad Chihuahua along the highway connecting that city with Ciudad Juárez (still at that time called El Paso del Norte). Victorio knew that the three volcanic protrusions of Tres Castillos guarded a small lake and a supply of grass. Once his people had recuperated, the Chihene's plan was to set out for Juh's stronghold in the Blue Mountains/Sierra Madre.⁵⁹

During the first two weeks of October, Terrazas and Mata Ortíz followed Victorio's trail across the desert. Early in the month, Terrazas informed Colonel Buell that his services were appreciated (Buell's men had restricted the Apaches's access to life-giving watering holes), but because the Chircahuas had fled so deep into Chihuahua "he thought it best for the Americans to return to the United States." Buell complied with

⁵⁹ Thrapp is puzzled by Victorio's decision to head to Tres Castillos rather than to seek refuge in the Blue Mountains/Sierra Madres with Juh. He presents the Apaches's progress as a death march, "an exodus to nowhere, from the land of broken hopes to the land of no hope whatever. So toward the east Victorio led his people, his men almost out of ammunition, driving before them beasts to be their food, a crawling multitude under a pillar of dust there were no eyes to see save those of the vultures ever wheeling in the cloudless, burning sky, awaiting their turn, which was coming" (*Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 298). Chamberlain, on the other hand, explains the decision in terms of the summer heat and lack of sufficient water and supplies. She maintains that Victorio's ultimate goal was to unite his band with that of Juh far to the west of Tres Castillos, but that he sought a temporary reprieve (*Victorio*, 198-200).

his request. On October 15, as he approached Tres Castillos, Terrazas realized that he had Victorio's group within his grasp. His troops and their horses were battered and exhausted from the extensive ground they had covered during the pursuit. Telltale dust plumes alerted the battle-worn warrior that Victorio's band was concealed on the south peak of the Tres Castillos. Terrazas led his men to the left of the Chihenes's position and he ordered Mata Ortíz to lead his contingent around to the right, effectively surrounding the Apaches. Battle began in the late afternoon and continued well into the night. Around 10:00 a few in Victorio's band started a brush fire as a means of distracting and redirecting the Mexican forces. Their efforts proved to be in vain. By midnight both sides were engaged in close range, hand-to-hand combat. The Apaches fought almost to the last man: 62 warriors were slain along with 16 women and children. Terrazas sustained only three casualties and ten wounded. In the aftermath, Terrazas rounded up 68 prisoners, 120 horses, 38 burros, "and rescued two captive Mexican boys." It wasn't until he surveyed the carnage following the battle that Terrazas realized Victorio had been slain; one of the rescued boys pointed the cadaver out to him. Mauricio Corredor, head of the Tarahumara detachment in Terrazas's forces, received the credit for killing the great Apache headman.⁶⁰

The result of the massacre at Tres Castillos was that the Chiricahua people were forever wrested from the lands that Ussen had granted to them. In order to establish the sovereignty of the United States and Mexico on their respective sides of the international boundary, they dispossessed the Chihene and Chokonon of their homelands, restricting

⁶⁰ Quote in Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*, 195; Terrazas, *Memorias*, 116-120; Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches*, 300-303; and Chamberlain, *Victorio*, 203.

them to the desolate San Carlos reservation. Remnants of the various Chiricahua bands, now under Nednhi leader Juh and Bedonkohe headman Geronimo, continued the struggle until 1886 when they were famously/infamously captured and exiled to reservation lands in Florida. In the course of the conflict, the Apaches brutally murdered Mata Ortíz in retaliation for his leading role in the violence against their people. Despite their deep connections to Ussen, each Chiricahua band suffered the wrath of Americans and Mexicans who desired their lands and resources. Their best efforts to maintain their centuries-old sacred homeland came to naught by 1886, although a few Apaches (most notably those who followed the erstwhile U.S. military scout known as the Apache Kid) continued to roam freely throughout the lands that held sacred meaning to them as a people. At times, they led daring and violent raids against settlements in both the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico, offering an eerie reminder that the towns, railroads, mines, ranches, and farms of the 1890s were built in contested spaces.

Additionally, future struggles were framed by the results of the violence of Apache land dispossession. In southern New Mexico, small-scale capitalists redefined the Lower Mimbres Valley as a landscape rich in resources ranging from minerals, to prime agricultural lands, to transportation thoroughfares. In 1881 the town of Deming was founded when the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads met in the desert to the south of Cooke's Peak and north of the Florida Mountains. The timing was not a mere coincidence; the death of Victorio and the scattering of his people was a sign that Apache dominance of the borderlands had essentially come to an end. The mindset of many American settlers, prospectors, railroaders, and investors who had come to the region reflected the notion that Apaches had to be removed and subjected to "civilizing forces"

in order for any true progress to be made. By 1882, Deming's economy based on the rail industry and mercantile trade enterprises attracted a slow, but steady, stream of settlers—many of them of Mexican heritage. According to local promoters, the town's future lay with its capacity to make a transportation and trade link with Mexico.⁶¹

As Mexican residents of the “Little Chihuahua” section of Deming, north of the railroad tracks, were “busy as bees making ‘dobies [adobies],” the *vecinos* of La Ascensión confronted a major challenge to their status within the Mexican nation. In 1883, they were finally awarded 21,690 acres of land from the federal government as the legally recognized townsite. An outside agent, Colonel Angel Boquet, was assigned to oversee land surveys that would determine how the land would be parceled out. Boquet took advantage of his position, as well as of the inconsistencies in previous land demarcation schemes, to downsize the lands possessed by locals. As “excess” lands became available through his new series of surveys, such lands were regarded as *terrenos baldíos* (idle lands) and they reverted to the possession of the federal government. Not only did medieros lose access to lands, but throughout northwestern Chihuahua they found that their relationship with the state had been redefined once the Apache threat had passed. For the residents of Janos and Namiquipa, their honor and claims to “civilized” lifeways were based on their active participation in the wars against Apaches. By the 1880s, however, many Mexican officials considered their practices to be a drag on modern progress. From the officials' perspective, the former military colonists' tendency to hold lands in common for the use of the community, as well as their adherence to local

⁶¹ Virginia Measday and George Pete Measday, eds., *History of Luna County, New Mexico, Supplement One* (Deming, N.Mex.: Luna County Historical Society, 1982), 7-8; and *Deming Headlight*, 18 March 1882.

usos y costumbres to define access to resources, exemplified antiquated practices that needed to be updated. Typically, the process of capitalist modernization that imposed private property regimes and legally defined access to resources placed long-time residents at a great disadvantage; such transitions were a form of dispossession in and of themselves.⁶²

The ensuing regional struggles over resources and rights, both legal and political, underscore the notion that cycles of violence were not brought to a close by the dispossession and removal of Chiricahuas in the border region that centers on the Lower Mimbres Valley. Instead, violence was repackaged in newer modes of land and resource use and development. In the process, medieros and other locals were in turn dispossessed of their prior access to land and, as a group of people, recast as “uncivilized.” Land surveys (called *deslindes* on the Mexican side of the border) and the privatization of water and other precious resources placed great stress on their ability to continue their patterns of subsistence and sustain their regional economies. Acres of terrenos baldíos passed into the hands of wealthy capitalists, many of them Americans. In the course of the violent redefinition of property rights along modern, capitalist lines, many medieros in and around La Ascensión were pushed toward physical violence that targeted the symbols of such development, ensuring the continuation and intensification of violence along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. Efforts to develop a transnational rail corridor through the heart of the Lower Mimbres Valley (a line that would have connected Deming and La Ascensión) best exemplify such developments, and are the subject of the next chapter.

⁶² *Deming Headlight*, 25 March 1882; Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 191; Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 124-131; and Aparecida de S. Lopes, *De Costumbres y Leyes*, 201-205.

Chapter 3:

The Violence of Capitalist Accumulation in the Borderlands: The Story of the Failed Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific Railroad

“From Deming for several hundred miles southward to Guerrero, the line will be a great trunk, with feeders from there to the Pacific, to the south and to the east. The outlet of these lines and their connection with the system of American railways will be here, at Deming, which is thus made the point of distribution for all that traffic to the east the north, and the west, and also the point of concentration from all these sources for the return of southbound trade.” –*Deming Headlight*, 7 September 1889

“The Mormons have established a considerable colony in Mexico, 100 miles south of Deming, along the Boca and other valleys, in the vicinity of La Ascension. Deming is their nearest supply point, and numbers of them are seen here from time to time on supply expeditions. Their purchases from Deming merchants not infrequently amount to several thousand dollars a week. They are located on the immediate line of the Deming, Sierra Madre & Pacific Railroad.” –*Deming Headlight*, 30 November 1889

“Deming is on the eve of another boom, J. W. Young, the boss Mormon railroad builder is figuring for purchase of the D. S. M. & G. road and proposes to push the work to completion. Large colonies of the L.D.S. are being established in Mexico, and this road is being built for their convenience.”—*Deming Headlight*, 17 January 1891

On 4 July 1889, the focal point of the Independence Day celebrations in Deming, New Mexico, was the laying of the first rails of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific line, ceremoniously driven into the freshly graded landscape with four sharp silver spikes. The editor of the *Deming Headlight* heralded the event over a week in advance, emphasizing that this would be perhaps the world’s only railroad inaugurated with silver spikes. The spikes were forged locally from silver extracted from nearby mines, as well as the metal taken from donated Mexican coinage. In late June, Demingites were afforded the opportunity to view the spikes on display at the offices of McKeyes & Washington, a law and real estate firm. At the July 4 ceremonies, the railroad’s chief engineer, Ladislao

Weber, promised locals that they could “take a free ride with him to Mexico [on the completed railroad] about the middle of September.” The dream of a good road south to Mexico, a priority of capitalists since the town’s inception in 1881, seemed to be a near reality. Yet, the road was not completed by September 1889, and continued efforts to create the line that repeatedly promised to open up the exploitation of untouched resources in northern Chihuahua had still failed to produce results three years later.¹

The story of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad project is not merely the tale of a failed business venture. As historian Richard White has pointed out in his recent work on the transcontinental rail lines of North America, the railroads “created modernity as much by their failure as by their success.” In his study, White emphasizes that even as the railroad companies themselves folded time and again, they solidified a system of finance capitalism that allowed the presidents and boards of such companies to continue to reap a fortune from such failures.² The modern form of finance capitalism that came of age in the transcontinental ventures was very much present in the attempts to create the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific. Additionally, the Mexican state was heavily invested in creating the atmosphere in which corporations, both foreign and domestic, backed colonization and development projects throughout the nation. The infamous *compañías deslindadoras* (land demarcation or surveying companies) took advantage of the Porfirian government’s desire to transfer *terrenos baldíos* (public lands) to private hands as a means of modernizing the country. In more than just a few cases, the rights to

¹ *Deming Headlight*, 28 June 1889 and 5 July 1889.

² Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), xxi, xxv.

newly surveyed lands were attached to concessions for colonization and development rights (including railroads, telegraphs, mines, etc.).³ Within the Lower Mimbres Valley, the same forces that attempted to build the failed railroad did in fact create the towns of Palomas and Columbus and set the terms for violent revolt in the region.

In the case of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific, Mexican and American capitalists came together with local businessmen in Deming, as well as prominent Mormon settlers of Colonia Díaz, located six miles northwest of La Ascensión, and laid out plans to secure the capital and resources necessary to complete the railroad and develop the vast tract of land that adjoined its proposed route. As new colonists continued to stream into Colonia Díaz between 1886 and 1892, residents worked to build permanent homes and community buildings. For them, the completion of a railroad that would connect the colony to Deming thus had a twofold appeal: first, it would allow greater ease of migration south, and second, it promised to channel building materials and other needed supplies into the colony in a more regular fashion. Concurrently, Deming merchants and entrepreneurs welcomed the prospect of creating a consistent market for their wares. The capitalists connected to the *compañías deslindadoras* and colonization companies also invited the prospect of commerce in the region nearest to their land concessions. This set of dovetailing interests meant that the residents of Colonia Díaz allied themselves early on with economically influential groups in their immediate,

³ Robert H. Holden, "Priorities of the State in the Survey of the Public Land in Mexico, 1876-1911" *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 70, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 579-581; Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 72-82. José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), argues convincingly that Porfirian colonization projects were also driven by the government's desire to repatriate Mexican people from the Southwestern United States as ideal colonists, especially along the border. See pp. 62-63 and Chapters 5-7.

transnational region. Leaders like Bishop William Derby Johnson, Jr., forged connections with the elites of Deming that outlasted the failure of the railroad company and linked colonists to their neighbors to the north who supported their prosperity in the 1890s, as well as their dark hour of necessity when revolutionary violence forced them from their community in the summer of 1912.

Conversely, however, this type of alignment enhanced the social and economic distance between Díaz colonists and local Mexican communities such as La Ascensión and Palomas. As recent monographs by historians José Angel Hernández and Ramón Ramírez Tafoya illustrate, the population of La Ascensión was divided into competing political and economic factions. Rafael Ancheta's contested election as municipal president in 1892 exploded into a violent episode that left Ancheta and several of his supporters dead. At issue was Ancheta's collusion with engineer Angel Boquet, who had conducted dubious and corrupt land surveys that dispossessed many colonists of their lands. When news of the 6 January revolt reached Colonia Díaz a "peace committee" led by Joseph H. James (one of Bishop Johnson's counselors) was dispatched to aid local militia forces from Janos in putting a stop to the violence.⁴ In taking this stance, the colonists illustrated their support for the pro-Ancheta faction in Ascensión and, by extension, for the patterns of land tenure cast as the forces of modernity by the Porfirian state and its capitalist supporters, but viewed as unjust means of dispossession by a faction of small landholders in La Ascensión.

⁴ Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 201-205; Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión* (Chihuahua, Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2009) 92-101; Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión antes y después de la revolución* (Chihuahua, Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2011), 57-64; Joel H. Martineau Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter CHLA].

The dual violences of original accumulation through land dispossession and targeted armed revolt formed a sort of dialectic through which the towns of Palomas and Columbus were born. These types of violence were distinct from the Apache removal campaigns described in Chapter 2, often rooted more in the implication of physical violence than in its practice. Yet, due to the reallocation of access to resources, local people did experience real harm as a result of their dispossession. As Karl Marx theorized in the first volume of *Capital*, the “pre-history” of capitalism illustrates its reliance on “primitive,” or original, accumulation. Marx compared this stage in capitalist development to “original sin in theology,” a crucial element in the founding myth of the new economic order. The concept of original accumulation is ever-present in capitalist ventures, yet hidden from plain sight by the various ideologies that accompany the imposition of new property regimes or development programs.⁵ Such ideologies include notions of Progress, modernity, and civilization set in opposition to their antitheses, degeneration, antiquation, and savagery. It was through this type of framework that violent dispossessions of Apaches from their lands were cast as heroic actions to incorporate the borderlands into the modern world of civilization and order.

⁵ Although Marx’s concept has traditionally been translated “primitive accumulation,” I follow the reasoning and translation of Mark Neocleous in my use of “original accumulation.” Marx drew the concept from Adam Smith’s “previous accumulation,” meaning the supposed accumulation of capital and property that had taken place prior to the existence of capitalist structures. Given this interpretation, “original” seems to capture the Marx’s stated meaning most accurately. See, Mark Neocleous, “War on Waste: Law, Original Accumulation and the Violence of Capital” *Science & Society*, 75, no. 4 (October 2011), 506-507; and Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, Samuel Moore, trans. (C. H. Kerr & Company, 1915), 784-785. My thinking along these lines has also been shaped by Sandro Mezzadra, “The Topicality of Prehistory: A New Reading of Marx’s Analysis of ‘So-called Primitive Accumulation,’” Arianna Bove, trans. *Rethinking Marxism*, 23, no. 3 (July 2011): 302-321; and Hilmar Farid, “Indonesia’s Original Sin: Mass Killings and Capitalist Expansion, 1965-66” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6, no. 1 (2005): 3-16.

The resultant spatialization portrayed the Lower Mimbres Valley as empty space, ripe for new mines, railroads, settlements, and industries.⁶ Throughout the 1870s and the 1880s, violence intensified between Apache peoples as government agents attempted to force them into reservation lands outside of their traditional homelands. As discussed in Chapter 2, in 1880 the cycle of violence between military forces of the United States and Mexico and the Mimbres Apache band led by headman Victorio ended in his death at Tres Castillos, Chihuahua.⁷ This conflict marked the detachment of Apache peoples from lands and resources that they considered theirs, making them available for modern exploitation. Original accumulation, then, was facilitated through the violent expulsion of those who previously claimed the region's land and resources. Although they received the brunt of the physical violence of the process, not only Apaches were dispossessed. Former part-time specialists in violence in the former presidio towns, as well as recently arrived repatriates from the Southwestern United States, lost access to resources that they considered to be theirs by virtue of usufruct or communal holding.

The timing of the foundation of communities in the Lower Mimbres Valley coincided with the Chihene's loss of their traditional homeland. The border communities

⁶ For a discussion of the ways in liberal ideals of "Progress" and "modernization" in both Mexico and the United States during the Porfiriato and Gilded Age, see Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 124-131; and Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 17-18.

⁷ For treatments of Apache dominance of the border region in the 1860s and 1870s as well as the pattern of escalating violence between Apaches, Americans, and Mexicans during the same period, see Chapter 2; Dan L. Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 266-267, 277-280; St. John, *Line in the Sand*, 51-53; and Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 60-63. Also, the *Deming Headlight*, 19 February 1895, reported that the Sierra Madres just to the south of the Lower Mimbres Valley "are classified as the richest mineral mountains in the world and offer alluring opportunities to prospectors. For a time the Apaches kept them from being prospected but in recent years there has been no danger from that source."

of La Ascensión, Deming, Colonia Díaz, Palomas, and Columbus (founded in 1872, 1881, 1886, 1888, and 1891, respectively), were (and are) all tied together by physiography, spatial proximity, and their location within traditional Apache territory. The distance between La Ascensión and Deming, the furthest points south and north in the region under scrutiny, is only about 100 miles. Although boosters of the Deming, Palomas, and Columbus townsites boasted an “inexhaustible” artesian water supply that promised to support the cultivation of crops ranging from alfalfa to corn to canaigre (also known as “Tanner’s Dock,” cultivated for tannin), the reality of the local environment was starkly different.⁸ The region is defined by desert landscapes, dotted with yucca and cactus, broken by small mountain ranges. The Mimbres River, which bestowed its name on the valley along the border, runs south from the Black Range in New Mexico. Approximately 30 miles to the northeast of Deming, the river becomes an underground aquifer that flows beneath the valley between the Florida and Tres Hermanas mountains, eventually feeding the Palomas Lakes a few miles south of the border. On the surface, erosion of the local mountain ranges through seasonal runoff created a deep alluvial plain. Late-nineteenth-century boosters heralded the Palomas Lakes as evidence of the great possibilities for artesian irrigation. The hidden water supply was crucial for the survival of Columbus and Palomas, as well as the municipal seats, Deming and La Ascensión, but it was hardly the agricultural engine promised by regional promoters. As Victorio and Joaquín Terrazas knew all too well, tinajas or watering holes were in short

⁸ See, for example, *Deming Headlight*, 9 August 1890, 4 July 1891, and 10 June 1893, as well as Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, Hellberg & Blair, “Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley, New Mexico” (El Paso, Tex.: Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, 1912). Canaigre is a root that grows in the region, known for its high tannin content. Local entrepreneurs hoped to cultivate it and create a hide tanning industry around the turn of the twentieth century.

supply in the desert along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border.⁹ This arid landscape, however, provided (and provides) a sense of continuity across the international boundary line and the unbroken geography indicates the region's interconnected history, as well as the arbitrary nature of the border itself.

Even while Apache peoples continued to dominate the area in the 1870s and 1880s, on the Mexican side of the line the region was peopled through the colonization policies of Porfirio Díaz's government. Although efforts to attract Mexican repatriates from the U.S. Southwest were initiated almost immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, promised funds to support relocation to northern Mexico were not forthcoming. The only successful repatriate colonies were those comprised of people who were able to shoulder the costs of migration without government support. This pattern continued throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century; the colony of La Ascensión was settled by Mexican repatriates from La Mesilla, New Mexico. As outlined in the previous chapter, the violent election riot of 27 August 1871 prompted those who had supported the losing candidate to relocate in northwestern Chihuahua. Despite initial conflicts with Apache groups near the Ojo de La Ascensión, as of May 1872 over 150 families from La Mesilla had migrated to the valley of La Ascensión where they worked to build new homes and lives.¹⁰

⁹ For descriptions of the region and its landscapes, see Townsite Company, "Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley," especially p. 6; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 12 July 1893; and Donald D. Brand, "The Natural Landscape of Northwestern Chihuahua" *University of New Mexico Bulletin, Geological Series* 5, no. 2 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1937), 71.

¹⁰ Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 98-99, 177, 183; Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión antes y después*, 38-39; and Martín de la Vara, "The Return to Mexico: The Relocation of Mexican Families to Chihuahua and the Confirmation of a Frontier Region, 1848-1854," in *The Chicano Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, Erlinda González-Berry and David Maciel, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 43-44.

Despite official policies that favored the colonization of Mexican repatriates along the northern border, the Mexican government was not prepared for their sudden relocation to La Ascensión. Colonists petitioned the Congress in Mexico City for official title to five *sitios de ganado mayor* in 1875, but their rights to the land upon which they had built their new town were not officially granted until 1883. In doing so, the settlers sought legal legitimation of their land ownership and usage to define their rights to the lands that they immediately began to cultivate. In the intervening years they held their lands in *arrendimiento* (rent or lease). This pattern of settlement prior to legal entitlement set a shaky foundation for the colony and land rights more generally in the region. A subsequent series of surveys did not agree in terms of the size of colonists' plots; each survey measured the plots differently. As argued by historian José Angel Hernández, "so were sown the seeds for competition, corruption, entrepreneurship, and social upheaval."¹¹ The situation in La Ascensión was further compounded as colonists faced difficulties in securing water rights to irrigate their parched fields.

1883 not only marked the year in which the colonists of La Ascensión were granted legal title to five *sitios de ganado mayor*. That year a new Land and Colonization law was passed in Mexico City and Colonel Angel Boquet was "assigned to the colony to oversee its administration and distribute land titles."¹² Although the Colonization Law was issued to clarify many of the issues that had arisen during the first years of La Ascensión's existence, it set terms that created a deep divide within the community itself. The law called for the "surveying, measurement, division, and valuation" of the nation's

¹¹ Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 184-185.

¹² *Ibid.*, 191.

terrenos baldíos in order to free up public lands for colonization.¹³ Boquet's responsibilities included conducting a new survey of La Ascensión to determine and legitimize individual colonists' rights to their plots of land. In the process, however, his survey undervalued and undersized a majority of the plots that Ascensionenses had been living on and working for over a decade. Boquet and his accomplices, the most prominent of which was Rafael Ancheta, then acquired the "surplus lands" in and around the colony which had reverted to the status of terrenos baldíos due to the survey. During the late 1880s, as residents of La Ascensión were dispossessed of their lands in this manner, social tensions and animosities compounded, culminating in the January 1892 revolt.¹⁴

In 1886, just a few miles northwest of La Ascensión, a different type of colony was founded. Colonia Díaz benefitted from the surveys as well as the 1883 Colonization Law, but it was composed of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons). Following on the heels of the Edmunds Anti-polygamy Act of 1882, church officials in Salt Lake City and Arizona began to search in earnest for lands in northern Mexico that might provide a refuge to polygamous Mormon families. While officials of the Mexican Mission in Mexico City worked to negotiate for suitable lands with government representatives there, small groups of Mormon families, led by Joseph H. James, set up a makeshift camp on the outskirts of La Ascensión in early 1885. By

¹³ *Legislación de Terrenos Baldíos, o sea complete colección de leyes, decretos, ordenes, circulares, reglamentos, contratos y demás disposiciones supremas relativas a terrenos baldíos de la república publicadas hasta el mes de septiembre de 1885* (Cd. Chihuahua: Imprenta y Librería de Donato Miramontes, 1885), 109. My paraphrase and translation; unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish are the author's. For more on 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: Chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁴ Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 182,192-194; Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla*, 103-106.

July, Apostle Erastus Snow, working with Apostle George Teasdale and William Derby Johnson, Jr., had completed negotiations with surveyor Ignacio Gómez del Campo for the purchase of 7,000 acres. Johnson and James led the group that surveyed and platted the town of Colonia Díaz in August 1886, and in October Johnson was sustained bishop of the Colonia Díaz Ward—the first LDS jurisdiction in North America outside of the United States.¹⁵

Just like the founders of La Ascensión, the Díaz colonists waited in legal limbo while their representatives secured title to the lands they wished to inhabit. Unlike the Ascensionenses, however, they used the surveys to their advantage. The Mormon colonists looked to purchase terrenos baldíos. And, from the moment of their arrival in the region, Díaz colonists relied upon the people of La Ascensión for their livelihood. Juan Holguín, La Ascensión's municipal leader in 1885, provided the first colonists with a campsite on his own lands in the northwestern section of the colony.¹⁶ This site, so close to town, provided protection from Apache bands that continued their struggle to hold on to their traditional lands in the area through the mid-1890s, even after the capture of Geronimo. Holguín allowed the colonists, whose number grew week by week, to remain camped on his land until the Mormons' land negotiations were finalized in mid-1886. Other Ascensionenses supported the Mormons' right to colonize the area when the acting governor of Chihuahua and some minor regional authorities ordered their

¹⁵ Extracts from the journals of A. F. MacDonald and W. Derby Johnson, Jr., 10 March-24 October 1886, Joel H. Martineau Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, CHLA; Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (1938, repr.; Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2005), 62; and Annie R. Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz* (Mesa, Ariz.: Self-published, 1972), 58-62.

¹⁶ Here, I use “municipal leader” because La Ascensión did not receive its own municipal president until 1891. See Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión antes y después*, 19; and *De La Mesilla*, 116.

immediate expulsion in May 1885. In 1886 and 1887, the colonists negotiated with Anastacio Azcarate and Zacarias, Pedro, and Juan Zozaya for access to the Palotada spring as well as access to the nearby Ojo Caliente. Water rights had been lacking in their land purchase contracts, so Azcarate and the Zozayas' assistance in this matter was crucial to the colony's ability to sustain its population and eventually flourish. The scarce water resources of the region had also been staked out by Ascensionenses of lesser economic means, however, setting the stage for conflict with their new neighbors as well.¹⁷

Although they considered themselves refugees in a foreign land, legalized forms of land and resource reallocation based on the *deslindes* provided the Mormons with access to their colonies. Additional colonists trickled into Colonia Díaz throughout the rest of the decade, and Bishop Johnson worked with colonist Alexander F. McDonald and LDS officials operating in Mexico City to create the Díaz Colonization Company to manage the continued migration and settlement of their coreligionists. During negotiations with Mormon representatives in Mexico City, Porfirio Díaz raised concerns over the Mormons' desire to hold land so near the border, but the incorporation of the colony's landholdings allowed them to overcome this potential obstacle to their expansion in northwestern Chihuahua.¹⁸ Indeed, a Mexican law dating back to 1856 expressly prohibited foreigners from owning land within about sixty miles (the specified unit was twenty leagues) of the border. Such legislation stood as evidence of Mexicans'

¹⁷ Ramírez Tafoya, *La Ascensión*, 19-22; Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization*, 187-190; and "Water Rights Contract, Díaz Ward, Mexican Mission," LR 2271 22, Folder 1, CHLA.

¹⁸ Excerpts from Alexander F. Macdonald's Journal, April 1885, Joel H. Martineau Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, CHLA.

fears of renewed encroachments on their national territorial sovereignty following the U.S.-Mexico War. As historian Rachel St. John has pointed out, American citizens were able to acquire lands in the forbidden zone along the international boundary by forming Mexican corporations. By taking that route, they could maintain their American citizenship status as individuals while simultaneously gaining corporate Mexican citizenship privileges. As illustrated by St. John, “any company incorporated under the laws of Mexico carried all the rights of citizenship, save voting.”¹⁹ The Mormon colonists thus formed various companies, including the Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company and the Díaz Colonization and Dublan Land and Water Corporations, to gain legal access to land and water rights in their adopted country.²⁰ Additionally, the first Mormon representatives to Mexico had been interested in northwestern Chihuahua as a prime colonization site because of the prospect of a proposed railroad that “from Deming will pass up this valley to Casas Grandes and Chihuahua and connect with the Mexican Central R.R.”²¹

The rail line under discussion in Deming and La Ascensión as early as 1885 was not proposed in concrete form until a couple of years later. In 1887 Luis Huller, a Mexican national of German origin, received several different railroad concessions from the Secretaría de Fomento for lines in Baja California, Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Chiapas. Due to his vast wealth and extensive involvement in projects to colonize and

¹⁹ St. John, *Line in the Sand*, 79-81.

²⁰ The companies were key for the initial land acquisitions for the Mormon colonists, but with time many of them decided to become naturalized Mexican citizens.

²¹ Entry for 8 January 1885, [microfilmed] A. F. Macdonald Journal, Taylor Orden Macdonald Collection, CHLA; and Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 65.

build modern rail systems throughout Mexico, the American press often referred to him as the “Mexican Jay Gould” or the “Mexican Vanderbilt.”²² Among his various rail concessions was the Sonora, Sinaloa y Chihuahua grant which provided Huller and his companies with the right to build a rail line from Guaymas, Sonora, through the Sierra Madres “at the most practicable points,” and to Ciudad Chihuahua where the line would connect with the Mexican Central Railroad.²³ He also contracted with the Secretaría de Fomento, Colonización e Industria to construct a line from Ciudad Chihuahua, through Guerrero, and northward through “Colonias Juárez, Porfirio Díaz y Palomas to a point convenient to the boundary line with the United States.”²⁴ This last leg of the proposed rail line was vital to the success of land and colonization grants that Huller received from the Mexican government in 1888. That year he signed a contract with Secretario de Fomento Carlos Pacheco which gave him ownership of a section of northwestern Chihuahua known as the Palomas tract. When it was originally conceded to the compañía deslindadora of Luis García Teruel in 1885, the tract encompassed 1.76 million acres (712,300 hectares) directly adjoining the Chihuahua-New Mexico border. Prior to taking control of the plot, Huller purchased adjoining lands from other deslindadoras and hacendados in northwestern Chihuahua. In a deed dated 10 May 1887, he acquired 61,776 acres (25,000 hectares) in the Galeana district from the company of Ignacio

²² *Deming Headlight*, 1 February 1890; and AP dispatch of Huller’s obituary printed in the *Daily Citizen* [Ottawa] and various other papers, November 1891.

²³ Contrato Luis Huller para su construcción, 87-22-1, Subfondo 87, Fondo Ferrocarriles, Archivo General de la Nación, México, D.F. [hereafter AGN]. For further details on 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 Mexico* 19 January, 1886, p. 3; “Huller Still at It,” *Weekly New Mexican Review* 7 June 1888, p. 3; “Very Favorable,” *Albuquerque Morning Democrat* 30 August 1888, p. 4; and “In a Mexican Prison,” *The New York Herald* 13 February 1889, p. 10.

²⁴ Informe de George H. Sisson, 86-5-1, Subfondo 86, Fondo Ferrocarriles, AGN.

Gómez del Campo. And in August 1887 he purchased plots of 574,812 acres (232,618 hectares), 35,593 acres (14,404 hectares), and 210,403 acres (85,147 hectares) from Azúnczolo y Socios, Don Luis Terrazas, and Ignacio Gómez del Campo, respectively. In all, Huller's land holdings in northwestern Chihuahua totaled just over 2.6 million acres (just over 1 million hectares).²⁵

In an effort to make this gargantuan land purchase profitable, Huller worked through partners in the International Company of Mexico (incorporated in Hartford, Connecticut) to attract settlers and develop the area's resources. He also negotiated with Carlos Pacheco for a new colonization concession. Under the Mexican Colonization Law of 1883 potential colonists had to receive certification from a consular agent or from "a company or enterprise that had been authorized by the Executive to bring colonists into the Republic."²⁶ On 4 June 1888, Huller signed a contract with Carlos Pacheco that granted him "and the Company or Companies which he may organize" such authorization from the executive for the colonization of his Palomas lands. Under that contract, Huller's company was bound "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." The contract also granted the leeway for the company to choose the places on its lands that "it may deem most convenient for the rapid growth of the colonies."

²⁵ Letter from Garfield and Rhodes to Henry W. Anderson, Agente de la Comisión de Reclamaciones Mixtas, 1 August 1925, Correspondence relative to the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, Box 349a, Entry 125a, RG 76: International Claims Commission, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. [hereafter NARA].

²⁶ *Legislación de Terrenos Baldíos*, 110.

Additionally, the population of such colonies was to be at least 60 percent Mexican nationals, with preference given to repatriates from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.²⁷

Following the Apache removal of the 1880s, the Mexican government favored growth schemes that would both populate the border region with people of Mexican heritage and simultaneously bring modern forms of capital and infrastructure to the nation. Although all of the pieces weren't in place until June 1888, Huller evidently had a master plan for this type of development in the Palomas tract from the moment he started to make land purchases and sign colonization contracts. As early as November 1887 he began to forge ties with entrepreneurs in Deming who supported his Deming and Sierra Madre Railroad Company. At about the same time, he disclosed his plans to create a new town called Palomas (identified as "Palomas City" in U.S. newspaper reports) about thirty eight miles south of Deming, directly on the proposed rail line, and about four miles south of the international line.²⁸ The creation of the town of Palomas was the first step in Huller's plans to develop and populate the region. Newspapers on both sides of the border heralded the town's official founding on 17 November 1887 (about seven months before the colonization contract), and the people of Deming took interested notice. Over the next few years Deming merchants provided the bulk of the supplies for the physical construction of the fledgling colony. Settlers in southern New Mexico recognized the potential of the colony to make their region an important port of entry and

²⁷ Secretaría de Fomento, *Contract Entered Into Between The Secretary of Public Works, General Carlos Pacheco, and Luis Huller, Esq., for the Colonization of Lands called "Palomas," situated in the District of Galeana, State of Chihuahua* (México, D.F.: Printing Office of Joaquin Guerra y Valle, 1889), 3-4.

²⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, 26 November and 18 December 1887. Although the 1887 concession specifically stated that the railroad would also pass through the Mormon colonies Díaz and Juárez, those colonists were not a key part of the early planning and development stages.

trade point between the two nations and they put all of their support behind the success of Palomas and the railroad that would connect the two towns. Despite the efforts of Huller, his various companies, and the residents of Deming, however, Palomas initially grew at a slow rate.

Huller placed Ladislao Weber in charge of the nascent colony; in reports on Palomas in borderlands newspapers, Huller and Weber were routinely listed as the leading duo of colonization and railroad efforts. Weber held the title of Chief Engineer, and was at times referred to as President of the Palomas colony. He took up residence in the town itself at its inception and made regular trips to Deming in an effort to boost the new townsite and secure supplies for the various construction projects taking place there. Weber was also in charge of the grading work for the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific line. Notices in *El Eco de Palomas*, the colony's short-lived weekly, and one-page broadsides advertised the town's advantages to potential colonists. Weber was listed as the contact person, via his office in Deming, for parties interested in relocating to the colony. The inaugural issue of the paper made the unsubstantiated claim that "inhabitants of La Ascensión, Casas Grandes, and Janos, when informed of the good climate and accommodations that this nascent town has to offer, wish to leave their places of residence to become part of this small town."²⁹ Broadsides printed by Huller's company reasserted many of the newspaper reports' declarations, touting the great water supply provided to the town by the surrounding springs and lakes, as well as the great lands of which colonists could receive 25 acres and "un solar" (homesite) completely free of

²⁹ *El Monitor Republicano* [México, D.F.], 26 January, 7 February, and 16 March 1888 contain extracts from *El Eco de Las Palomas*. Unfortunately, there are no extant copies of *El Eco*.

charge. And, in line with the stipulations of the colonization contract, “Mexican residents of California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas . . . who desire to return to the refuge [seno] of the beloved mother country” were specifically singled out for the benefits of the Palomas colony.³⁰

The number of repatriates that actually relocated to Las Palomas remains uncertain due to a paucity of records that relate their arrival. Few, if any, locals from surrounding towns rushed to relocate in the new colony. Yet, there were several capitalists willing to place their fortunes behind the prospect of the colony and railroad. Aside from Ladislao Weber and George H. Sisson, Colonel Andrew O. Bailey, a Massachusetts native who retained his Civil War rank long after the fact, was foremost among this group of investors. Bailey was independently wealthy, holding stock in Standard Oil and the Hudson Bay Company. However he had come to know Huller, Bailey was willing to relocate to Palomas not only due to promised prosperity, but because of his tubercular son, Frank. The dry, warm climate of southern New Mexico and northern Chihuahua was known for its salubrious impact on people who were plagued with tuberculosis. As Huller increasingly spent more of his time in Mexico City, Bailey moved his family into the luxurious Huller house in Las Palomas and took charge of the town’s day-to-day business. Additionally, in 1891 and 1892, through his own efforts and those of his wife, Charlotte, and another son, Lester, to purchase existing homesteads, the Bailey family acquired 648 acres along the northern side of the international boundary. The Bailey family then kept homes on both sides of the line. In the United States, Bailey

³⁰ Broadside “La Colonia de Las Palomas,” 1888, Caja UI1350, Expediente 479, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

constructed a two-story frame house and began his efforts to promote his new venture, the Columbus township, which was recognized with a post office in 1891.³¹

The entrepreneurs and capital that legal realignment of land and resource rights attracted to the Lower Mimbres Valley signaled the arrival of modernity and Progress. The Palomas project was certainly well advertised and staffed, and it gave rise to most of the key development efforts along the Chihuahua-New Mexico boundary during the late 1880s and 1890s. The twin border towns of Palomas and Columbus were founded as a direct result of efforts to colonize and modernize the Palomas tract, and the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad seemed constantly to be at the point of near completion (or near construction) during that same period. The Palomas tract and its various railroad, colonization, mining, and water concessions also provided reasons for residents of the communities on both sides of the border to come together. Despite the fact that the effort to build the railroad ultimately failed, during the attempt Palomas was founded and the Díaz colonists forged ties with the communities of Deming and Columbus that might not have otherwise materialized. The railroad was also a symbol of the economic liberalism of the Porfiriato that separated hundreds of thousands of Mexican people from the land and their ability to maintain their livelihood. Such conditions sowed the seeds for discontent and armed revolt in northwestern Chihuahua adjacent to the international border.

³¹ Ray Sherdell Page, *Columbus, NM: Queen of the Mimbres Valley* (Silver City, N. Mex.: Page 1 Publishers, 2001), 6-7; Richard Dean, "Founder of Columbus, Colonel A. O. Bailey," unpublished manuscript, Personal Archive of Richard Dean, President of the Columbus Historical Society, Columbus, New Mexico; and Bill McGaw, "Bailey Family, Founders of Columbus, Knew Tragedy" *The Southwesterner* (April 1964): 3, 20.

The seeds of conflict were a normal side effect of capitalist development, but most of its observers and participants never made the connection. Even among the capitalists and investors themselves, strife was a regular component of their dealings. Although in 1887 and 1888 hopes were high for the speedy construction of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific line, the venture was unstable from the get-go. Locals in Deming (and later Colonia Díaz and Columbus) viewed Luis Huller, George H. Sisson, and Ladislao Weber as men who were fully dedicated to the cause of their railroad and colonization projects. Yet, Huller and Sisson, as agents of the Connecticut-based International Company of Mexico, had many other, potentially more profitable ventures also on their minds in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In terms of railroad concessions alone (not counting land grants and purchases, colonization projects, or shipping rights of way that Huller also owned), Huller and Sisson—sometimes on behalf of the International Company, sometimes as individuals—received rights and subsidies to build lines in Baja California, Sonora, Sinaloa, Chiapas, and Chihuahua. In all, this meant that they had committed to build at least six different roads in Mexico.³² The attention of the company's agents was thus spread quite thin.

In Deming, local reports began to tie the town's future to the success of the coming railroad. The town itself had been founded at the meeting place of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads in 1881. Demingites, therefore,

³² Francisco R. Almada, *El Ferrocarril de Chihuahua al Pacífico* (México, D.F.: Editorial Libros de México, 1971), 73-75; International Company of Mexico, *Description of Lands in Lower California For Sale by the International Company of Mexico: Absolute Patent Title from the Federal Government of Mexico* (San Diego, Cal.: Ferguson, Bumgardner & Co., 1887), 2. George H. Sisson was the International Company's Assistant General Manager, operating out of San Diego, California. Luis Huller, a Mexican citizen, worked as the Company's Land Commissioner out of Mexico City. The various contracts for rail and land concessions issued by the Mexican Government in the 1880s specifically listed the names of Huller and Sisson.

recognized the power of rail lines to enhance the local economy as well as the size of their town. Throughout 1888 Huller, Sisson, and Weber frequented Deming to promote their railroad to potential local investors. Prominent citizens, including Frank Siebold and B. Y. McKeys, purchased stock in the Chihuahua and Sierra Madre Railway Company, officially incorporated in Deming on 25 February 1889. H. L. Warren, Joseph C. Tiffany, Charles Schofield, Sigmund Lindauer, and Gustav Wormser, all prominent merchants and politicians in Deming, were named as the company's incorporators. Charles H. Dane & Sons, a local construction enterprise, positioned itself to receive the surveying and grading work for the line.³³ Following on the heels of the company's inauguration, stories ran in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* and *St. Louis Republic* announcing that work on the new railroad into Mexico was to "begin at Deming about April 15."³⁴ These developments led to the ceremonious laying of the silver spikes on 4 July 1889.

Underneath the surface, however, the situation was unsteady. Luis Huller's Palomas concerns had not developed as planned. The colony of Las Palomas was in a state of destitution. Additionally, plans to relocate the customs house to that point from La Ascensión created animosity with Asencionenses. And, the overextended Huller found himself in financial and legal trouble at about the same time. In January 1889, the International Company sold out to a London syndicate. For reasons that are unclear, the new British operators of the company clashed with Huller. In February 1889, the company's legal representatives charged him with a breach of trust for having failed to

³³ For the regular visits of Huller and his associates to Deming, see *Deming Headlight*, 21 and 28 September, 5 October, and 23 November 1888, as well as 1 and 8 February 1889. For the incorporation of the local railroad company, see *Deming Headlight*, 1 March 1889.

³⁴ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 5 March 1889; and *St. Louis Republic*, 7 March 1889.

pay the balance owed the Secretaría de Fomento for land concessions made to the company in Sonora. Although Huller was arrested in Mexico City and indicted for criminal actions, including embezzlement, he asserted that he was the victim of the company's attempt to sully his name in order to avoid paying the amount still due on the Sonora lands. Although it is difficult to ascertain who was actually in the wrong, Huller came out on top. The International Company folded shortly after the charges against Huller were dropped. Since he and Sisson were personally named in the majority of the International Company's contracts with the Mexican Government, they retained the rights to those lands and construction projects. In April 1889, Huller transferred the Palomas tract to the Northwestern Colonization and Improvement Company of Chihuahua. Despite the name, the company was incorporated in Deming under the laws of New Mexico Territory and backed financially by a group of Chicago capitalists. Huller then transferred the rail concession to the Chihuahua and Sierra Madre Company.³⁵ Despite the collapse of the parent corporation, Huller and Sisson remained in control of the profitable projects through their astute manipulation of the world of corporate finance.

Unfortunately for locals in the New Mexico-Chihuahua border region, efforts to construct the railroad and develop the Palomas tract did not directly benefit from these corporate turns of events. Various factors kept the progress of grading and other preparations for the road moving at a snail's pace. Despite local support for the venture in Deming, as well as the subsidies that accompanied the concession from the Mexican

³⁵ Emilio Rabasa, *Luis Huller, acusado de abuso de confianza a la Compañía Internacional de México* (México, D.F.: Imprenta del Gobierno en el Ex-Arzobispado, 1889); *Deming Headlight*, 22 February 1889; and "The Northwestern Colonization and Improvement Company: Juicio, jurisdicción voluntaria, testimonio de documentos," Caja 1058, Expediente 187408, Fondo Justicia, AGN.

government (8,000 pesos per kilometer completed), logistical issues and conflicts between customs officials in La Ascensión, the Mexican Consulate in Deming, and company officials kept work on the railroad from continuing in a regular manner. According to the conditions of the concession made to Huller, the importation of construction materials from the railroad was to be duty free. Much of the lumber, machinery, and tools for the early work on the road were purchased from Deming merchants. Yet, officials of the La Ascensión customs house, the port of entry along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border in the 1880s, required all such materials to be transported to their location in order to ascertain whether or not the items brought across the line were actually included under the terms of the concession. This stipulation meant that, although most of the time the customs attendants did not assess any duty, the company had to foot the bill of transporting the items about 140 miles round trip from Las Palomas to La Ascensión and back. Only a few weeks after the initial founding of Las Palomas, Huller petitioned the Secretario de Hacienda for the relocation of the customs house from La Ascensión to Las Palomas.³⁶ Customs officers and prominent Ascensionenses sought to use their town's status as a federal customs checkpoint to bolster their own local concerns. They also used their location along the international boundary to shore up their economic livelihood.

Issues of capital continued to plague the Deming and Sierra Madre Railroad Company into 1890. That January, the *Deming Headlight* dedicated much space in its columns to debunk rumors that the terminus of the road was to be relocated to El Paso.

³⁶ Almada, *Chihuahua al Pacífico*, 73-74; and Letter from Rafael Pardo (legal representative of Luis Huller) to the Secretario de Fomento, 26 December 1887, Caja UI1348, Expediente 2209, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

On January 25, Luis Huller held a public meeting in Deming where he explained that he had secured new financial backers in order to overcome a shortage of funds and the failure of certain contractors to uphold their agreements to the company. The corporation had also been reorganized, with Benjamin C. Faurot, a prominent banker of Lima, Ohio, added to the list of familiar faces on the board of directors. Huller also reported that he had successfully petitioned Mexican officials for an extension on the concession, which had been scheduled to expire within a few months' time. And he claimed that he had received "positive assurance from German bankers that the entire \$40,000,000 required for the construction of this system could be secured." In the next breath, he mentioned that El Paso entrepreneurs were indeed "very anxious" to redirect the rail venture away from Deming to their own city. His reassurances, however, that nothing would change, that "Deming would be the point of connection with the American system of railroads," generated great applause from the audience. Among those present were Sigmund Lindauer, Gustav Wormser, Charles H. Dane (now president of the First National Bank of Deming), and former New Mexico Territorial Governor Edmund G. Ross. At the meeting's end those in attendance adopted resolutions to continue to extend to Huller and company not only their "most hearty assurances of confidence and support," but also promises of capital investments and commitments to assemble track-laying teams to push the work forward. Huller promised that no matter what happened with the German investors (an ominous hint that their assurance was not so positive), "within six months a first-class railroad should run out of Deming for Palomas."³⁷

³⁷ *Deming Headlight*, 25 January 1890.

The level of excitement remained high through the month of July. About midmonth, Andrew O. Bailey was given the additional title of General Manager of the railway company. From Palomas, he oversaw the grading efforts that had been underway since April between the border and Colonia Díaz. Bailey invested not only his time and energy, but also much of his personal fortune in the road. Yet, fits and starts on construction had not ended. Another lull set in when the financing from Huller's German sources failed to materialize. Once again grading teams halted their work and laborers and machinery stood idle. In early November, the word in Deming was that work was going to begin shortly on the road, as had so often been reported time and again since late 1887. In this instance another newcomer to the project, John W. Young, was trumpeted as the spark that would renew the work. Young was reportedly "an extensive and successful railroad contractor and builder," and he was one of the sons of the famous Mormon prophet Brigham Young. When business negotiations to transfer the railroad company to Young became public knowledge in mid-November, Demingites dared to think that actual rail construction might soon be carried out.³⁸ And, for the first time, Mormons in Colonia Díaz had a direct link to the venture.³⁹

³⁸ *Deming Headlight*, 1 and 15 November 1890.

³⁹ The story of John W. Young is intriguing in and of itself. He was the third son of Brigham Young and the first born in the covenant. Brigham Young ordained John W. and two of his brothers (including Brigham Jr.) as apostles while they were still quite young (John W. was 11 years old). This turn of events set the stage for conflicts between John W. and members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles following Brigham's death in 1877. The conflict became especially acute as John W. failed to make good on loans granted him by General Authorities for the construction of railroads in Utah and other points in the West. For more on the life of John W. Young, see Todd Compton, "John Willard Young, Brigham Young, and the Development of Presidential Succession in the LDS Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 35, no. 4 (winter 2002): 111-134; M. Guy Bishop, "Building Railroads for the Kingdom: The Career of John W. Young, 1867-91," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 48, no. 1 (January 1980): 66-80; and Charles L. Keller, "Promoting Railroads and Statehood: John W. Young," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 45, no. 3 (June 1977): 289-308.

Interestingly, just prior to John W. Young's connection to the railroad project, Deming began a shift in its attitude toward the Mormon colonists. An examination of the pages of the *Deming Headlight* in the period 1888 to 1890 indicates this change.⁴⁰ Mormons had been transiting through Deming, stocking up on supplies, verifying their loads with the Mexican Consul, and checking in at the customs house there since the initial founding of Colonia Díaz in the fall of 1886. Between September 1888 and late 1889, the colonists were rarely mentioned in the paper, despite accounts from the colonists themselves that indicate their regular passage through the town.⁴¹ When they did appear, it was usually in passing—in relation to the route of the proposed railroad, for example—or in negative light. The 11 January 1889 edition, for example, derided and condemned “the president's recent pardon of five convicted Mormon adulterers.”⁴² In early March, however, stories about colonists and the Mormon people in general began to appear much more regularly. In the March 15 *Headlight*, the Mormon colonists were described as “well-to-do, having fine stock and comfortable, well put up outfits.” Instead of reporting in horrified tones on the colonists' practice of polygamy, the paper now focused on their economic standing as well as their uncanny ability as colonizers. The

⁴⁰ Lamentably, there are no extant copies of the *Headlight* between fall 1882 and fall 1888, so my examination begins with the 21 September 1888 issue. The newspaper reports do not, of course, indicate how all of the residents of Deming felt about the Mormon colonists. Due to a lack of letters, journals, or other primary accounts that might provide a more in-depth analysis of Demingites' attitudes, the newspaper provides the best available evidence about the opinions that were expressed by Deming economic elites. Most of the paper's editors, including Ed Pennington (Sept. 1888-Aug. 1889), Edmund G. Ross (Sept. 1889-Dec. 1894), and W. B. Walton (Jan. 1895-Aug. 1896) were also merchants and prominent local politicians. Ross also had experience as a national and territorial politician. The *Headlight*, therefore, indicated the interests of Deming's promoters and entrepreneurs.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 29, 54, 59; and Box1, Folders 2 and 3, Joel H. Martineau Papers, CHLA.

⁴² For reports about the colonists in passing see, *Deming Headlight*, 5 October, 7 and 28 December 1888, and 4 January 1889. For the negative remark about the Mormon practice of polygamy (as a form of adultery), see *Deming Headlight*, 11 January 1889.

Díaz Mormons were also characterized as the people who “have in two years turned the country in the neighborhood of La Ascensión from a barren waste into a garden.”⁴³

Beginning in December 1889, the references in the *Deming Headlight* to sizable groups of Mormon colonists passing through Deming toward their new homes in Colonia Díaz increased markedly in number. The December 14 issue reported that “twenty-three wagons filled with the families and goods of Mormon people from Utah and Colorado, have passed through here during the past week en route for Diaz and La Colonias [sic], in Mexico.” Again, of particular note in these types of announcements was the fact that the colonists “did considerable buying while in town.” From January to November 1890 (when John W. Young took control of the railroad company) similar references to Mormon migration, ingenuity, and buying power appeared on a regular basis. Reports mentioned Mormon leaders, such as Bishop William Derby Johnson and Alexander F. Macdonald, making extended visits to Deming as representatives of the colonies’ business affairs.⁴⁴ On April 12 the *Headlight* ran an extended feature titled, “Another Mormon Hegira.” This story cast the Mormons as law-abiding people who sought to develop their lands in northern Mexico and live “quiet and orderly lives.” They had been forced to leave the United States where they “received nothing but beatings” and “cast their lot with an alien people, and swear allegiance to a foreign flag” in order to have

⁴³ *Deming Headlight*, 15 March 1889 and 30 November 1889 (epigraph). The Mormons’ colonizing abilities were also noticed by papers in Las Cruces and other points in southern New Mexico. See, for example, *Mesilla Valley Democrat*, 2 July 1889. In terms of the shift away from polygamy to the colonists economic status, a paragraph in the *Deming Headlight*, 2 November 1889, reported: “Two families of Mormons spent a few days here this week, on their way from Utah to the Mormon settlement near Ascension, Mexico. There were eleven persons in the two families, and they seemed to be comfortably stocked with worldly goods and cash. *There were no indications of polygamous practices*” (emphasis mine).

⁴⁴ *Deming Headlight*, 22 March and 7 June 1890.

such an opportunity. This story emphasized the Mormons' adherence to law, order, and hard work and it made no mention of the issue of polygamy—the very practice that had caused the recent conflicts between members of the faith and U.S. federal officials. A 16 August report called out the federal government for enacting laws that suppressed the rights of Mormons, forcing them to “find some freer country than the United States” in which to reside. Through the *Headlight*, Deming businessmen thus worked to overpower negative reports, so common at the time, about the Mormon practice of polygamy and recast the Mormons as upstanding people and excellent neighbors. Indeed, their business had the potential to enrich and support Deming's mercantile industry and, by November 1890, it seemed that the Mormons would be the impetus needed to complete the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad.

In early January 1891, Huller and Young met in Deming and the former officially transferred all of the railroad property to the latter. Bishop Johnson began to spend much more of his time in Deming at that point because Young had singled him out for a prominent position in the rail venture. Johnson had acted as Young's agent for land purchases north of Colonia Díaz in which young secured 150,000 acres near the Casas Grandes River. At about the same time, Huller extended 20,000 acres of his lands near the town of Nuevo Casas Grandes for the settlement of Mormon colonists. Although Huller's creditors (he was never financially in the clear during the early 1890s) refused to allow the Mormons to take possession of the tract, it was acquired by them years afterward. The settlement that became known as Colonia Dublán was initially dubbed Colonia Huller because of these dealings between the wealthy German-Mexican and the agents of the Mormon Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company. In 1889 the

Company, which enjoyed the support of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, purchased 28,000 acres from Young that were added to Colonia Díaz.⁴⁵ In these transactions, Johnson served as the representative on the ground while Young was away schmoozing wealthy investors in New York City in support of his several rail and land ventures in northern Mexico and the Western United States. This type of relationship continued between the two men during Young's tenure as President of the railroad company.

During an early trip to New York in his capacity as an agent of the railway company, Johnson gave an interview to the *New York Saturday Globe* that was subsequently excerpted in the *Deming Headlight*. Despite the efforts by Deming elites to incorporate the Mormon colonists into their regional society and economy, the *Headlight's* treatment of that interview infers that some Demingites had reservations. Editor Edmund G. Ross used the opportunity to emphasize the idea that the Mormons in Mexico were in no way practicing polygamy. In introducing Johnson's statement that polygamy could not exist in the Mormon colonies because it was contrary to Mexican law as well as the proclamation of LDS President Wilford Woodruff that expressly ended the practice among adherents of the faith, Ross highlighted Johnson's "very emphatic language, which ought to be satisfactory to all reasonable people." Ross's approach illustrates his own effort to convince some Demingites that the Mormon colonists were ideal partners in the railroad enterprise because they had truly given up the practice that had previously made them suspect to so many Americans. The actual continuance of

⁴⁵ *Deming Headlight*, 3 January 1891; Romney, *Mormon Colonies*, 64-65; "Extracts from the Deed of Sale Executed by Messrs. William Derby Johnson, Jr., and John Willard Young in Favor of Mexican Lands and Railway Trust, Limited," Mexican Land Transactions, 1893-1895, MS 19672, CHLA.

polygamous marriages in the colonies, however, calls into question the success of Ross's attempts at persuasion⁴⁶

With all of its characteristic flourish and bravado, on 21 February 1891 the *Headlight* announced that “a new star was born in the railway firmament on Thursday last” when the enterprise was officially reorganized as the Mexican Pacific Railway Company with John W. Young as its controlling officer. In Ciudad Chihuahua, Young, Tomás Macmanus, Huller, and Sissons had achieved the extension of the land concession and subsidy when Young fronted “fifty thousand dollars down and signed a note for seven hundred twenty thousand.”⁴⁷ Young was named as president of the company, with Macmanus (a wealthy and well-connected Chihuahua entrepreneur) as vice president, W. Derby Johnson as Treasurer, and B. C. Faurot, Luis Huller, M. Masterson, Charles H. Dane, Gustav Wormser, and J. T. Crosby as members of the board of directors. Once again, Huller retained a leading role in the venture, remaining in a position to profit from the railroad should it succeed and keeping his losses at a minimum if it did not. Ladislao Weber had taken up residence in Deming in mid-1890 and he maintained his post as the line's chief engineer. Along with his title as treasurer, Johnson was also singled out as Young's “immediate representative” and the person in charge of local operations. Johnson moved his family and many of his personal items from his home in Colonia Díaz

⁴⁶ *Deming Headlight*, 31 January 1891. For the continuance of polygamy in the colonies, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 171-178.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 92.

in order to take charge of company affairs from its new offices in Deming's business district.⁴⁸

The Deming investors, Bishop Johnson, and Columbus-founder Andrew O. Bailey placed their faith in reports that seemed to prove John W. Young's aptitude as a business leader and railroad builder. With little knowledge of Young or the details of his other ventures, they pledged their time and money to the cause. The 7 March *Headlight* reported that the Deming townsite company, a McKeyes and Burnside interest, had "transferred to J. W. Young, president of the Deming, Sierra Madre & Pacific railroad, a quarter interest in all their town property"—a gesture of good faith meant to tie Young to the interests of the locale. Additionally, many of the Díaz colonists threw their support behind the projected railroad. Ammon M. Tenney, Díaz colonist and longtime Mormon missionary in Mexico, partnered with Bailey to secure funds for the line. Bailey put in \$80,000 of his own money for the railroad because he believed that it would spur the growth and importance of his Columbus townsite. Tenney received a contract to complete the grading for a 90-mile stretch of the line from Las Palomas to Corralitos, and he promised to raise \$40,000 through personal connections in Utah and elsewhere. Colonists Joseph H. James, Erastus Beck, and Andrew C. Peterson organized mule teams and hired Mexican helpers, presumably from La Ascensión and Las Palomas, to aid in the grading work.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Deming Headlight*, 21 February 1891; and *Dallas Morning News*, 10 March 1891.

⁴⁹ For reports on John W. Young's railroad acumen, see, for example, *Albuquerque Citizen*, 5 March 1891; *Deming Headlight*, 13 December 1890 and 7 March 1891. Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 93-94; F. Stanley, *The Columbus, New Mexico Story* (self-published, Pep, Texas, 1966), 6; Page, *Queen of the Mimbres Valley*, 8-9; and *Deming Headlight*, 11 April 1891. For reports of Tenney's involvement in the project, see *Deming Headlight*, 31 January 1891.

Entire families were engaged in work on grading the rail route. Both of John Adams' wives served as cooks for the laborers and many others followed suit. Anyone connected to the project would have quickly noticed that whether or not new polygamous marriages were discontinued among the Mormons, polygamous families that had already formed were commonplace in the Díaz colony. Yet such considerations did not hamper the growing business connections between Deming and Colonia Díaz. From the colonists' perspective the women created an atmosphere of religiosity and morals that kept the men in line at the worksite. Colonists remembered that one non-Mormon supervisor felt that he had to watch his mouth because his typical jobsite vocabulary didn't "fit in with the oathless and clean conversation about him." Entire families freely gave their time to the venture because the future prosperity of the colony seemed to be ensured by the progress of the railroad. Many dreamed that the railroad, with its promise to bring to the colony a modern shipping connection, would bring an era of more luxurious homes, new supplies and machinery, and better schools for their families and the community at large. Reportedly, the youngest members of the effort were four- and six-year-old Charles and Rhoda Merrill "who had been hired to pick up kernels of corn spilled by the horses while eating." Through the effort and commitment of the colonist families, 75 miles of grading work were completed south of the border by 29 May 1891.⁵⁰

The renewed confidence that came along with the organization of the Mexican Pacific Railway Company thus seemed well-founded in early 1891. Salvador F. Maillefert, Mexican Consul in Deming, recognized the potential of the railroad both to

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 95-96.

develop lands and to continue the migration of Mormon colonists to northern Chihuahua. In connection with Alexander F. MacDonald and the Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company, Maillefert secured 700,000 acres in the Galeana District of northwestern Chihuahua (southwest of the Palomas tract and La Ascensión) from Carlos Pacheco, Secretario de Fomento, in Mexico City. As part of the deal, Maillefert became the official colonization agent for the tract, as well as all other colonies established in the Galeana District. His contract stipulated that he was to settle 600 colonists on the lands granted to him and the colonization company. Certainly, his partnership with the Mormons for colonization made the venture's success seem a foregone conclusion. Back in Deming in late February, Maillefert reported on his dealings and announced that he had also acquired lands in Sonora and Durango as well. He advertised 5 million acres for sale.⁵¹

Andrew O. Bailey also considered John W. Young's tenure with the railroad venture to be a sign that the time had come for the completion of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific line. By late March 1891, work to expand Bailey's small border town of Columbus hit full stride. He believed that his townsite would grow exponentially in size and importance with the completion of the railroad into Chihuahua. Accompanying his heavy investments in the railroad, therefore, Bailey put up funds "for the erection of new buildings at Columbus." He also reached out to Deming investors who understood the possibilities of growth for Columbus should their railroad investment pay off this time around. As stated in the *Deming Headlight*, "We trust Columbus, on the border, will

⁵¹ *Deming Headlight*, 28 February 1891; Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 63-64; and "Memorandum de M. Fernández, Secretaría de Fomento," 23 February 1891, and "Letter from M. Azpiroz, Sección Consular," 24 February 1891, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México, D.F. [hereafter AHSRE].

grow into a lively town. Every new building erected there is of benefit to Deming.”⁵² This was not only due to the increased potential for transnational commerce that came with the new town, but also the fact that most of the lumber, hardware, and other building materials to construct Columbus were sold by Deming merchants. Additionally, the Demingites’ investment in the infrastructure and local economy of Palomas promised now to pay off as well. In his attempts to promote the town and keep tabs on the progress of the railroad company, Bailey and his wife and daughters kept regular rooms in Deming.⁵³ His efforts, coupled with the promise of the railroad, seemed to pay off. McKeyes & Burnside invested in Columbus and became the official agents of the Columbus Townsite Company. By the end of June, just as local confidence and excitement in the railroad seemed to peak, several plots of land had been sold to homesteaders in southwestern Texas, southern Arizona, and southern New Mexico. A post office was officially established at Columbus, with Frank Bailey as postmaster, and a school district was also organized in Columbus, with Andrew O. Bailey and newcomers D. Z. Moore and W. W. Lawhorn as directors.⁵⁴ For promoters and investors in the region, prospects could not have seemed brighter.

Despite the revelry and high confidence of the first half of 1891, ominous signs for the railroad project began to accumulate. As the Administrator of the La Ascención customs house, Francisco Raymundes, asserted his desire to maintain the status quo,

⁵² *Deming Headlight*, 11 April 1891.

⁵³ Las Palomas was also a popular resort and hunting site, see, for example, *Deming Headlight*, 2 May 1891. That issue of the *Headlight* also announced the residence of the Bailey family in Deming.

⁵⁴ *Deming Headlight*, 18 April, 2 and 23 May, and 13 June 1891. For reports of the tourist draw of Las Palomas (at least at the regional level), see *Deming Headlight*, 2 May 1891.

Consul Maillefert, railroad executives, colonists, as well as Mexican federal officials, became involved in the conflict over customs practices in the region. Conflicts between Maillefert and José Larroque, Raymundes's predecessor, intensified in February 1891 when the former refused to admit several Mexican repatriate colonists to Palomas that had been cleared to do so by the Deming Consulate. Ladislao Weber served as acting consul when the permissions were granted (Maillefert was away in Mexico City working out the details of his land and colonization acquisitions). Weber granted "two or three repatriate families," as well as merchant J. W. Brown, certificates to enter Palomas as new colonists. According to Larroque, Weber did not provide them with the proper documentation to show that they had the right, as outlined in the Colonization Law of 1883, to introduce personal effects and other supplies. Upon his return, Maillefert fired off several telegrams to his superiors in the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Pública in which he argued that the actions of Larroque violated the colonization concession, still current, that was made to Huller in 1887.⁵⁵ Although not directly connected to the railroad effort, this case illustrates the beginning of a trend in which customs house officials cited the letter of federal laws to justify their ability to exact duties and dictate the terms of entry to Chihuahua from New Mexico.

As grading proceeded from Deming to Las Palomas and beyond, officials of the Mexican Pacific Railway Company and Maillefert renewed the push for an official, independent customs house at Palomas. From their perspective, this move would eliminate the last of the major barriers to the railroad's completion. When Huller had

⁵⁵ Report of José Larroque, 25 February 1891; Telegram from Ladislao Weber, 19 February 1891; Telegram from Salvador Maillefert, 21 February 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 479, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

spearheaded an attempt to move the customs house to his new colony in 1887, officials in La Ascensión read the effort as an attempt to diminish the importance of their town.⁵⁶ Due to the miniscule size of Huller's colony at its founding, a compromise measure had been reached which located an agent from the La Ascensión custom house in Palomas. In that way, customs could be assessed without a 140 mile round trip from the border to the customs house and back, and the customs headquarters for the region remained at La Ascensión. Yet, as Huller's fortunes and those of Palomas waned between 1888 and 1890, the customs outpost was not regularly maintained. Even when it was, officials at times attempted to exact duties twice. Mormon colonists who made the journey between Deming and Colonia Díaz, whether as new arrivals to the colony or during trips to secure supplies, often reported this type of activity and were outraged when customs officials attempted to charge them for items that were authorized as duty free under the conditions of their colonization contract. Their troubles only multiplied as they attempted to build the railroad. Peter McBride, for example, complained that customs officials unjustly confiscated horses and outfits belonging to his employer, Wilford Webb, on 3 April 1891. It was only after repeated trips to La Ascensión and the intervention of the U.S. consul in Juárez that the teams were returned to Webb over a month later on 9 May.⁵⁷

In early May, a group of railroad contractors, including Webb, that had been conducting grading between Las Palomas and Boca Grande (just north of La Ascensión)

⁵⁶ Letter from Rafael Pardo (legal representative of Luis Huller) to the Secretario de Fomento, 26 December 1887; and Letter from La Ascensión Customs House Administrator, 2 January 1888, Caja UI1348, Expediente 2209, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 94; Informe sobre el estado de los colonos en Las Palomas, July 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 479; and Informe del Visitador de Aduanas, 12 September 1891, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

sent a complaint about the policies of the customs house officials to the Secretaría de Hacienda. Their main grievances were that the officials at La Ascensión required them to regularly make excessively long journeys to undergo customs assessments and that their policies for extracting payment were not uniform. In his defense, Raymundes informed the Secretario that he had done the best he could under the circumstances since there was no official policy in place for handling the regular importation of construction materials along the international border. For that reason, he had granted them temporary importation permits that required periodic renewal. On 23 May, Raymundes received official word that the Secretaría de Hacienda approved of his efforts to manage the customs situation from a customs house that was about 75 miles south of the border.⁵⁸

It was at that point that Maillefert and railroad officials initiated their campaign to relocate the customs house. They argued that such a move was not unprecedented (Huller had worked to that end in 1887), and that it would hasten the completion of a railroad which the Mexican government was actively supporting through concessions and subsidies. They had to overcome, however, the Secretaría de Hacienda's support for Raymundes's actions. On 13 June 1891, the *Deming Headlight* reported that due to the decision of La Ascensión customs officials to require that goods be assessed at that point, work on the railroad had to be "partially suspended for a few days." Yet, the paper cast the situation in rosy tones, asserting that the "rigidity [of Raymundes] in the matter" would surely not continue once the issue was "laid before the proper officials at Mexico City." Bishop Johnson reassured Demingites and the Díaz colonists that, ultimately, the

⁵⁸ Letter from Secretary of Hacienda Pública to Francisco Raymundes, 23 May 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1098, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

work would not halt due to the struggle with the customs house. The company would press on as best they could despite the situation.⁵⁹

Although the petition to move the customs house to Las Palomas was eventually granted, it was stalled in bureaucratic red tape until March 1892. An inspector [visitador], M. Barragan, was dispatched from Mexico City in early September to assess the situation in northwestern Chihuahua. His final report favored the relocation of the customs house following essentially the same reasoning as Maillfert and the railroad company. By moving the customs house to the border, unnecessary travel expenses for merchants, colonists, and manufacturing companies would be avoided. Additionally, importers would be able to take advantage of a stipulation pronounced in Article 316 of the General Customs Ordinance that granted only three days for the presentation of goods at a customs house after receiving the consular documents that approved exemption of duty payments. As the situation stood, the trip from Deming to La Ascensión usually exceeded the three-day period. As such, railroad contractors and colonists in northwestern Chihuahua were unable to make good on the duty-free status of their materials.⁶⁰

Ultimately, Raymundes put his support behind Barragan's findings that the distance between La Ascensión and the border was a detriment to importation, but in so doing he also asserted the claim that Palomas was no place for a customs house.

According to Raymundes, there were no more than eight buildings erected in the town

⁵⁹ Letter to the Secretary of Hacienda Pública from G. Webb, et al., 18 November 1891; Report of Francisco Raymundes to the Secretary, 16 May 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1098, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN; and *Deming Headlight*, 13 June 1891.

⁶⁰ Report of visitador M. Barragan to the Secretary of Hacienda Pública, 12 September 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1697; Extended report on the visita a La Ascensión and Las Palomas, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1697, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

and the population was extremely sparse. Raymundes's assessment was overstated, but not too far off the mark. Indeed, throughout 1890 and 1891 town funds ran so short that the police commissioner [comisario] had not received regular pay. Barragan stated that there were far more than eight buildings in the town for its 100 inhabitants. He continued to support his assessment that the customs house be relocated, but pointed out that the entire corridor between Deming and La Ascensión was indeed very meagerly populated and largely undeveloped. La Ascensión itself could boast of no more than 2,000 inhabitants and, although Deming was the supply point for it, Colonia Díaz, and Palomas, other towns just to the south (such as Janos, Corralitos, Nuevo Casas Grandes, and the Mormon Colonias Juárez and Dublán) had a stronger connection to Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, Texas. Barragan expressed his hope that the railroad might bring more commerce to the region along the Deming-La Ascensión axis, but advised caution in the meantime. He stressed that Palomas was a nascent colony with a small population and very few services. The customs presence there might best be considered an outpost than a full customs house, but such would suffice until the railroad brought further development to the region.⁶¹ Barragan's comments illustrated the fact that, despite promoters' bravado, Deming, Columbus, and Palomas were not growing as planned.

While the customs house dispute went back and forth through official channels in the Secretaría de Hacienda, the fortunes of the Mexican Pacific Railway Company evaporated. With or without the construction delays caused by the unresolved customs issue, John W. Young had apparently overextended his finances by June 1891. The

⁶¹ Ibid.; and Correspondence between Juan Caballero, comisario de policía de las Palomas, and the presidencia municipal de La Ascensión, 12 December 1890, 21 December 1890; and 6 December 1891, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez, Microfilm Copy (MF 513), University Library, University of Texas at El Paso [hereafter AMCJ].

previous April, rumors began to circulate that Young was on the verge of selling the railroad venture. The *Deming Headlight* reported on June 13 (the same issue that first broke the news of the customs house controversy) that Young had gone to London to “finally close the business with the English Syndicate that is behind him in the construction of the Mexican Railroad and land grant.” As hundreds of Mormon colonists continued to migrate to Colonias Díaz, Juárez, and Dublán, Bishop Johnson attempted to maintain confidence in Young’s ability to finance his various projects. Along with his interest in the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific, Young also presided over several railroad projects in Utah and had invested in several different ventures in New York City. Only one of his proposed railroads, a short line between Salt Lake City and Coalville, Utah, was ever completed. The others, as reported in the *Salt Lake Tribune* of 4 June 1891, had been graded but not constructed. The status of Young’s various projects seemed to elude public knowledge along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. Although he maintained communications with his representative in Deming, Young never returned to the town after his trip to England was announced. Johnson made several trips to New York and London to meet with Young and prospective financial backers, but the bulk of the capital that Young had promised when he signed the rail concession never materialized.⁶²

By the end of July 1891, Mormon contractors with the grading project began receiving late payments from the company. But by mid-August they received nothing at all. Bishop Johnson promised to rectify the situation by holding Young’s land in the

⁶² Reports on the railroad company in the *Headlight* between June 1891 and September 1892 routinely rely on Johnson’s knowledge of Young’s efforts to secure funding in New York and London. Young’s presence in the town was never again reported.

region, large sections of which were also in Johnson's name, as security until the contractors were paid. Young had acquired so many debts, however, that he was unable to make good on all of them. Despite attempts in Deming to indict him for fraud, Johnson was able to maintain the company's office there through the fall of 1892. Although no construction took place after August 1891, hope that the railroad might be redeemed died hard. In November the Secretaría de Hacienda made the official decision to relocate the customs house to Palomas by no later than 1 March of the following year. Demingites heralded this action as the next spark that would reignite construction on the railroad, as well as new development in the towns of Columbus and Palomas. When election violence erupted in La Ascensión on 6 January 1892 and Díaz colonists with Joseph H. James' "peace committee" helped to suppress the group that rose to arms, the decision to relocate the customs house was solidified. By March 1892, therefore, the conditions desired by the railway company and consul Maillefert were in place, but the finances of John W. Young and his Mexican Pacific Railway Company were in shambles. When Bishop Johnson left London on 16 September 1892 after a meeting with Young, he was forlorn. Only 40,000 acres of Young's northern Chihuahua lands remained as security for the Díaz colonists that had invested their time, money, and resources into the effort. Although the debt for unpaid supplies and services was almost \$90,000, Johnson estimated that the land was only worth about \$20,000. He feared that when it was subjected to forced sale it would only garner about half of that amount.⁶³ Johnson was faced with the dismal task of informing Díaz colonists and Demingites alike that the railroad company had folded.

⁶³ Orden oficial mandada a la Audana de La Ascensión, 28 November 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1697, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

Deming investors, Sigmund Lindauer, Gustav Wormster, Charles H. Dane, Frank Siebold, and others, were also left with nothing to show but debts for their efforts to support the railroad. Andrew O. Bailey, as the company's General Manager, retained piles upon piles of unused ties outside of his Columbus ranch house. Ammon Tenney was unable to supply the \$40,000 that he had promised Bailey for the railroad effort. When the project dissolved in late 1892, Bailey was granted control of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific's assets in Deming, which he attempted to sell in an effort to pay off some of his debts. Confidence in the growth of his Columbus townsite dwindled as well. The post office there was discontinued in 1893, and Columbus existed in name only until 1908 when it was relocated three miles to the north in order to place it directly on the line of the new El Paso and Southwestern Railroad that connected Phelps-Dodge smelters in Douglas, Arizona, to the industrial hub of El Paso.⁶⁴

The towns of La Ascensión and Palomas were also left in shambles. Following the 1892 revolt, Asensionenses found themselves under the constant scrutiny of Mexican federal forces. Yet, between fifty-five and sixty of the participants were exonerated of the charges brought against them, and several others fled to southern New Mexico where they claimed U.S. citizenship (hearkening back to their identities as residents of La Mesilla) as a means of eluding arrest. Their town lost its customs house, but its 2,000 or so inhabitants continued to make their living as small-scale farmers and most of the unclear and corrupt land surveys were resolved favorably for the Asensionenses—at least in the short run. Palomas continued to exist primarily because it was the site of the

⁶⁴ Page, *Queen of the Mimbres*, 6-9, 12; and Stanley, *Columbus, New Mexico Story*, 6; and *Deming Headlight*, 12 August 1893.

customs house. Its small population remained in a poor and destitute state. The bulk of those that remained in the town were repatriates from various places in New Mexico and Texas. The capitalists that had first constructed large estates and elaborate houses, however, had vacated the colony. Historian Jane-Dale Lloyd provided an apt assessment of the status of Las Palomas in the 1890s: the false promises of the colonization project “abandoned on the tract a few impoverished Mexican families, who had hoped to work rich agricultural lands that did not exist.”⁶⁵

The long awaited boom for the region failed to materialize, yet its people forged ahead. For the Díaz colonists, the collapse of the railroad taxed relationships within their own community, but it also it created important ties with people in Deming, Columbus, and even La Ascensión. Despite the lack of rail transportation, Colonia Díaz thrived during the mid-1890s. The colonists constructed mercantile institutions, grist mills, and irrigation canals that allowed them to cultivate large orchards and various crops. Beginning in September 1894, Colonia Díaz initiated an annual fair that provided an outlet for the Mormons to showcase their agricultural produce as well as their community. For months prior to the event, the *Deming Headlight* ran lengthy promotional stories and advertisements. Each year, large groups of people from Deming came together to make the trip to Colonia Díaz to participate in the fair. The 1896 fair generated more than the usual fanfare as the colonists marked the ten-year anniversary of the colony; Demingites turned out in masse to help them celebrate. Officials from La

⁶⁵ Hernández, *Mexican-American Colonization*, Chapter 7; Ramírez Tafoya, *Antes y después de la revolución*, 60-64; and Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Proceso de Modernización Capitalista en el Noroeste de Chihuahua, 1880-1910* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1987), 32. Despite Lloyd’s assertion, Huller was in fact a naturalized Mexican citizen. See also John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 178.

Ascensión and Cd. Chihuahua also took part in the festivities, praising the colonists for their ingenuity and great ability to transform a desert into a blooming rose.⁶⁶

Cooperation did not always typify the Díaz colonists' relations with other people in their region, however. Various conflicts with neighbors in Mexico, including skirmishes with the few remaining Apache people, Mexican *revoltosos*, and continued hardships due to isolation, also typified their experience in the 1890s and the first decade of the 1900s. Yet, the relationships with residents of Deming and Columbus that began during episodes such as the attempt to build the railroad proved crucial in the summer of 1912 when *Colorado* forces under José Ines Salazar forced the Mormon colonists to flee their homes for the safety of the American side of the border. From Colonia Díaz, colonists escaped along the route that had been graded in anticipation of the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific two decades earlier. Some former Díaz colonists, such as Peter K. Lemmon, Ernest V. Romney, and Zeno Johnson (son of William Derby) made permanent homes in the Columbus-Deming area. Lemmon and Romney established a store in Columbus in the fall of 1912 and the Johnson family remained in Columbus through the early 1930s. The episode of the Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific Railroad venture illustrates that the Mormon colonists in Díaz were not merely refugees in a foreign country, but actors in a transnational regional community.

The case of the failed Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad illustrates the complexities, as well as the violence, of the process of original accumulation—a process that typically is rendered invisible by legal codes and modern property regimes. It also

⁶⁶ See *Deming Headlight*, 16 August and September 6 1895 and 21 August, 18 September, and 9 October 1896; and Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 128-135.

highlights the ways in which manifestations of the nation-state were tempered by local agents and concerns along the U.S.-Mexico border in the late-nineteenth century. As historian Rachel St. John has pointed out, “The arrival of U.S. and Mexican customs officers ushered in a new era of state control that changed the way people crossed the border, channeling them through ports of entry and requiring them to submit to bureaucratic procedures.”⁶⁷ Yet, in La Ascensión, customs procedures were geared toward local, rather than state, concerns in northwestern Chihuahua. The process of solidifying sovereign claims along the border was far more complex than situating a customs house along the line. Various factions in La Ascensión worked at cross purposes depending on their own interests. Palomas had seemed poised to become a major way station along both the border and a transnational rail connection, although such was not to be the case. Instead, peasant forces in northwestern Chihuahua employed physical violence in a brazen attack on the clearest manifestation of their dispossession by the Mexican state—the customs agency at Palomas—in the fall of 1893. Through their actions, they sought to communicate discontent with the centralizing measures of the Porfirian state and the solidification of the border as a sign of sovereignty. The raid on the Palomas Customs house in November 1893 exemplifies the continuation of a dialectic of violence along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. This raid is the subject of the next chapter.

⁶⁷ St. John, *Line in the Sand*, 96.

Chapter 4: A Violent Dialectic: Las Palomas Customs House Raid, 1893

“Across the face of Mexico, land became a commodity, to be bought, traded and accumulated; land values, buoyed up by rising agricultural demand and prices, rose steeply; and landholdings became increasingly concentrated into few hands, ensuring landlessness for the great majority.”—Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: Vol. 1*¹

“He that denies your liberty; he that impedes you from living in tranquility by the side of your families is not the patria, but Porfirio Díaz; that evil Mexican that has mortgaged Mexico in foreign markets; that damned son who murders his brothers or vilifies them.”—**Revolutionary Proclamation, 8 November 1893, Palomas**

Historians Friedrich Katz and Jane-Dale Lloyd, along with anthropologist Ana María Alonso, have emphasized that between 1890 and 1893 northwestern Chihuahua was rocked by various violent revolutionary movements. Such agitation was, at least in part, a response to efforts by the Mexican federal government, working in tandem with state and local authorities, to parcel out *terrenos baldíos*, or public lands, to private interests. *Compañías deslindadoras* (surveying companies) secured contracts that allowed them to retain one-third of the public lands they delineated. Much of the land in the Galeana and Bravos Districts of northwestern Chihuahua (to both of which the municipio of La Ascensión belonged at different moments in the 1880s and 1890s) was subjected to their surveys between 1884 and 1895. The enormous Huller concession was the result of their efforts as well. Although the Huller lands were generally uninhabited prior to their acquisition, they were part of the public domain that was used by residents of La Ascensión and surrounding villages for grazing. Their conversion to private

¹ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (1986, repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 95.

property had a negative effect on the livelihood of Ascensionenses and greatly limited the ability of Palomas colonists to access resources in the ways in which they had previously been accustomed.²

In November 1893, peasant inhabitants of northwestern Chihuahua led a coordinated, pre-dawn assault on the Palomas Customs House. This chapter examines the raid and its impacts on the region, as well as on diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico. The raid targeted the most tangible symbol of the Mexican national government along the international border: the customs house. That the insurgents targeted the Palomas customs station is no surprise. The Lower Mimbres Valley had long been considered empty and uninhabitable, a space held hostage by indios bárbaros. As the deslindes and Huller's development schemes reordered traditional patterns of landholding and resource usage, the Mexican state began to assert its role in the area as well. Yet its presence there was still relatively tenuous and fractured; as the exchange between Francisco Raymundes, M. Barragan, and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (discussed in Chapter 3) illustrates, the Palomas Customs House was more of a makeshift checkpoint than a full-fledged customs agency. Agents of the state also worked at cross-purposes with one another within the Lower Mimbres Valley. Palomas, then, was one of the weakest manifestations of the state's presence along the border. It was the target of small groups of revolutionaries during the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s for that precise reason.

² Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 19; and Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 142.

Additionally, violent skirmishes between Chihuahuenses and Mexican forces became a regular occurrence throughout the region during the Tomóchic rebellion of 1891-1892. In that case, Cruz Chávez led his supporters against the authority of local, state, and federal-level officials for their impositions on traditional economic and political structures and practices. Their movement also had deep religious overtones as well. The Tomochitecos vowed to recognize the authority of God and of no other. Officials in Mexico City, as well as the Porfirian-imposed governor of Chihuahua, Lauro Carillo, considered Tomóchic a grave threat to the march of Progress and modernization. In late October 1892, General José María Rangel led a combined force of federal and regional troops in the violent siege of Tomóchic. When the dust settled, the entire town had been leveled, the rebels killed “to the last man.” To the people of northwestern Chihuahua the Mexican government showed that it had no regard for their lives, treating them as obstacles to development rather than as citizens.³ In the spring of 1893, violence was renewed in the region. This time, its culmination was in the military’s massacre of the people of the town of Santo Tomás. The insurgents who sacked the Palomas Customs House in the fall of 1893 acted in direct response to these types of atrocities. In all three instances, former Apache-fighter Santana Pérez played a key role in the violence.

³ For the most recent, detailed treatment of the Tomóchic rebellion, see Paul J. Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). For his discussion of the final siege, see pp. 266-277. Vanderwood’s analysis frames the Tomóchic rebellion as a movement in which religious devotion combined with a reaction to the negative impacts of modernization on the residents of the small town. Many previous studies treated the revolt as a manifestation of misplaced rural religiosity. See, for example, Francisco R. Almada, *Resumen de Historia del Estado de Chihuahua* (México, D.F.: Libros Mexicanos, 1955), 347-369; and Jesús Vargas Valdez, ed., *Tomóchic: La Revolución Adelantada, Resistencia y Lucha de un Pueblo de Chihuahua con el Sistema Porfirista (1891-1892)*, 2 vols. (Cd. Juárez, Chih.: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1994).

The insurgents' actions had repercussions beyond the Lower Mimbres Valley. The November 1893 attack directly impacted diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico as Mexican authorities attempted to silence news of the uprising along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. Ambassador Matías Romero, Mexican emissary to the United States at Washington D.C., coordinated such efforts with the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores and the Secretaría de Hacienda in Mexico City, as well as with Mexican consuls in Deming and El Paso. The American press in the borderlands, specifically the *El Paso Times* and the *Deming Headlight*, portrayed the events at Santo Tomás and Palomas as justifiable actions against an oppressive and tyrannical government. Those papers printed the insurgents' manifestoes and cast their actions as a revolution. Mexican officials, on the other hand, worked to erase (or, if that wasn't possible, to redirect) the story of the events. From their perspective, the events along the border in no way comprised a revolution. Instead, the raid on Palomas was merely the work of regional bandits who had launched their assault from the northern side of the border. The Mexican government took particular interest in the events surrounding the Palomas raid because news of revolution in Mexico held the potential to curb foreign investment in Mexico. Multiple violent incidents stemmed from the fall 1893 attack: the physical struggle on the ground in and around the Lower Mimbres Valley comprised one manifestation, the attempt to control the story of the assault and assess its significance was another. The history of the Palomas raid and its aftermath clearly illustrates the dialectic of violence that continued in the Lower Mimbres Valley well after the Apache wars had concluded, and it highlights the ways in which local people alternatively defined the border as a barrier and point of connection according to circumstances.

In April 1893, as rumors circulated in Deming about the renewal of John W. Young and Bishop Johnson's efforts to maintain their concession and finally build the rail line, locals also heard the first whisperings of a massacre that had occurred some three hundred miles to the southwest in Chihuahua. The earliest reports of discontent in Chihuahua were dismissive, but by early May, the *Deming Headlight* began to report on the widespread dissatisfaction of Chihuahuenses in La Ascensión and surrounding towns.⁴ Rebellions and dissent had been on the rise since the violent suppression of the Tomóchic uprising in October 1892. In an attempt to downplay the revolt and deny it any legitimacy, Porfirian officials at the national, state, and local levels worked to paint Tomóchic as the product of "Indian" religious fanaticism. Yet, as historian Paul Vanderwood has illustrated, most of the social unrest that raged in Chihuahua in the first few years of the 1890s was not carried out by indigenous peoples and was not primarily based on religious fanaticism. Instead, Chihuahua's troubles were the direct result of peasant peoples' (many of whom proudly served in Apache wars) efforts to resist what they viewed as unjust political impositions and economic inequalities and dispossession. Often, such resistance was cast in religious terms, as highlighted by the efforts of Cruz Chávez's Tomochic supporters to seek the advice of Santa Teresa of Cabora. Their appeal to the authority of God reflected an attempt to harness supernatural power that

⁴ For the rumored renewal of railroad construction, see *Deming Headlight*, 21 January 1893, 3 May 1893, 1 July 1893, 15 July 1893, 16 September 1893, and 7 October 1893; and *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 14 March 1893. Although such rumors persisted through the end of 1893, and although Johnson made various company-related trips to London during that period, by March 1894 the Young concession had officially been transferred to a General Mexia and Lancaster Jones (*Deming Headlight*, 10 March 1894). For the early reports on the Santo Tomás massacre, see *Deming Headlight*, 29 April 1893, 6 May 1893, 3 June 1893, 24 June 1893, 1 July 1893, and 2 September 1893.

they considered very real as they struggled to maintain their traditional *usos y costumbres* in the face of a capitalist legal and political system that stripped such rights from them.⁵

That most Demingites did not fully comprehend the sociopolitical and economic context of Chihuahua against which the Tomochitecos had struggled is evident in the *Headlight's* coverage of renewed unrest in the spring of 1893. The regularity of reported discontent and limited violence in Chihuahua, it appears, caused them to view such developments as unimportant; these were trends that the Mexican authorities would bring under control soon enough. The 6 May report of “dissatisfaction and discontent among the masses” in La Ascension, for example, was regarded by the *Headlight* as “not at all serious.” Editor Edmund G. Ross, ex-governor of New Mexico Territory and member of the Democratic opposition to the territorial Republican political machine, reminded readers that in January 1892 “the lower classes” in La Ascensión had also killed several officials but the government had handily dealt with such insurrection. The same issue also called attention to the death of Simón Amaya, a man who had lived in Pinos Altos, New Mexico, for a time and who was killed by Mexican federal forces as he led a group of “revolutionaries”⁶ near the town of Santo Tomás in western Chihuahua. The massacre

⁵ Vanderwood, *Power of God*, Chapters 9 and 10; Katz, *Pancho Villa*, 21-27; and Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 144-145. For a discussion of the ways in which traditional modes of land and resource usage were redefined by the modernization project that accompanied the deslindes, see María Aparecida de S. Lopes, *De Costumbres y Leyes: Abigeato y Derechos de Propiedad en Chihuahua durante el Porfiriato* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2005).

⁶ The titles afforded to participants in Chihuahua's social movements of the 1890s were very much contested. Mexican authorities, ranging from Ambassador to the United States Matías Romero, to Chihuahua Governors Lauro Carillo and Miguel Ahumada, as well as to consular officials in Deming and El Paso, worked to eliminate the term “revolution” or “revolutionaries” from reports on Chihuahua's resistance movements in the American press. Instead, they used “bandidos,” “revoltosos,” and “amotinados,” suggesting that the actions of figures like Simón Amaya were in no way political, but merely attempts to plunder and gain personal notoriety. Additionally, they used the terms “Tomochi” or “Tomochic” and “Indian/indo” to paint the struggles as attempts by uncivilized peoples to thwart local

of insurrectionists and townsfolk at Santo Tomás, however, caused a marked change in the tone of reports in the Deming paper. By 3 June, the *Headlight* reported that the events of Santo Tomás created a situation in Chihuahua that proved that “instead of being suppressed, as reported, [the revolution] is said to be growing in proportions.” Indeed, the *federales*’ heavy-handed violence against insurrectionists in Santo Tomás inspired a continuation of local resistance movements that directly impacted the inhabitants of Palomas and the Mormon colonies of Juárez and Díaz.⁷

Following his participation, along with Celso Anaya and Santana Pérez, in an 1889 conspiracy to undermine the authority of Porfirio Díaz’s government, Simón Amaya fled in exile to the United States. It was probably at that time that he took up residence in Pinos Altos. The powerful Luis Terrazas had thrown his support behind the insurrection as part of his efforts to minimize the centralization program of the Porfiriato and restore his own local political power. Amaya was intensely loyal to Terrazas; he had participated in the resistance to French occupation in the 1860s, against Terrazas’ political opponents (associated with Angel Trías) in 1879, and against Apaches for most of his life. In the 1880s he had served as jefe político and was thus directly impacted by the Porfirian effort to end the election of such local political officers. Despite the failure of the 1889 movement, as well as local authorities’ fears that the rebellion would be

modernization efforts, including *deslindes*, railroad, and colonization projects. See Vanderwood, *The Power of God*, 135-140.

⁷ *Deming Headlight* 6 May and 3 June 1893. Although the *Headlight* reported that “Simon Armalla” had been killed at “Santa Tomas,” such misspellings (and mistranslations) of names from Spanish to English were common. The activities of this “Armalla” were the same as those attributed to Simón Amaya in official Mexican reports. See, Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 40-43; and Rubén Osorio, “Villismo: Nationalism and Popular Mobilization in Northern Mexico,” in Daniel Nugent, ed., *Rural Revolt in Mexico and U.S. Intervention*, Monograph Series, 27 (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1988), 150-151, n. 4.

renewed from the U.S. side of the border, on 30 March 1893 Amaya and Anaya issued a call to arms from Corral de Piedras, a rancho located in the municipio de Namiquipa. Once again, they accused Díaz of violating the Constitution of 1857 through his constant reelections, and they called for the abolition of presidential reelection altogether.⁸

By mid-April, Amaya had recruited somewhere between 50 to 100 supporters and had occupied the town of Santo Tomás, located in the Sierra Madres about 340 miles southwest of Deming, 18 miles east of Ciudad Guerrero. Perhaps due to the Mexican government's efforts to suppress news of the event, the most detailed account of the battle there comes from the *Deming Headlight*. As Editor Ross explained, "Mexican authorities are very reticent upon the subject and refuse all information." Therefore, a full account of the battle that transpired between Amaya's men and Mexican federal forces for an eleven-day period beginning on 22 April 1893 was not made known until 24 June. Even then, the details of the struggle were only recorded in a few official reports, the letters of the parish priest of Tomósachic, and a brief mention in the *Periodico Oficial* of Chihuahua. No newspapers on the U.S. side of the border, except the *Headlight*, ran more than a few references to a rumored massacre in Chihuahua. The efforts of Mexican officials to keep the story under wraps, it appears, were quite successful.⁹

⁸ Acuña, *Corridors of Migration*, 41; Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 120-121; Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 40-41; and Jesús Vargas Valdés, "Namiquipa, tierra de revolucionarios" *La Fragua de los Tiempos*, no. 826, 9 de agosto de 2009, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, www.uacj.mx/UEHS/Documents/Fragua%202009/La%20Fragua%20de%20los%20Tiempos%20826.pdf, accessed 4 October 2012.

⁹ Sources for the story of the Santo Tomás massacre are limited. Francisco R. Almada discusses it in his *Resumen de la historia de Chihuahua*. Accounts by Rodolfo F. Acuña and Jesús Vargas Valdés draw heavily on Almada's account. Rubén Osorio's reference to Santo Tomás is based on the letters of the parish priest of Temósachic, Julio Irigoyen, to the archbishop of Durango in 1893. Finally, on 24 June 1893 the

The treatment of the story by the *Headlight* was quite sympathetic. The name of the eyewitness was withheld, “summary punishment being feared should he ever be compelled to cross the border.”¹⁰ According to the informant, Amaya’s group arrived in Santo Tomás on 22 April and they occupied the town “without resistance, despite the fact that the residents were not especially in sympathy with the rebels.” Notwithstanding this lack of resistance, most of the town’s families evacuated their homes and went into hiding in the nearby mountains, worried about the prospect of a major battle. Even with the town largely emptied, the revolutionaries did not plunder, but instead “prepared to meet the troops who came into sight about dusk.”¹¹ In the meantime, General Juan Hernández had been preparing to make a move against the rebels from his headquarters in Ciudad Guerrero. With a combined force of about 800 soldiers that included his own men and locals recruited by Colonel Joaquín Terrazas under orders of the *jefe político* of Guerrero, Hernández and the insurgents, who numbered about 100, began a standoff that lasted for over a full week. Although they were greatly outnumbered, Amaya’s forces held off the federal forces from a fortified position in the nearby mountains. The refugee

Deming Headlight published a detailed description of the slaughter two months after the fact, based on the eyewitness testimony of a resident of the town who was forced with his family to take refuge in southern New Mexico following the destruction of Santo Tomás. Estimates of the size of the force vary depending on the source. All estimate the size of Amaya’s force at about 100. Those following Almada’s lead place the number of federal forces between 300 and 500 men. The *Headlight* and Vargas Valdés, however, state that there were 800 federal soldiers at Santo Tomas.

¹⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 24 June 1893. The refugee eyewitness was also reportedly “accompanied by his entire family, composed of his wife and three children. At the time of the battle, the members of the family became separated in the mountains and nearly a week elapsed before they could be gotten together, the children, in the meantime, suffering much for food and water. The Mexican was assisted to this point by a citizen of Deming, who learned of his plight while on a business trip to Mexico, and who says that there are numerous refugees in the mountains near the former site of the town.”

¹¹ *Ibid.* Vargas Valdés places the arrival of Amaya and his supporters on 13 April, and he states that the battle against Hernández’s forces began the following morning. He accounts 9 days of battle with the final charge coming on 24 April. See Vargas Valdés, “Namiquipa,” 2-3.

informant reported that they were continuously “supplied with food and water by their confederates in the town.”¹²

Yet after over a week of constant battle the insurgents became weary and began to lose their advantage. Once Hernández concentrated his cannons on the rebel stronghold, it seemed that they were lost. In an attempt to rally forces that had begun to flee, Amaya turned his horse back toward the cannon fire and initiated a charge. In the process, he was shot down and the remaining revolutionaries beat a scattered retreat. Hernández reported that eighty-two, or nearly all, of the rebels were killed during the course of the battle. The *Headlight*'s informant estimated that the rebel losses were closer to fifty, or about half of the total number of men involved. He also declared that the most horrifying event occurred once the battle had officially concluded. Because the federal forces had endured such a high death toll themselves, 500 killed of the 800 total soldiers according to the informant, the victors forced the women and children that remained in Santo Tomás to burn the dead bodies that had amassed on the battlefield. As soon as they had completed the task, “the victors at once proceeded to slaughter the women and children left in the town with no means of escape.” At the close of the *Headlight* report, verification was made by “a party of three residents of Deming” that had been in Chihuahua on business. Their names were also withheld because they wished to return to Mexico in the future. By their account, “the entire country south of Ascension” was subject to martial law because the people were in an uproar over the “wanton murder of the people of Santa Tomas [sic].” State officials had also raised eighty men from La Ascensión and Casas Grandes to hunt down the surviving members of Amaya's band. Yet, by all accounts the

¹² *Deming Headlight*, 3 June and 24 June 1893; Vargas Valdés, “Namiquipa,” 3.

massacre at Santo Tomás created intense animosity against the Mexican government throughout Chihuahua. As the refugee informant concluded, “there is no doubt that Mexicans on this side of the line [U.S. side] are rendering assistance to their friends who are hiding in the mountains, but there is the small likelihood that another armed movement will be attempted.”¹³

The events surrounding the Santo Tomás massacre and the later attack on the Palomas customs house bear striking similarities to the patterns of the Apache wars that officially ended only a few years previously. As the Porfirian government worked to promote its modernization and development programs in places like the Lower Mimbres Valley, the *mestizo* Mexicans who had formerly claimed honor and status through their prosecution of the Apache wars were reimagined as primitive and backward. Their patterns of small landholding and an economy based on kinship and reciprocity appeared to be the antithesis of Progress and modernity. In the eyes of the Mexican state, then, the former Apache fighters in northwestern Chihuahua became the next obstacle to full-fledged capitalist development in the North. In essence, they replaced the Apaches as the “problem” that threatened the progress of the nation. It was as though the Apache wars continued after 1880 despite their expulsion and dispossession. Leaders in the former conflict, men with reputations for effective war leadership such as Simón Amaya and Santana Pérez, raised groups of insurgents in the Guerrero and Galeana Districts of northwestern Chihuahua to challenge the state’s efforts to dispossess them of land and deprive them of political participation at the municipal level. Many such leaders were of the *ranchero*—independent small-holder—class, but rose in arms when Porfirio Díaz’s

¹³ Ibid.

policy of supporting his own “official” candidates for municipal leadership ousted them from such positions of political power. Additionally, Amaya, Pérez, and their supporters used the border as a shield against the attacks of the federales. Many of the survivors of the Santo Tomás massacre, including Santana Pérez, fled to southern New Mexico for refuge—using the border to evade Mexican forces just as the Apaches had done to evade their own attacks in previous decades. Despite the defeat of the *bárbaros*, the dialectic of violence continued to shape and define relations in and around the Lower Mimbres Valley.¹⁴

Reports to the *Headlight* in September 1893 indicated the extent to which acts of violence continued in Chihuahua following the Santo Tomás massacre. On 2 September, Editor Ross ran a story that reported wholesale executions of people suspected to have taken part in the Amaya movement. According to two Chihuahuense informants to the paper, federal forces rounded up civilians near the town of Cruces, about 80 miles south of Casas Grandes, desperate to find and punish members of the resistance movement. When they failed to find any of the alleged combatants at Santo Tomás, they “seized a number of women and men, who were thought to be in sympathy with the movement, and carried them into Cruces.” The accused were given no trial whatsoever, but were subjected to torture and other “frightful indignities in the hope of obtaining information concerning the rebels but none confessed for the reason that they knew nothing.” They were then hanged from nearby trees, their bodies reportedly left dangling there for several

¹⁴ Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 162-168, 183; and Almada, *Resumen de Historia*, 348.

days.¹⁵ Such horrifying incidents insured the continuation of discontent and the potential for future uprisings.

Such was the state of affairs when a few months later the Customs House at Palomas was attacked in the early morning hours of 8 November 1893. Once again, Mexican officials attempted to suppress news of the assault, but this time they were less successful. For months after the fact, newspapers along the border and throughout the United States carried news of the actions of the revolutionary group that attacked Palomas. The continued coverage was not merely a reflection of the papers' penchant for sensationalism (although there was surely some embellishment of details). The revolutionaries, under the leadership of Santana Pérez and Víctor L. Ochoa, continued to amass recruits and materiel for their struggle against the Díaz regime, advertised in several proclamations issued in 1893 and 1894. In their statements, they drew on the martyrs of Tomochic and Santo Tomás for legitimacy and inspiration. In response, Mexican consuls in Deming and El Paso worked in tandem with Ambassador Matías Romero and Ignacio Mariscal, Secretario of Relaciones Exteriores, to suppress the "exaggerations" of the American press regarding the matter. At issue, once again, was the proper characterization of the perpetrators; they were acknowledged as "revolutionaries"

¹⁵ *Deming Headlight*, 2 September 1893. Although the *Headlight* account is the only one to levy such strong allegations of murder and atrocity, such accounts seem plausible in the larger context of early 1890s Chihuahua, described by Katz and Alonso. Additionally, as Chihuahuense historian Rubén Osorio has pointed out, Julio Irigoyen, priest of Tomosáchic, described the massacre in similar terms. In his letters about the matter to the archbishop of Durango, José Vicente Salinas, dated 12 and 16 May 1893, Irigoyen asserted that the Santo Tomás massacre "surpassed in brutality what happened in Tomóchic, and includes the remark that the towns were devastated since, 'the Federal troops shot whomever they felt like shooting'" (Quoted in Osorio, "Villismo," n. 4, p. 150).

in the U.S. press. Mexican officials worked to control the story by labeling them instead as “bandits.”¹⁶

In the *Headlight's* report on the raid in its 11 November issue, Editor Ross reminded readers to “remember the wanton slaughter of Temochians at Santa [sic] Tomas last spring, in which several hundred Indians were murdered by Mexican troops.”¹⁷ Ross’s commentary not only linked the two violent actions, it also reflected the labels placed on the revolutionaries by Mexican officials. Such labels erased the mestizo background of Pérez and the U.S. nationality of Ochoa and painted the two men as self-serving bandits of indigenous background. A report filed by Las Palomas Customs House Administrator José S. Hernández on the day of the assault also reflected the official disregard for the political and social motives of the rebels. As the report outlined, the Customs House was attacked and robbed by 23 well-armed men at 4:00 a.m. on 8 November. Guards Lorenzo Muñoz and Mateo Muñoz Silva were surprised by the arrival of the party, and surrendered arms and ammunition under the threat of physical violence. Other Customs employees, Administrator Hernández, and local residents came to the aid of the guards and were overpowered by the raiders. One guard, Rafael M. Pérez, was seriously wounded and his horse shot out from under him early in the course of the assault. The leaders of the band (not specified by name by Hernández) then demanded the

¹⁶ On the issue of labels and the social nature of movements labeled as “banditry,” see Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 135-140; Gilbert M. Joseph, “On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance” *Latin American Research Review* 25, no. 3 (1990): 7-53, especially p. 22; and José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapter 7. For a discussion of the ways in which violent actions, such as the motín in La Ascensión in January 1892, represent a form of communication, see José Angel Hernández, “Violence as Communication: The Revolt of La Ascensión, Chihuahua (1892)” *Landscapes of Violence* 2, no. 1, article 6, available at: <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/lov/vol2/iss1/6> (accessed 26 December 2012).

¹⁷ *Deming Headlight*, 11 November 1893.

keys to the safe. Resistance by the guards, Cashier Agustín Lara, and Hernández was limited because they had been stripped of their weapons. As the party emptied the safe of the 203 pesos that it held at the time, Lara pointed out that they were committing a “grave outrage and they would be called to account for their misdeeds.” The insurgents responded that “they deliberately intended to take Government funds with or without force wherever they could.” According to Hernández, they claimed to have a political motive for their actions, but he and the other Customs house employees agreed that, in their opinion, the party was composed of “bandits who use such ends as a pretext to commit their crimes.”¹⁸

Because their personal backgrounds, as well as their ethnicity and nationality, played a key role in the ways in which the revolutionary leaders were characterized, a short biography of Santana Pérez and Victor L. Ochoa is in order. Pérez has been viewed quite differently by various historians. Chihuahua historian Rubén Osorio describes him as a “highly regarded popular leader,” a forerunner to famed Generals of the Mexican Revolution like Pancho Villa. On the other hand, historian Paul Vanderwood paints Pérez as a “restless opportunist” who was pragmatic to the extent that “you could never tell which way he would point his rifle.” Osorio portrays him as dedicated to the cause of social and political justice; Vanderwood considers him to have been truly committed only to his own personal prosperity. In reality, Pérez’s character perhaps melded these two contrasting portraits of his personality and his role in various rebellions in northwestern Chihuahua from the late 1880s to 1910. By all accounts, his home was the village of

¹⁸ Report of José S. Hernández, Customs House Administrator, Las Palomas, Chihuahua, made to the Secretario de Hacienda Publica, Ignacio Mariscal, 8 November 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

Yepómera in the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua's Guerrero District. He owned land and cattle and had served at times as the municipal president of Temósachic. Such prosperity had been built on his reputation for boldness as an Apache fighter in various engagements from the 1860s forward. In 1892 he lost the municipal election to the official Porfirian candidate, Julio Bencomo, but he did not accept the defeat quietly. Bencomo stepped down after receiving threats of violence from Pérez and his supporters; in the context of the La Ascensión uprising that left the newly elected municipal president, Rafael Ancheta, dead, Bencomo did not take chances.¹⁹

Santana Pérez's on-again-off-again support for the federal and Chihuahua state governments supports Vanderwood's characterization. Pérez's actions, however, also fit the description of a person struggling to come to terms with the ways in which the Porfirian modernization program was reshaping familiar political, economic, and social landscapes in northwestern Chihuahua. In 1889, for example, Pérez lodged a complaint with Guerrero District authorities that the municipal presidency in Temósachic had taken some of his lands and given them to their supporters. Yet, during Simón Amaya's 1889 revolt against the Díaz regime that had the support of Luis Terrazas, Pérez sat on the fence. And, during the Tomóchic conflict in 1891 and 1892, Pérez initially supported Chihuahua Governors Carrillo and Miguel Ahumada (Díaz replaced the governor in late 1891) and he raised local supporters to aid the federales against the Tomochitecos. Over the course of the campaign, however, federal troops, including the campaign's commander, General Rangel, blamed their inabilities on the alleged treachery of Pérez

¹⁹ Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 121; Osorio, "Villismo," 150-151; Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 143; and Almada, *Resumen de Historia*, 348.

and his forces. Following a particularly troubling defeat at the hands of the Tomochitecos, for example, Pérez was scapegoated for the loss. Rangel and others accused Pérez of traitorous actions ranging from a simple failure to support the federales to the charge that he ordered his men to fire on the federal troops from behind. The astute Pérez played the various levels of authority off of one another, however, by appealing to Governor Ahumada with whom he cleared his name and reasserted his loyalty to the state. Still, by the final months of the conflict, Pérez realigned his allegiance and threw his support behind the insurgents at Tomóchic. His inability to come to grips with capitalist economic systems and the centralizing tendencies of the Porfirian government led him to commit decidedly to the rebel cause by the spring of 1893 when he fought with Amaya at Santo Tomás. Following the Palomas raid, his unswerving opposition to the fall of the Díaz dictatorship was clearly laid out in his various proclamations.²⁰

Such proclamations underscored the insurgents' view that the new political and economic systems were tainted by "moral corruption and disorder," and were printed by Pérez's comrade-in-arms, Víctor L. Ochoa.²¹ Ochoa was a U.S. citizen, the 27-year-old editor of the El Paso area newspaper, the *Hispano Americano*. He had been born in Ojinaga, Chihuahua, but had relocated to west Texas where he became a naturalized U.S. citizen. From the U.S. side of the line, he expressed deep sympathies toward the Tomóchic Santo Tomás movements. From his editorial post, he extolled the ideals of "democratic institutions and human equality" for his birth nation, and he viewed Porfirio

²⁰ Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 249-250, 257, 270; Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 143, 183; and Osorio, "Villismo," 151. Osorio points out that by the first decade of the twentieth century, Pérez threw his support to the Magón brothers' Partido Liberal Mexicano. And, "In 1910 Pérez declined an invitation to join the Madero movement . . . because of his advanced age" (151, n. 6).

²¹ Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 183.

Díaz as a despot who denied such important societal safeguards to his people. Due to his efforts to promote Pérez's 1893-1894 insurgency in the American Southwest, the Mexican government targeted Ochoa for extradition and prosecution. Mexican consuls in El Paso and Deming were ordered to take all possible actions to bring him to justice. By 1895 he was imprisoned at the Kings County Penitentiary in New York for his crimes, but following his release in 1896 he continued to advocate for the ouster of the Díaz regime. Although he did not share Pérez's reputation for valor in the Apache wars, his connections north of the border aided Pérez's ability to use the international boundary to elude the federales.²² Together, both men's efforts, along with those of their supporters, illustrate the continuance of violence as a means of both constructing and contesting the economic, political, and social order along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border in the early 1890s.

From Palomas, in another report written later in the day of 8 November 1893, in which Administrator Hernández outlined the various arms and supplies that were taken from the Customs House by the attackers, he noted that the rebels had referred to themselves as "los pronunciados de Tomóchic."²³ As noted above, the *Headlight* also referred to the insurrectionists as "Tomochian Indians." The title, of course, hearkened back to the Tomóchic rebellion, led by Cruz Chávez in denunciation of the authority of

²² Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 291-292; and Acuña, *Corridors of Migration*, 42-43. It is important to note that Vanderwood's skepticism toward Pérez's intentions and actions is also reflected in his portrayal of Ochoa. He considers Ochoa an opportunist who attempted to propel his own dreams of revolutionary grandeur by capitalizing on the memory of Tomóchic. As Vanderwood concludes of Ochoa's proclamations, "through his [Ochoa's] words we can see one of the ways in which rumors are planted and nurtured, how a real tragedy may be sifted for embers to spark other ambitions and embellished for political purposes" (p. 291).

²³ Report and Inventory of José S. Hernández, Customs House Administrator, Las Palomas, Chihuahua, made to the Secretario de Hacienda Publica, Ignacio Mariscal, 8 November 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

the Mexican state in favor of that of God alone, which had been brutally suppressed by federal forces just over a year previously. Due to the Tomóchic movement's association with Santa Teresa Urrea and various local folk saints, the title also carried the connotation of religious fanaticism. Thus, although the forces that united behind Santana Pérez and Víctor L. Ochoa cited the memory of the martyrs of Tomóchic, the use of the term by the American press (other papers in the Southwest and nationally received dispatches from Deming and El Paso and followed their usage of the label) implied a type of religious zealotry and pre-modernism that simultaneously denied the armed movement the political legitimacy that its leaders sought.²⁴

By the *Headlight*'s account, the raid “created much excitement” in Deming and a small party was dispatched to Palomas, a regular destination for local merchants, miners, and ranchers, to assess the situation. From the earliest reports, editor Ross surmised that the raid “was one of the boldest and most complete ever executed.” The Temochies, as they were also dubbed in the American press, had apparently been staking out the town for days prior to the raid but their presence went unnoticed until reports made by Palomas locals after the fact. Once they had taken all of the “carbines and arms, provisions and supplies” from the Customs House, the group fled into the surrounding mountains. En route, they passed through Colonia Díaz where they stole four of Bishop Johnson's horses.²⁵ On November 11 or 12 Administrator Hernández fired off a telegram to Colonel Eduardo Subikurski in Ciudad Juárez who then relayed the message to Officials at the

²⁴ Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 291-292; and Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 183-184.

²⁵ *Deming Headlight*, 11 November 1893; and “Memories of Orson Pratt Brown,” Taylor Oden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, reel 1 (MS 9548), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter CHLA].

Secretaría de Guerra y Marina in Mexico City. Hernández reported that he was cut off from regular communication with “the interior of the country because enemies control all the routes.” Since he only had five employees to guard the Custom House, he asked if he should remain at Palomas or flee to the U.S. side of the border. He urged his superiors to send him word as quickly as they possibly could because the situation was dire. The response was made by Secretario de Finanza, José Yves Limantour on 15 November and submitted through the appropriate channels in the Secretaría de Hacienda to Hernández. The dispatch ordered the Administrator to hold his position and protect the Customs House if at all possible. He was only to leave his post if the situation became absolutely indefensible, and members of the Gendarmería Fiscal were ordered from their post at La Ascensión to Palomas to reinforce the Customs House guard. These exchanges indicate the worried reaction of Hernández to the revolutionaries’ continued presence in the region; at least during the first few days after the attack, he felt that the rebels were on the verge of controlling the region.²⁶

In the early hours and even days after the attack, misinformation and anxiety ran through official Mexican communications and efforts to suppress and guide the story of the raid went into full gear. The Mexican Consul in Deming, Adolfo L. Domínguez, learned of the raid shortly after it had occurred and immediately sent telegrams to officials in Ciudad Juárez and Ciudad Chihuahua and was soon the recipient of communications from Ambassador Romero in Washington D.C. First intelligence reports indicated that fifty armed men had surprised the guards at the Customs House on the

²⁶ Telegram from Colonel Eduardo Subikurski to Secretario de Guerra y Marina, 14 November 1893; Telegram from José Yves Limantour to José S. Hernández, 15 November 1893; and Official Dispatch from Limantour to the Commander of the 2ª Zona de la Gendarmería Fiscal de Chihuahua, 17 November 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

morning of 8 November. Domínguez reported that during the raid the “bandits” mentioned that their next step would be to take the town of La Ascensión, although the mobilization of federal forces in northwestern Chihuahua forced them to take refuge in the Sierra Madres instead.²⁷ By 9 November press dispatches from Deming had circulated throughout the Southwest. José Zayas Guarneros, Mexican Consul in El Paso, sent a dispatch to Romero on the 10th that highlighted his efforts to ensure that “the truth of what had happened” appear in the pages of the El Paso *Times* and *Herald*. Zayas warned that “because the American press, particularly in this place, tends always to exaggerate events of this type, to present them as a revolution in our Republic,” he sought an immediate meeting with the editors of both papers so that he could influence their stories before they went to print. He was sorely disappointed, however, when he was unable to meet with the sleeping editor of the *Times*, Juan S. Hart, late on the night of 9 November in order to make his case before the morning daily was distributed.²⁸ The *Times* went to press, therefore, on 10 November with a story of the raid that had been relayed by its correspondent in Deming and that had not been doctored by Zayas.

Thwarted in his first attempt, Zayas penned a letter to the editor of the *Herald*, which circulated in the afternoon. He informed the editor that the *Times* report was riddled with falsehoods relative to the attack, and that the Consulate in El Paso had received the “datos verídicos” (true information). First and foremost, Zayas stated that the Palomas Custom House had been attacked by a group of armed robbers who were able to

²⁷ Telegram from Adolfo L. Domínguez to Ambassador Matías Romero, 9 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (I), Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México City, D.F. [hereafter AHSRE].

²⁸ Dispatch from José Zayas Guarneros to Ambassador Matías Romero, 10 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (II), AHSRE. Emphasis in original.

overpower the guards due to their superior numbers. They took cash and supplies and then moved on to look for “other offices where there might be money.” In making this characterization of the events at Palomas on 8 November, Zayas suggested in no uncertain terms that the robbery had no connection to a revolutionary movement. In fact, he railed against the *Times* piece that was already in circulation for its “anonymous libel, full of disrespectful characterizations of Mexico that were expressed in vulgar language with absolute ignorance.” He levied these harsh charges precisely because the *Times* reported that the attack at Palomas signaled the beginning of another revolutionary movement in Chihuahua, in the spirit of Tomóchic and Santo Tomás. The pronunciados had issued a proclamation that outlined their grievances against the Porfirian regime and local Chihuahuense authorities. Zayas responded in his letter to the editor of the *Herald* that no such proclamation had been issued following the assault.²⁹

Yet, Consul Domínguez’s dispatch of 9 November recognized that the assailants had indeed circulated a proclamation. He enclosed a copy with the dispatch that he submitted to the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City. Consul Zayas and Ambassador Romero were also in regular communication with Secretario Mariscal at the time, but they expressly fabricated a story for the *Herald* that denied the armed movement’s revolutionary character, a violent and blatant silencing of the facts of the case. Yet the proclamations did circulate in the immediate region of Palomas and in late November and early December, the Deming and El Paso papers reported on the

²⁹ Letter from José Zayas Guarneros to the Editor of the El Paso *Herald*, Annex to Zayas’ dispatch to Ambassador Matías Romero, 10 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (II), AHSRE.

revolutionaries' stated demands and goals.³⁰ The version of the proclamation that Domínguez attached to his report was a printed broadside, likely produced under the auspices of Víctor L. Ochoa in the El Paso area. The message was addressed to "Mexican soldiers," exhorting them to understand that they had been pressed into the service of Porfirio Díaz, who had violated their rights and who used them to "enslave" other members of Mexican society. The revolutionaries heralded the Constitution of 1857 as the document that "taught us to think like citizens and that elevates us to the status of free men." They further argued that "if the tyrant that pays you to kill us had governed by this Constitution" they would not have taken up their weapons against the government. Their appeal ended on an especially poignant note: "You defend a man that enslaves you and looks only for his own aggrandizement. Down with tyrants! Long live the revolution and long live Tomóchi!"³¹

Below the proclamation, the revolutionaries added a postscript in which they described the massacre at Santo Tomás. According to their report, thirty-one people had been summarily executed in the days following the horrible destruction of the town. Of that number only five or six were connected to the insurgency. The rest were innocent locals.³² That massacre and the violent suppression of the insurgents at Tomóchic were intimately connected events because they both stood as evidence of the brutality of the

³⁰ See, for example, *Deming Headlight*, 11 and 18 November 1893; *New York Herald*, [dispatches from Deming and El Paso], 17 November 1893; and *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 16 November 1893.

³¹ Annex to Telegram from Adolfo L. Domínguez to Ambassador Matías Romero, 9 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (I), AHSRE.

³² This report is quite muted compared to the report made in the 24 June 1893 *Deming Headlight*. The report in Deming seems geared to its American audience, cast in terms that would generate the greatest level of sympathy. This proclamation, on the other hand, was intended to convince the soldiers that they were serving a tyrant, not to paint them as tyrannical themselves.

Mexican state against its own people in Chihuahua. Additionally, the revolutionaries argued that their statement was necessary because the story that had been published in Chihuahua's *Periódico Oficial* was "untrue and at the same time a deception." Their strategy was to appeal to those members of the federal forces that had been impressed into service. Such was the pattern in northwestern Chihuahua; locals had been impressed into militia service at Guerrero to fight with federal forces against Cruz Chávez and his supporters in Tomóchic. Just as in the aftermath of Santo Tomás massacre, eighty men had been called into service at La Ascensión.³³ Such soldiers were not dedicated to the missions that they had been called to support, but neither did they wish to cross the Porfirian government. This proclamation was intended to appeal directly to that reality. The revolutionaries pushed such soldiers to recognize that the goals of the government for which they were fighting were unjust, and that they were tearing apart innocent families. The proclamation indicated that the men that followed Santana Pérez and Víctor L. Ochoa were not merely robbers or highwaymen; they were fighting to correct the grave injustices and violent reprisals perpetrated by the Mexican government in Chihuahua.³⁴

As the revolutionaries moved in the region between Palomas, La Ascensión, Corralitos, Casas Grandes, Galeana, and Santo Tomás over the first half of November, Ambassador Matías Romero worked through diplomatic channels and Mexican consular agents along the border to control the story. In a 12 November report, Domínguez

³³ *Deming Headlight*, 24 June 1893.

³⁴ For further analysis of the proclamation, as well as its appeal to support the kinship and reciprocity based traditional economy as opposed to the monetary-based capitalist one, see Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 183. See also Vargas Valdés, "Namiquipa, Tierra de Revolucionarios."

informed Romero that he knew the location where the “bandidos” gathered to plan the assault on the Customs House and that he had a list that contained the names of the insurrectionists that had lived in the United States. To the names of Ochoa and Pérez, who had already been singled out as key leaders, he added the names of Eleuterio Nevares, Luis Nevares, Jesús Mendoza, and Antonio Ybarra, all of whom had been residents of Santo Tomás prior to the April massacre. The first two, he indicated, had since lived at a ranch three miles south of Deming. Mendoza had taken up refuge in El Paso and Mimbres, New Mexico, and Ybarra in Silver City.³⁵ Three days later, Romero levied the charge that these men had violated neutrality laws and that U.S. officials had done nothing to prevent or prosecute such action. He also claimed that immediately following the Palomas raid, the insurrectionists had retreated across the Rio Grande to a refuge in the United States. These accusations were expressed in a letter to Walter Q. Gresham, Secretary of State.³⁶

To investigate Romero’s accusations, First Lieutenant of the First Cavalry Oscar J. Brown was ordered to the border from Fort Bayard along with Adjutant Charles E. Dodge who was assigned to assess the situation near Silver City and throughout southwestern New Mexico. Brown set up camp near Columbus and interviewed as many residents of Palomas as possible, with the aid of Lieutenant Barber of the First Infantry who served as interpreter. He found that, according to the reports of locals and

³⁵ Report of Adolfo L. Domínguez to Matías Romero, 12 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (I), AHSRE; and Letter from Adolfo L Domínguez to José Zayas Guarneros, Mexican Consul at El Paso, Texas, 16 November 1893 Expediente 44-16-2 (II), AHSRE.

³⁶ Correspondence of General A. McDonald McCook, Commanding Officer of the Department of the Colorado: Report to the Adjutant General, 29 November 1893, Tomo 417, Archivo Embajada de México en los Estados Unidos Americanos [hereafter AEMEUE], AHSRE.

Administrator Hernández, the insurgents had acted in a way “marked by great consideration for men engaged in lawless acts.” They had provided a receipt for the money they took, and they left locals and American citizens in the area at peace due to their stated intention to avoid “interfering with anyone except Mexican officials.” Their commitment to the cause of disrupting only Mexican government operations was further illustrated when they took only the horses and munitions of the Customs House guards, “leaving better ones belonging to Americans.” According to Brown, the only Americans that were targeted by the rebels were F. Siebold, a storekeeper at Palomas who also kept a home in Deming, and a cowboy employed by A. O. Bailey. Siebold reported that the revolutionaries had taken two guns from his store, and the cowboy recounted that the group had pursued him and stolen his horse. Neither was injured nor were their lives threatened. Brown learned from his interviews that the insurgents had a deep disdain for the Mexican military: “this dates back to the time some months ago when through some oppression they rebelled against the local authorities and the troops were sent in to settle the matter, which they did by killing men, women, and children, so the report goes, after suffering great loss themselves.” Brown’s ultimate assessment was that Americans and their interests along the border would not be threatened or harmed by this group of rebels because their grievance was with the Mexican government and they were firmly focused on their target.³⁷

³⁷ Report of Oscar J. Brown, First Lieutenant, First Cavalry, to Brigadier General A. McDonald McCook, Commanding Officer, Department of the Colorado, 20 November 1893, Tomo 417, AEMEU, AHSRE. The initial report of Administrator Hernández and his guards also reported that the revolutionaries had left a receipt for the \$203 they took from the Customs House safe. See, Report of José S. Hernández, Customs House Administrator, Las Palomas, Chihuahua, made to the Secretario de Hacienda Publica, Ignacio Mariscal, 8 November 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

Adjutant Charles E. Dodge's assignment was to assess the situation on the U.S. side of the border in southwestern New Mexico, as well as to verify Romero's charges regarding insurgent bands that were allegedly coalescing near Silver City. He found calm conditions in the towns of Hachita, Separ, Deming, and Silver City, where he concluded his tour on 19 November. In his report, Dodge used language that had been employed during Apache campaigns of the previous decades: cattle ranchers in the area informed him that "no depredations had been committed on our border by either Indians or Mexicans, and that the cattle men felt little, if any, uneasiness on account of the reported Mexican Revolution." His interview with Mexican Consul Domínguez in Deming, on the other hand, was of quite a different tenor. Domínguez informed him that the leaders of the insurgents in southern New Mexico were Valentia García and Morcario Pacheco who had raised a force of fifty to sixty men. He also reported that "a number of Mexicans, who were citizens of the United States, were then on their way to the border, well-armed, to join the Revolutionists in Mexico." The consul painted the region between Deming and Columbus to be teeming with potential revolutionary forces, although Dodge found no evidence to support such a characterization.³⁸

His final interview, with a Mr. Brockman, a prominent Silver City banker, was more in line with the reports of Lieutenant Brown and the cattlemen. Brockman had been traveling in northwestern Chihuahua in early November tending to his mining interests, and he had a personal brush with the revolutionists. He reported that on 9 or 10 November (he wasn't certain of the exact date) that he encountered a party of fifty-six

³⁸ Report of Charles E. Dodge, Adjutant, to Brigadier General A. McDonald McCook, Commanding Officer, Department of the Colorado, included as an Annex to McCook's report to the Secretary of State, 20 November 1893, Tomo 417, AEMEU, AHSRE.

men encamped some twenty-five miles southwest of Palomas. He observed that some had horses, but that most were on foot, although “they were all well-armed and had an ample supply of ammunition.” As he approached their encampment, he was stopped by a four-man guard and was asked whether he had witnessed any troops approaching their position. After he responded in the negative, the men told him of the revolution and he decided, “of his own free will,” to drive into their camp where he “talked with a number of their men whom he described as intelligent, well-armed and thoroughly prepared to fight for their claimed rights.” According to Brockman, they had a clear list of grievances against the Mexican government, including that their lands had been taken from them and given in grants by the government to “individuals and corporations without their consent, or without just compensation.” When they attempted to voice their concerns through legal channels, the government had denied them any sort of recourse and they “had in every way failed to secure justice.” They assured Brockman that they expected many more men in the region to come join their struggle.³⁹

Dodge and Brown’s findings led them to the conclusion that, at least as far as Americans were concerned, the uprising in Chihuahua would not pose a threat. They portrayed both the border itself and the insurrectionists’ stated goals as barriers that insulated Americans from the violence. Brigadier General Alexander McDonald McCook, Commanding Officer of the Department of the Colorado, which presided over southern New Mexico, used their reports as evidence that Romero’s accusations of neutrality law violations were unfounded. Additionally, McCook reported, in line with the intelligence offered from Domínguez and Hernández, that the assailants regrouped

³⁹ Ibid.

near La Ascensión following the initial attack—they did not cross the border near El Paso as alleged by Romero. Based on their reports and the other intelligence received by the Department of the Colorado, McCook affirmed that “no armed revolutionists from Mexico have been within the limits” of the Department. He promised that his forces would actively work to prevent any neutrality law violations along the border.⁴⁰ The U.S. reports made the case that Romero’s accusations were false and they also shed light on a revolutionary movement that was much more than the motley group of bandits that Mexican officials made it out to be. American military officials made known their intention to fortify the border as a shield against both neutrality violations and the flight of revolutionaries from Chihuahua into New Mexico or Texas.

Despite Romero’s and Zayas’s efforts, American newspaper reports regarding the insurrection seemed to multiply during the month of November. Papers in places such as Albuquerque, Boise, Chicago, Boston, New York City, and Washington D.C. regularly printed dispatches from Deming and El Paso regarding the rebels’ movements. A 15 November El Paso dispatch reprinted in various papers reported that Santana Pérez’s forces had retaken the town of Palomas, causing “Mexicans and Americans alike” to flee across the border for refuge.⁴¹ Reports made the following day indicated that the revolutionaries had also taken control of La Ascensión and all “roads 100 miles the south.” Estimates of the strength of the revolutionary force ranged from between 300 and

⁴⁰ Report of Alexander McDonald McCook, Brigadier General, Commanding Officer, Department of the Colorado, to the U.S. Adjutant General, 29 November 1893, Tomo 417, AEMEU, AHSRE. Letter from Edwin F. Uhl, Acting U.S. Secretary of State to Matías Romero, 9 January 1894, Tomo 432, AEMEU, AHSRE.

⁴¹ *Albuquerque Morning Democrat*; *Boston Daily Advertiser*; *Daily Inter Ocean* [Chicago]; and *Idaho Statesman* [Boise], 16 November 1893.

600 men, depending on the dispatch, and one El Paso report indicated that General Neri of Guerrero State had also raised 13,000 men in support of the revolt. Some reports indicated that the Mormon colonists had been ordered to abandon their homes at Colonia Díaz and Colonia Juárez, yet others declared that the colonies were the sites of robberies, the rebels having “taken horses, arms, and supplies,” but that no physical harm was done to the colonists themselves. Stories printed on 16 November indicated that General McCook had dispatched troops from Fort Bayard to the border with orders to “guard American interests and prevent any violation of the neutrality laws.” An 18 November dispatch from Deming stated that rebel forces were encamped in the Tres Hermanas mountains, just north of Columbus, and that many “Mexicans are crossing the line every day to join the revolutionists.”⁴² The roller-coaster trajectory of the stories about the revolution validates the Mexican officials’ allegations of sensationalism in the American press. The idea that Pérez and Ochoa’s movement was gathering strength, however, was corroborated by Mexican sources even if the details of the revolutionaries’ movements were exaggerated or uncertain.

Throughout November, the revolutionaries made a circuit between Palomas, La Ascensión, and the Sierra Madres to the west of the two towns. The Ciudad Juárez telegraph officer reported that the revolutionaries had indeed retaken Palomas on 15 November and that their force was comprised of “200 well-armed men.” According to the *Deming Headlight*, this time the Customs House guards fled across the border “for safety

⁴² *Deming Headlight*, 18 November 1893. For the 16 November El Paso dispatch, see *New York Herald-Tribune*; *Morning World-Herald* [Omaha]; *Philadelphia Inquirer*; *Springfield* [Mass.] *Daily Republican*; and *The Sun* [Baltimore], 17 November 1893. For the report on General Neri and the rebel’s control of the larger region surrounding Las Palomas and La Ascensión, see *New York Herald*, 17 November 1893.

and sought refuge in the house of A. O. Bailey at Columbus.”⁴³ That same day, Chihuahua Governor Miguel Ahumada relayed information from Domínguez that revolutionary forces had been planning their next moves near Deming on the American side of the border. On 17 November, Administrator Hernández wired Domínguez that the situation in and around Palomas was indefensible. The revolutionaries had camped at Boca Grande, to the south of Palomas, and “their number was on the rise,” but federal reinforcements had not yet arrived to dislodge them from the town. Troops had been dispatched from Mexico City to support the Customs guards and Gendarmería Fiscal forces from the area surrounding La Ascensión and Janos. According to Domínguez’s reports, however, federal forces would not arrive at the border until 21 November at the earliest.⁴⁴

In the meantime, local forces were dispatched to support the Customs House guards at Palomas and also at La Ascensión, the rumored target of additional raids. Agents of the Secretaría de Hacienda and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores ordered the local guards at both towns to hold their positions and make the best defense possible if attacked. One of the officers of the Gendarmería Fiscal headquartered at Janos, Corporal Severo Trejo, was ordered to Casas Grandes from his post near La Ascensión to raise volunteers to support the defense of the border customs posts. Although Trejo was unable to convince the Municipal President to support his request, on the night of 17

⁴³ *Deming Headlight*, 18 November 1893.

⁴⁴ Telegram from C. Perales, Ciudad Juárez Telegraph Operator, to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, 15 November 1893; Telegram from Miguel Ahumada to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, 15 November 1893; Telegram from Adolfo L. Domínguez to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, by way of Ciudad Juárez, 17 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (I), AHSRE; and Letter from Adolfo L. Domínguez to José Zayas Guarneros, Mexican Consul at El Paso, Texas, 16 November 1893 Expediente 44-16-2 (II), AHSRE.

November “a Mormon, *vecino* of Colonia Juárez,” arrived in town with the news that he and some of his fellow colonists had seen twenty-eight armed men in the hills surrounding the colony.⁴⁵ Upon receiving this report, the Municipal President, with the support of the Captain of the 15th Regiment stationed at Casas Grandes, raised twenty-five soldiers and twenty-five armed civilians who marched through the night with Colonel Trejo and his Gendarmería Fiscal employees to reach Colonia Juárez. On 18 November, Trejo met with Section President Henry Eyring to create a plan of action to protect the colony. Eyring informed Trejo that seven men from the colony, led by Orson Pratt Brown, had set out that morning to search once again for the revolutionaries. When the party located the band of insurrectionists they initiated an exchange of gunfire. Six of the Mormons were trapped by the revolutionaries, although Carl Nielson fled to Colonia Juárez for reinforcements.⁴⁶

Nielson reported that the “Tomoches,” as the Mormon colonists also called the rebels, had the party surrounded and had possibly killed them all. Although Trejo was ready and willing to accompany Nielson back to the scene of the battle, the civilian volunteers secretly returned to Casas Grandes, a move that Trejo characterized as “a desertion before the enemy.” The commander of the small group of soldiers that had

⁴⁵ Official Dispatch, from José Yves Limantour to V. Barrera, Commander of the 2nd Zone of the Gendarmería Fiscal, State of Chihuahua, 17 November 1893; and Telegram from Vista Vevraumont to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, 18 November 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

⁴⁶ Report of V. Barrera, Commander of 2nd Zone of the Gendarmería Fiscal, State of Chihuahua, to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, 2 December 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN; Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 312-314; and “Memories of Orson Pratt Brown,” Taylor Oden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, reel 1 (MS 9548), CHLA. See also Report of Section President Enrique [Henry] Eyring to Presidente Municipal de Distrito Bravos, 6 October 1893, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez [AMCJ], Microform copy, Roll 72, part 2, reel 54, University Library, University of Texas at El Paso [UTEP].

come from Casas Grandes also refused to join in the skirmish, arguing that he had received no orders to take such a course of action. Trejo and nine other members of the Gendarmería Fiscal were the only reinforcements that returned to the battlefield with Nielson. From the Mormons' perspective, the Mexican soldiers and civilians were an unorganized, superstitious bunch. According to Thomas Cottam Romney, the seventeen-year-old who had relayed the message to Casas Grandes, those who accompanied him "were footmen except those in command, and a sorry looking lot they were." He commented on their drinking and boisterous manner during the march to the colony, but concluded that they were cowards who did not wish to engage in combat, ultimately "leaving the colonists to fight their own battles."⁴⁷ Orson Pratt Brown, captain of the cavalry in the Colonia Juárez militia, shared Romney's opinions. Brown and five companions held off a barrage of gunfire for three hours before Trejo and the others reached their position. Trejo concluded that because they were outnumbered (Brown estimated that there were twenty-eight insurrectionists present), the group should retreat to Colonia Juárez. Despite initial claims that the rebels be captured dead or alive, the Mexican forces seemed afraid of an engagement. On the other hand, Brown and Amos Cox stood toe-to-toe with a group of three armed revolutionaries prior to the arrival of reinforcements. When the three armed "Tomoches" surprised the two men, Brown, by his own account, pulled his gun and refused to allow the Mexicans to have the upper hand. His negotiations with the men secured the release of his own party and prevented the rebels from raiding Colonia Díaz (their reported intention). Although his memoir seems

⁴⁷ Romney, *The Mormon Colonies*, 314. Romney's work on the Mormon colonies presents the dual perspectives of an academically trained historian and firsthand participant. He received a PhD in History under the direction of Herbert Eugene Bolton and included a personal account of the colonists' brush with the revolutionaries in November 1893 and his own role in the events that unfolded at that time.

to overstate his own bravado and bravery, his disdain for the seeming weakness of the Mexican forces was shared by other colonists.⁴⁸ The Mormon colonists felt as though they could handle the situation more effectively than the local Mexican forces.

Brown's memories of the rebellion also underscore its political nature. During his confrontation with the three rebels, he accused them all of being bandits and thieves. At this charge they became indignant, clamoring that they were not but that they had "another mission" that they intended to fulfill.⁴⁹ In early December, the *Deming Headlight* and other American papers published the story of the clash between the Mormons and the revolutionaries. In the *Headlight's* report, Editor Ross indicated that the failure of local Mexican civilians to pursue the rebels was due to the fact that "at heart they were all in sympathy with the rebels." Reports from the same general time frame indicated that the revolutionaries had organized into three companies, with Santana Pérez the "commander-in-chief of all." Organized and well-armed, the forces continued to dominate the region between La Ascensión and Palomas, headquartered in the Sierra Madres not far from Boca Grande. Due to the heavy concentration of federal troops at La Ascensión (300 troops, with the promise of 500 more within days), the *Headlight* surmised that the first major battle of the revolution was likely to occur there.⁵⁰ All the

⁴⁸ Report of V. Barrera, Commander of 2nd Zone of the Gendarmería Fiscal, State of Chihuahua, to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Ignacio Mariscal, 2 December 1893, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN; and "Memories of Orson Pratt Brown," Taylor Oden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, reel 1 (MS 9548), CHLA. The 2 December 1893 *Deming Headlight* published a story of the skirmish between Brown's party and the revolutionaries based on a letter from an unnamed Mormon in Colonia Juárez. The letter reported that "the action of the [Mexican] troops was cowardly in the extreme and that 'any old woman with a broom could have whipped the entire squad.'"

⁴⁹ "Memories of Orson Pratt Brown," Taylor Oden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, reel 1 (MS 9548), CHLA.

⁵⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 2 December 1893.

while, Romero, Domínguez, and Zayas worked to deny and suppress reports that the rebels had any purpose other than simple plunder.

Just as the revolutionaries had once again taken control of Palomas in mid-November, Romero issued a statement to the American press that downplayed their activity. In the same story that acknowledged the rebels' capture of "500 horses, ammunition, camp stores and arms," the *New York Herald* also published Romero's statement that "the trouble is of small importance." According to the *Herald*, when asked about the activity along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border, Romero scoffed: "Why, there's no rebellion in Mexico. The papers give too much importance to the little disturbance a band of bandits is making for us along the border. They continue troublesome for the same reason that a few dozen Apache Indians were troublesome to this country. . . . They will eventually be surrounded and captured as the Apaches were, and if captured they would not be as mercifully dealt with as the Apaches."⁵¹ Again, Romero sought to brand the insurrectionists as uncivilized Indians in an attempt to erase any legitimacy that might be accredited to their movement. And he did so in terms that Americans could directly relate to by claiming the rebellion was akin to the Apache wars that had raged along the border through the 1870s and 1880s. A 20 November report in the *Herald* cited both Porfirio Díaz's and General Bernardo Reyes' comments about the revolution in Chihuahua. Díaz reportedly "ordered that all insurrectionists captured be shot like dogs, those being quietly arrested in the dead of night might be taken out from town and shot to death 'while trying to escape.'" And Reyes, Governor of Nuevo León

⁵¹ *New York Herald*, 18 November 1893.

and commander of Mexican forces in that region, retorted that Mexican officials “do not recognize them as revolutionists, but as bandits, and will so treat them.”⁵²

The Deming and El Paso papers, however, continued to report on the state of affairs in Chihuahua in a totally different light. On 25 November, the *Headlight* reported that all was quiet in the vicinity of Palomas and La Ascensión due to the fact that the revolutionaries “are very cautious and will not give battle to the troops unless everything is in their favor.” The paper commented that the lull in combat had allowed regular business patterns to resume in Palomas, but that the rebels, who numbered about 200 men, boasted “that one decisive victory will increase their number to over one thousand men.” Based on “private information” exclusive to the *Headlight*, the story also offered the news that “the leaders of the disturbance have even gone so far as to arrange for a provisional government and the circulation of money” in the event that they were able to “defeat federal forces definitively,” another indication that the government’s version of events was violently tilted to deny legitimacy to the movement. The story ended with the comment that Mormon colonists, as well as the town of La Ascensión, had actually escaped rumored depredations by the rebels. Still, “Consul Domingues [sic] expresses the opinion that all the trouble is over and that the rebels will be scattered and killed before Christmas.”⁵³

Tellingly, the report of the insurrectionists’ care and planning was juxtaposed with a report on the Apache Kid in the same issue of the *Headlight*. Mormon settlers in Colonia Juárez reported that a group of Indians had camped near the colony during the

⁵² *New York Herald*, 20 November 1893.

⁵³ *Deming Headlight*, 25 November 1893.

previous week “and it is the general belief among the inhabitants that ‘Kid’ and his renegades are again in that vicinity.” The story reminded readers that “it is just a little over a year ago when the Thompson family was wiped out of existence by this murderous Apache.” In the fall of 1892, after the Apache Kid had evaded arrest in Arizona by taking refuge in the Sierra Madres with a group of those that had supported Geronimo years earlier, Indians massacred the family of colonist Hans A. Thompson. The Thompsons had settled on the Pratt Ranch, isolated in a secluded mountain valley miles from other colonists. While away at work in Colonia Pacheco, Thompson’s wife, two sons, and granddaughter were surprised by a band of Apaches. In the course of the subsequent conflict, Mrs. Thompson and seventeen-year-old Hyrum were killed. Fourteen-year-old Elmer was gravely wounded and six-year-old Annie escaped unscathed, although she witnessed the murders of her uncle and grandmother. Mormons in outlying areas moved closer to the main colonies for a time following the Thompson tragedy. In citing the murder of the Thompsons, the *Headlight* conjured up feelings of fear and apprehension of another spate of Apache violence, despite the assertion that the band rumored to be near the Mormon colonies currently had committed “no depredations.” The editor ended on the thought that “some are of the opinion that the Indians are the Temocians or Yaquis, who are in sympathy with the revolution now in progress in that vicinity.”⁵⁴ This manner of reporting indicates a sense of ambivalence toward the insurrection in Chihuahua in Deming.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: an Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 83-86; and Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 322-326. Mrs. Thompson’s first name is not given in any of the extant records.

Juan S. Hart's *El Paso Times* came down much more squarely in sympathy with the revolutionary movement, to the chagrin of Romero and Zayas. A 27 November report was highly critical of Romero's insistence that Texas authorities had not taken proper measures to investigate and prosecute violations of neutrality laws. The *Times* also staunchly defended Santana Pérez's revolutionary credentials, arguing that he had long been a "respected and honored citizen and was never a robber in any sense of the term." The correspondent cited Pérez's faithful service in support of the Plan de Tuxtepec, the revolutionary initiative that brought Porfirio Díaz to power in 1876. According to the *Times*, Pérez "had been on the salary list of Diaz until about a year ago" when a federal commander unjustly accused him of failure to support the Mexican government in suppressing the Tomóchic rebellion. The confrontation resulted in a volley of gunfire between Pérez's men and the federal troops present in Ciudad Guerrero. From that point forward, Pérez rose to prominence as one of the leaders of the revolt that resulted in the Santo Tomás massacre and went on to lead the revolutionary movement that raided Palomas on 8 November 1893. The *Times* concluded: "There is no doubt that Perez is a revolutionist, but he lacks the money and backing necessary to be a successful one."⁵⁵ Although the tone of Editor Hart's reporting was confrontational and incendiary, his story of Santana Pérez's background and conflict with federales at Ciudad Guerrero squares with the historical record.

This type of reporting provoked the ire of Romero and Zayas, despite the former's concerted efforts to maintain a public air of unconcern. In a 17 November communication

⁵⁵ Dispatches from the *El Paso Times*, printed in *Dallas Morning News*, 27 November 1893. For the skirmish in Ciudad Guerrero between Pérez and Mexican federal forces, see Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 249-250.

to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores Ignacio Mariscal, Romero commented that he had provided information to the Associated Press with the condition that his name not be associated with the story when it appeared in print. His attempts to maintain anonymity as a source reflected his conviction that “any denial whatsoever on the part of official agents of the Mexican government in this country [the United States] will not be sufficient to destroy the impression caused by such reports.”⁵⁶ His official correspondence indicates that he worked mostly behind the scenes to steer the trajectory of the narrative of the rebellion in northwestern Chihuahua. Zayas, on the other hand, took more overt measures to combat counternarratives to the government’s story, especially the sympathetic reporting of the *El Paso Times*. The editor of the *El Paso Herald* appears to have taken Zayas’ counsel to heart; he blamed the morning daily’s management for the “highly colored reports” produced by the *Times*. According to the *Herald*, such overblown stories were “not ‘amusing’ to the people of this section or to the citizens of Mexico.” The critique went on to accuse Juan S. Hart personally of being an “erratic cuss.”⁵⁷

The 1 December installment of the *New York Herald* published an interview between one of its correspondents and Nicaro Pacho,⁵⁸ second in command to Santana

⁵⁶ Report from Ambassador Matías Romero to Ignacio Mariscal, Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 17 November 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (I), AHSRE.

⁵⁷ Dispatch from the *El Paso Herald*, printed in *Dallas Morning News*, 28 November 1893.

⁵⁸ It seems likely that this was a misspelling of the name Morcario Pacheco who was known by Mexican authorities in the region to have taken part in the Palomas raid. See Report of Charles E. Dodge, Adjutant, to Brigadier General A. McDonald McCook, Commanding Officer, Department of the Colorado, included as an Annex to McCook’s report to the Secretary of State, 20 November 1893, Tomo 417, AEMEU, AHSRE; and Report of José S. Hernández, Administrador de la Aduana de las Palomas, to Ignacio Mariscal, Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Caja UI1351, Expediente 1790, Fondo Hacienda Publica, AGN.

Pérez. Pacho expressed faith in the growth of the revolutionary movement in Chihuahua, arguing that “it will not do for Díaz to throw dust in people’s eyes by claiming that we are bandits. We are in a war for the purpose of overthrowing a despotism.” Many of his statements echoed the initial proclamation issued by the group of twenty-three that raided the Palomas Customs House, and he also asserted the claim that “it is true we have had a battle with the regulars and we wiped them out. . . . We expect to have the regular forces desert and fight for freedom.” This statement echoed the purpose outlined in the earlier proclamation—that regular Mexican soldiers wake up to the abuses of the Díaz regime and join the revolution. Despite Pacho’s assertion, his use of the future tense indicated that the rebels had yet to attract many soldiers to their cause. Pacho dedicated much of the interview to setting the record straight on two points: the ideas that the revolt was based on religious fanaticism or indigenous grievances. As he put it, the revolutionaries’ “principles have nothing to do with religion.” Instead, their goal was to restore the spirit of the “republican constitution of ’57.” He also emphatically denied the charge that the revolutionaries were waging an “Indian war.” His explanation of this point was “if our war cry be ‘Avenge Tomochico!’ it is so because we remember the butchery that was made of a kindred town so dear to us by that despot, who tramples the laws of our country and her sons, as the whole world knows.” These final assertions offered important clarification about the significance of the connection to Tomóchic for the revolutionaries themselves. Far from asserting religious fanaticism often associated with the Tomóchic rebellion, the rebels stood in solidarity with those slain by the Porfirian government to quash the dissent expressed by Cruz Chávez and his compatriots.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *New York Herald*, 1 December 1893.

Lending support to the assertions of editors Juan S. Hart and Edmund G. Ross that the Mexican government had been suppressing all news of the revolutionaries' movements in Chihuahua, on 5 December Governor Miguel Ahumada issued an order that banned the circulation of the El Paso *Times* in the state of Chihuahua. Ahumada's action was taken under direction from Porfirio Díaz and Ambassador Romero. Significantly, the *Times* was the only El Paso newspaper that was prevented from circulating in the state. The *Herald* remained within the good graces of Mexican officials; according to Zayas, that paper (as well as the El Paso *Tribune*) consistently refuted *Times* reports on revolutionary movements in northern Chihuahua.⁶⁰ By mid-December, newspapers throughout the United States had followed the lead of the *Herald* and *Tribune*. For example, the *Dallas Morning News* ran a story on 5 December on the proscription of the *Times* in Chihuahua that concluded, "Reports from Deming regarding the fight between rebels and federal troops are now declared absolutely unreliable. There is no revolution except in the minds of ambitious newspaper correspondents." Two days later the Dallas paper ran an extract from the *Two Republics*, an English-language daily published in Mexico City, that congratulated Mexican officials on "the bridling of the sensational correspondents" along the border.⁶¹ The prohibition on the *Times* seems to have had its desired effect on reporting beyond the borderlands.

Interestingly, Consul Zayas' justifications for the suppression of the *Times* and Editor Hart's appeal to the U.S. Consul at Ciudad Juárez, Theodore Huston, that its

⁶⁰ Letter from José Zayas Guarneros to Ignacio Mariscal, Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 3 December 1893, Expediente 44-16-2 (II), AHSRE.

⁶¹ *Dallas Morning News*, 5 December and 7 December 1893.

circulation be reinstated were cast in economic terms. In a report to Secretario Mariscal, after a commentary on the ability of the American press to take liberties with the truth due to U.S. laws, Zayas argued that the *Times* “has already caused such great alarm that the commercial interests of Mexico along the border have been insensibly damaged.” From Zayas’ perspective, Ahumada’s gag order on the paper promised to reverse this situation and restore commercial opportunity. Hart’s request that Huston (and the U.S. State Department) reverse the suppression order was based on an almost identical argument, but at the personal rather than national level. Whereas Zayas was concerned about Mexico’s commerce, Hart argued that his own personal fortune was threatened by Ahumada’s move. He characterized the proscription of the *Times* as “an act of hostility against me by the Mexican government” that “would result in the ruin of my business” if continued. In addition to the removal of the order, Hart also pressed Huston to “demand of the Mexican government a pecuniary redress for me commensurate with the damages incurred in plain violation of our treaty with Mexico.”⁶² Despite such appeals, the prohibition of the *Times* remained in force throughout the rest of December.

Despite the ability of Mexican officials to control the narrative of the revolt in major newspapers in both nations, continued violence in Chihuahua and clashes between the revolutionaries and federal forces meant that reports from Deming and El Paso continued to present an inconvenient counternarrative. On 9 and 16 December, the *Deming Headlight* ran extended coverage of battles between Santana Pérez’s forces and

⁶² Letter from Juan S. Hart to Consul Theodore Huston, Ciudad Juárez, 5 December 1893, Reel 5, Despatches from United States Consuls in Ciudad Juárez (Paso del Norte), 1850-1906, File Microcopy of Records in the National Archives, No. 184 [hereafter, Microcopy 184]. Huston reported to Assistant Secretary of State Josiah Quincy that the actions against the *Times* seemed to be arbitrary and unjust. Yet, an unnamed State Department official responded that the suppression of the *Times* was within the purview of Mexico’s rights as a sovereign state (correspondence also contained in Reel 5).

federal troops under the command of General Juan A. Hernández, the military chief Porfirio Díaz had called out of retirement to quash Amaya's revolt at Santo Tomás. The 9 December issue recounted the skirmish between Mormon colonists and a band of revolutionaries near Colonia Juárez. Shortly thereafter, Hernández marched into Palomas with a meager "escort of fifteen cavalrymen, evidently desiring to show that little credence was placed in the revolutionary reports by him." Consul Domínguez also told the *Headlight* that "there are not more than twenty-five persons in the field against the government" who, he surmised, would "be shot before a month elapses." Although the situation seemed calm, Editor Ross noted that "The government has been especially successful in suppressing information," to the degree that many Mexican travelers in Deming refused to discuss the matter at all. Based on scant information from anonymous sources, the *Headlight* reported that the revolutionaries planned to avoid engagements until the spring in order to build reinforcements and supplies for a new offensive. They claimed to have the promise that 800 Yaqui people would join their ranks by that time. A few other papers, including the *Kalamazoo* [Michigan] *Gazette* and the *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean* picked up the Deming dispatch, by way of the *El Paso Times*, indicating the cracks in the official government story.⁶³

In its 16 December issue, the *Deming Headlight* once again provided the first account of a major engagement between Hernández's men and the rebels between Casas Grandes and Colonia Juárez. On the 13th, reports of the skirmish filtered into Las Palomas and were then relayed to Deming by "an American" who was in town at the

⁶³ On General Hernández, see Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 288-290. *Deming Headlight*, 9 December 1893; *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 9 December 1893; and *Daily Inter Ocean*, 14 December 1893.

time. Although the news was first reported at the Las Palomas Customs House, Mexican officials had threatened locals with arrest should they convey the news to Americans. As a company of about 600 federal forces searched for rebel strongholds in the Sierra Madres on the morning of the 12th, they unwittingly stumbled upon a well-armed and prepared band commanded by Santana Pérez himself. A battle between the two contingents raged for several hours. Fighting from a highly defensible position, the group of 100 rebels reportedly killed between 150 and 300 federal soldiers, although they sustained 25 casualties of their own. Due to their losses, the revolutionaries were unable to press their advantage and instead retreated to their mountain hideouts. The report in the *Headlight* emphasized that Mexican officials had suppressed the battle's details so tightly that the number of federal forces present, as well as the number of casualties, could not be verified. Customs House officials did admit that 25 insurrectionists had been killed and that the federals had sustained serious losses, but they refused to provide any other information. The *Headlight's* account compared this battle to the Santo Tomás massacre of the previous spring, news of which had been so vigorously suppressed by Mexican authorities that "an account of the battle never appeared in print." The report surmised that at Santo Tomás "eleven hundred soldiers were led into a narrow ravine and killed like sheep," yet even the most exaggerated estimates of the federal losses in April 1893 placed the number at 800. Ironically, the Mexican government's heavy handed approach toward the press provided space for such rampant speculation and exaggeration. The piece in the *Headlight* concluded with the assertion that this report was more than mere rumor because the "battle has been confirmed at this office from three different sources

and there is no reason to discredit a single particular.”⁶⁴ Yet, the exaggeration of the Santo Tomás casualty count also calls into question the admittedly shaky figures for the federal forces in the 12 December battle.

The *Dallas Morning News*, *New York Herald*, and *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean* initially reprinted the *Headlight*'s rendering of the battle, but within a few days once again recanted and fell in line with the official position. The *Dallas Morning News* ran a statement from Porfirio Díaz himself that affirmed calm and peaceful conditions throughout Chihuahua. Díaz downplayed the initial attack as the work of “some twenty-eight men from the American side of the Rio Grande” who assailed the “small settlement of Palomas, which numbers some ten or twelve shanties or jacales.” He even went so far as to claim that “There is no such man as Santana Pérez connected to this affair.” All of the manifestoes attributed to Pérez, by his account, were “of El Paso manufacture.”⁶⁵ Sheriff F. B. Simmons of El Paso County echoed such sentiments and argued that “Mexican authorities understand the situation and they are not losing any rest.”⁶⁶ By the end of December the *New York Herald* printed a letter-to-the-editor from Britton Davis, superintendent of the Corralitos ranching enterprise in northwestern Chihuahua. His letter completely disavowed any revolutionary activities in northwestern Chihuahua.⁶⁷

Despite such public renunciations north of the border, Mexican authorities along the border and within Chihuahua actively pursued the arrest or extradition of Santana

⁶⁴ *Deming Headlight*, 16 December 1893.

⁶⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, 17 December 1893.

⁶⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, 19 December 1893.

⁶⁷ *New York Herald-Tribune*, 29 December 1893.

Pérez, Víctor L. Ochoa, Morcario Pacheco, and other alleged perpetrators of the disturbance that began with the 8 November Las Palomas raid. Pérez and Pacheco were among the leaders of the forces that initially attacked the Customs House, whereas Ochoa had printed and circulated the various manifestoes of the revolutionaries from his home near El Paso. In mid-November, Governor Ahumada alerted Consuls Zayas and Domínguez of Ochoa's role in the rebellion, and he suggested that they begin extradition proceedings. Besides printing the proclamations, Ahumada also accused Ochoa of organizing armed bands of rebels at his home in Texas. Ochoa's status as an American citizen, however, made the situation more difficult for Mexican authorities. Working with Sheriff Simmons and U.S. Federal Marshals, Zayas was able to secure Ochoa's arrest on 30 November. U.S. Federal Judge Warner A. Gibbs, however, freed Ochoa on 2 December due to a lack of evidence in the case. Gibbs' decision infuriated Zayas, who claimed that he had provided more than enough evidence to support the extradition. Included with his reports on Ochoa's release, Zayas attached a copy of the 3 December *El Paso Times*. The front page ran a translation of the revolutionary proclamation that had been issued at the time of the Las Palomas raid. Zayas, however, characterized the manifesto as "a confused mixture of insults directed at our country and our head of state."⁶⁸ The suppression of the *Times*' Mexican circulation began only a few days later.

By mid-December news of the revolution in Chihuahua was no longer a staple of the border newspapers. The rebels had settled into hiding in the Sierra Madres, and

⁶⁸ Telegrams and Dispatches from José Zayas Guarneros to Ignacio Mariscal, Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 18 November, 29 November, 1 December, and 3 December 1893, Expediente 9-5-16, AHSRE; *El Paso Times*, 3 December 1893; and *New York Times*, 1 December 1893. Original (Zayas dispatch to SRE, 3 December): The *El Paso Times* incluye "de esta fecha con el titulo de Manifiesto un fárrago de insultos a nuestra patria y a nuestro primer Magistrado."

Mexican Federal forces continued to search for them without result. In the diplomatic arena, the Mexican Consuls in Deming and El Paso continued to push for Ochoa's extradition, but rumors indicated that he had also gone into hiding on the Mexican side of the line. Despite such rumors, on 30 December the *Deming Headlight* reported that "no further trouble is expected for the present at least, as the troops have evidently intimidated the rebels." In the same issue, Editor Ross also announced the closure of the Las Palomas Customs House. Mexican authorities made the decision to once again reduce the Customs House to a checkpoint. This change in status meant that small shipments could continue to cross the border at Palomas-Columbus, but larger importations would be required to pass through the Customs House at Ciudad Juárez-El Paso. The *Headlight* lamented the imposition that the change would create for Mormon colonists and Mexican citizens in the region that encompassed Deming and La Ascensión. Local merchants had reportedly already filed formal complaints with the Mexican government to restore the Palomas station to its former standing, and the *Headlight* opined that "if the true condition of affairs was brought to the proper authorities, such action would be at once taken as would remedy the evil."⁶⁹

Late January and early February 1894 saw a renewal of violence in the region near La Ascensión as the revolutionaries under Santana Pérez and Víctor Ochoa (now in Chihuahua) waged a guerilla campaign against federal forces and regional recruits. Due to continued suppression of the press, rumors circulated in Deming and El Paso dispatches about possible engagements between the rebels and federal forces, with little to no verification. A courier from Palomas provided the *Headlight* with news of a 13

⁶⁹ *Deming Headlight*, 30 December 1893.

January engagement between insurgents and nine members of the Gendarmería Fiscal in the Boca Grande area between Palomas and La Ascensión. The Gendarmería officials were surprised by the rebels and three were killed when they attempted to resist. The remaining six were unharmed, although the revolutionaries confiscated their weapons, horses, and saddles before retreating to their mountain strongholds. Following the skirmish, the garrisons at Palomas and La Ascensión were reinforced and new troops from Fort Bayard were dispatched to the border near Columbus. According to the courier's reports, as well as the account of an anonymous Silver City businessman, both the rebels and federal forces were recruiting in and around La Ascensión. One man, a former Mexican resident of Deming who now served with the forces to combat the insurgents near La Ascensión, was severely wounded when rebels fired on his company "from ambush"⁷⁰

On 23 January 1894, the *El Paso Times* broke the story of a battle at Manzano Creek, near Bachiniva, Chihuahua. The struggle began at daybreak and lasted throughout the day. When the dust settled, Colonel Susano Ortíz of the Second Chihuahua Regiment reported that the seventy or so rebels had been routed by his 250 soldiers. Although they fought from a fortified position in the canyon, the Federal forces were able to trap the insurgents in a barrage of gunfire. After attempting to break through the line three separate times, the revolutionaries surrendered. Ochoa and Filomeno Luján led the group; Ochoa somehow escaped but Luján was one of the thirty-three casualties of the fight. Consul Zayas confirmed the report of the battle with the editor of the *El Paso Herald* who lamented the end of the "*Times*' revolution." Governor Ahumada, on the other hand,

⁷⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 20 and 27 January 1894. For the quote, see 27 January issue.

continued to deny the existence of a revolutionary movement in Chihuahua. He claimed that the troops had engaged a group of twenty or thirty cattle rustlers from Texas that had been wreaking havoc south of the border. The conflicting stories, as well as the presence of 1200 to 1500 Mexican troops in Ciudad Chihuahua and a guard of fifteen to twenty men on every train between that city and Ciudad Juárez during the last two weeks of January, confirmed to Consul Theodore Huston that Editor Hart's characterization was correct. As he quipped in his report to the U.S. State Department, "it seems to me that these are extraordinary measures taken simply to check 20 or 30 cowboys on a horse-stealing raid."⁷¹

The final blow to Pérez and Ochoa's movement came on 8 February when a group of insurgents under Pérez were almost completely annihilated by Federal forces 40 miles south of Casas Grandes. As usual, information about the incident was heavily suppressed. Details of the battle were carried to the Mormon colonies and in turn to Deming. The remaining insurgents had been grouped in small bands, hiding in the mountains south of Palomas. According to the report, they "recently concentrated for the purpose of meeting the troops." In the course of the battle, seventy-five revolutionaries and fifty soldiers were killed. Pérez somehow managed to escape, as Ochoa had inexplicably done a few weeks earlier.⁷²

⁷¹ *El Paso Times*, 23 January 1894; *El Paso Herald*, 23 January 1894; *Periódico Oficial* [Cd. Chihuahua], 27 January 1894; *Deming Headlight*, 17 February 1894; and Dispatch from Consul Theodore Huston, Ciudad Juárez, to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, 24 January 1894, Reel 5, Microcopy 184. The story in the *Deming Headlight* includes a summary of Colonel Ortiz's report, published in the *Diario Oficial* in Mexico City, evidently not until early February.

⁷² *Deming Headlight*, 17 February 1894.

Only a few weeks later, Governor Ahumada issued a general amnesty for all “Mexican citizens that, since September 1892, have taken up arms against the constituted authorities.” The only exceptions were Víctor Ochoa and Benigno Arbizó, due to their “status as foreigners.”⁷³ The date hearkened back to the Tomóchic rebellion, making an implicit connection between the earlier movement and the insurrection that began with the 8 November 1893 raid on the Palomas Customs House. The connection between the two armed movements was both symbolic and real. Santana Pérez had been a key figure in the Tómoichic uprising, the spring insurrection that ended at Santo Tomás, and the most recent rebellion. Yet, as Pérez and his supporters made clear in their proclamations, their solidarity with those massacred at Tomóchic was not based on a shared religious foundation. Instead, Tomóchic was a symbol of the government oppression and violence that was manifested through both physical and legal means in the northwestern Chihuahua landscape. The second article of Ahumada’s proclamation was also quite telling: the amnesty only applied to those who had committed “political crimes.” The guilty parties were offered a period of two months during which they could turn themselves in to any state or municipal authority in Chihuahua. As Consul Huston commented in his final dispatch on the revolution (and unbeknownst to Ahumada), the amnesty proclamation and its terms were clear evidence that the governor’s earlier declaration that blamed the disturbances on Texas cowboys was blatantly false. The

⁷³ The amnesty order was printed in the Chihuahua *Periódico Oficial*, 27 February 1894. A copy of the order was included as an annex in Consul Huston’s 10 March 1894 dispatch to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, Reel 5, Microcopy 184.

governor himself admitted that the efforts of Pérez, Ochoa, and their supporters had been political in nature.⁷⁴

Few of the accused took advantage of the amnesty offer until April. In late March, Governor Ahumada made a tour of the Sierra communities that had been at the center of much of the unrest, including Santo Tomás, Tomósachic, and Namiquipa. His final stop was Ciudad Guerrero, where Santana Pérez and ten others “spontaneously presented themselves” before the governor to take advantage of the amnesty. According to the report in the *Periódico Oficial*, the men “expressed their great confidence in the Governor and delivered up not only their weapons, but also their unconditional service to the Government, shouting vivas to Gen. Porfirio Díaz, the Federal Government, the State, and Col. Miguel Ahumada.”⁷⁵ The enthusiasm of Pérez’s group was likely overstated in the report, although they did accept the amnesty offer wholeheartedly. As Pérez’s later life indicated, he still remained in opposition to the Porfirian regime. During the first years of the twentieth century, he allied himself with the Flores Magón brothers’ Partido Liberal Mexicano. And, although he declined due to his advanced age, in 1910 he was offered a post in the field with the supporters of Francisco Madero in Chihuahua.⁷⁶

Reports of the amnesty declaration in the pages of the *Deming Headlight* expressed a sense of relief that the troubles in Chihuahua had come to a close. Interestingly, the story of the amnesty decision was given an added twist in the Deming region. According to the *Headlight*, Mexican officials only made the decision to offer

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Periódico Oficial* [Cd. Chihuahua], 14 April 1894.

⁷⁶ Osorio, “Villismo,” p. 151, n. 6.

amnesty to the rebels due to the intervention of Mormon colonists on their behalf. Due to the “serious injuries” inflicted on the colonies by the small rebel bands that continued to circulate through the region, “the colonists assured the officials in the city of Mexico that if the Temochians were granted freedom from arrest and punishment, the Mormons would assume the responsibility of them ever after remaining law abiding citizens.” In his memoir, written decades after the fact, Orson Pratt Brown echoed the *Headlight*’s report. Brown named Apostle George Teasdale, a member of the Mormon hierarchy in both Salt Lake City and the Chihuahua colonies, as the instrumental figure in securing amnesty for the rebels. By Brown’s account, Teasdale wrote to Porfirio Díaz to make the request because he had come to understand “the reasons of uprising of these Tomoches.” The implication was that the Mormons accepted the heavy oppression of the people in northwestern Chihuahua as a justification for rebellion. Brown himself related a great respect for the resolve shown by the group of that he had confronted in late November with Amos Cox. Although the two accounts provide distinct reasons for the Mormons’ actions, both affirm the idea that Governor Ahumada acted under the direction of Porfirio Díaz, who was impressed by the petition of the Mormons that the revolutionaries receive amnesty.⁷⁷

Whatever the reasons for the amnesty and Pérez’s decision to accept it, the events surrounding the fall 1893 Palomas raid illustrate the continuance of a dialectic of violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley. As in the prosecution of the Apache wars, the violence and its implications could not be neatly contained inside of physiographic or

⁷⁷ *Deming Headlight*, 17 March 1894; and “Memories of Orson Pratt Brown,” Taylor Oden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, reel 1 (MS 9548), CHLA.

national boundaries. Within the context of dispossession through the surveys and the rise of a capitalist economic system that initiated a process of declining fortune for those who had so recently proven their loyalty to Mexico through warfare against Apache peoples, a call to arms seemed to be a reasonable course of action. The experience of Santana Pérez indicates that attempts to work within the system of law and order routinely failed to achieve the desired results—the maintenance of traditional political and economic relationships based on kinship and reciprocity. Law and land surveys favored a system of private property, the possession of monetary wealth, and ties to the Porfirian state; those who did not possess those things had no recourse within the system. This tendency to favor certain people at the expense and exclusion of others, usually those who had created a deep personal connection to their homes and communities through the earlier violence against *indios bárbaros*, left them with few options other than physical violence against the state. As historian José Angel Hernández has argued for the case of the January 1892 electoral uprising in La Ascensión, violence did not indicate a state of “pre-political” consciousness or primitive action. Instead, it was a form of communication, a means of airing grievances against the negative impacts of modernization in northwestern Chihuahua. Violence became the most viable social tool available to the dispossessed in and around the Lower Mimbres Valley.⁷⁸ The efforts of Mexican officials to control and silence reports of the 1893 raid is evidence that violent action was perhaps the only viable means of communication for Pérez and his supporters at that time and in that particular place.

⁷⁸ Hernández, “Violence as Communication,” 1-2; Lance R. Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), x.

By mid-1894, however, on the heels of the amnesty, boosters and developers connected to the Las Palomas tract reinitiated their attempts to grow their towns and make good on their investments. Colonel Andrew O. Bailey continued to support proposed rail ventures to connect his Columbus township to Palomas and destinations south into Mexico. Deming merchant Frank Siebold pressed forward with his mercantile in Palomas. Both men, along with others, including many of the Mormon colonists, attempted ranching and mining on lands they had acquired through the land surveys. They attempted to acquire new concessions from the Mexican government, attract new investors and settlers from the United States, and they even pressed for a U.S. consular agency in insignificant Palomas. Yet, it was not until 1908, when Columbus was relocated three miles north of the border to the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's right-of-way that the town began to show any true signs of life. New investors displaced Bailey and attempted to create a new place myth for Columbus that rhetorically disconnected it from Palomas and Mexico more generally. Their place myth, however, did not take into account the Lower Mimbres Valley's long history of violence. The failure of their efforts due to continued, sporadic raids against Palomas, as well as the violence of the Mexican Revolution after 1910, is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Second Founding of Columbus: Place Myth and Revolution

“Many groups of revolutionaries arrived at Palomas: Some fighting, others seeking funds for the cause. First the Tomoches or tomochitecos at the end of the nineteenth century. Later Víctor L. Ochoa . . . and other revolutionaries realized Palomas to be an important site, not for the size of its population but because it was on the border and it was in the possession of North Americans, always defended by the military.”—**Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, Cronista in La Ascensión**¹

“This place don’t belong to God it belongs to the other fellow”—**Belulah Blair, daughter of Columbus promoter J.W. Blair, June 1909**²

At the turn of the twentieth century, the small town of Palomas was seldom heard of beyond the immediate region of the Lower Mimbres Valley. The fall 1893 raid, along with two others that followed in 1896 and 1908, were the principal events that called attention to the town and its environs. Its sister township, Columbus, New Mexico, gained even less attention despite the concerted efforts of its founder, Colonel Andrew O. Bailey. Beginning in 1891, Bailey attempted to attract settlers to Columbus. He threw his support behind development projects that promised to connect Columbus (and Deming) to Palomas and further south into Mexico. Examples of such projects included the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad; a mail route between Palomas and Columbus; and a proposed U.S. consular agency in Palomas. Although such proposals had failed to produce any return on his investments by the mid-1890s, Bailey persisted with such dreams well into the 1900s. At the time of his death in 1913, he was the

¹ Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después de la Revolución* (Chihuahua, Chih.: Instituto Chihuahuense de la Cultura, 2011), 73.

² Ray Sherdell Page, *Columbus, NM: Queen of the Mimbres Valley* (Silver City, N.Mex.: Page 1 Publishers, 2001), 3.

principal backer of a railroad proposal known as the Colorado, Columbus and Mexican, another venture that promised a north-south connection between New Mexico and Chihuahua through the Lower Mimbres Valley and beyond. Despite Bailey's dreams, however, such schemes consistently dried up in the Chihuahua desert.

In 1907, agents of the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company took control of capitalist plans to build up the Lower Mimbres Valley. Unlike Bailey, the Townsite Company's entrepreneurs sought to connect Columbus to other U.S. cities and towns along the border's east-west axis, eschewing the idea that the connection to Palomas was the town's destiny. Palomas itself had been founded with the support and investments of Americans in Deming and the surrounding area; Bailey had been attracted to the area by Luis Huller's plans to make the Palomas Tract profitable. By 1907, however, the Townsite Company relocated Columbus three miles to the north of the boundary line (where it had initially been platted), deliberately placing the village directly on the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad. The company's agents also published pamphlets and flyers to promote the up-and-coming town. Additionally, in the weekly *Columbus News* and its successor, the *Columbus Courier*, references were routinely made to the village's projected growth. At times editor Perrow G. Mosely even argued that Columbus would exceed El Paso, Texas, in size and reputation within only a few short years. These types of activities were concentrated efforts to create what geographers Rob Shields, Christian Brannstrom, and Matthew Neuman have termed a *place myth*. Such myths were aimed at overcoming negative stereotypes about a given town or region in order to recreate it as a place attractive for settlement and development.

In this chapter, I argue that between 1907 and 1916 boosters, settlers, and capitalists attempted to create a place myth in and around Columbus with the express intention of redrawing it as the pinnacle of American development and modernization along the international border between New Mexico and Chihuahua. Although a lasting place myth failed to take shape, its attempted construction illustrates the ways in which elite actors attempted to recreate the Columbus area as a space firmly controlled by white Americans.³ Through the place myth, Columbus elites sought to erase, or at least redefine, their town's intimate social and historical connection to Palomas. In so doing, they tried to recreate the international boundary as a line of division rather than a point of connection. Their attempts at place-myth construction also perpetuated the historical dialectic of violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Columbus elites' place myth was a manifestation of violence in that its goal was to silence a significant portion of the area's populace: those of Mexican origin.

The construction of such a myth, however, was denied by the physical violence of Mexican revolutionary actions beyond their control. Again in 1896 and 1908, insurgent bands targeted Palomas and its Customs House as symbols of the tyranny of the Porfiriato. During the summer of 1912 threats from Mexican revolutionaries forced the evacuation of the Mormon colonies; most of the Díaz colonists fled to Columbus, Deming, and nearby southern New Mexico towns. And in March 1916 the violence crossed the international boundary to Columbus when Francisco "Pancho" Villa led his infamous pre-dawn raid against the sleeping New Mexican town. Ultimately, the

³ I use the term "elite" to describe a privileged socio-economic status, as well as perceived white, American ethnicity (as opposed to Mexican ethnic, national 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.

intended place myth was not strong enough to undo the history of violent struggle along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border.

The creation of place myths, defined by geographer Rob 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.”⁴

Geographers Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman build on Shields’ work in their article “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941.” Based on their research on the Magic Valley, they argue, “place myths are especially likely to appear when the place is distant from centers of political and economic power, direct experience by travelers and writers with the place is brief, negative stereotypes pervade public perception of the place, and elites provide the strong potential for accumulation in terms of resource valuation. Although distance and brevity of experience make place myths possible, the negative stereotypes and the imperative for accumulation make place myths necessary.”⁵

Many small, rural towns throughout the American West seemed to fit this mold near the turn of the twentieth century. Historian David M. Wrobel has illustrated that at the time the West was caught up in “the much discussed age of anxious transition from the premodern to the modern”—the precise conditions that preoccupied officials and

⁴ Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 60-61.

⁵ Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941” *The Geographical Review* 91, no. 2 (April 2009): 125.

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.”⁶ 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 seemed to fit these general descriptions well. Economic and political elites worked to redefine the town as an attractive place for white, American family farmers and entrepreneurs to build their lives. Unlike many other rural western towns, however, Columbus was located along the U.S.-Mexico border. Its history was directly connected to the development of the Palomas Tract across the line in Chihuahua. In order to build the desired image of the place, then, boosters necessarily had to emphasize the border as a line of division rather than allowing for its role as a point of connection. The Columbus place myth also added a nationalistic dimension to the mix. Members of the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company sought to overcome the existing place images of southern New Mexico as peripheral and backward by not only touting Columbus’ potential for irrigation, agriculture, and business, but also by portraying it, a small town on the international border with Mexico, as quintessentially American. Although Columbus was isolated, peripheral, and described

⁶ David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 2, 4.

in terms of negative stereotypes (all of the prime conditions for lasting place-myth construction according to Brannstrom and Neuman), the elite vision for the town was thwarted through raids and violence. The case of Columbus underscores the limitations of place myth as a category of analysis. Still, the Townsite Company and the Columbus newspaper editors did actively attempt to construct a new image for their town. For that reason, I distinguish between the use of the term *place myth* as both an analytical category as well as a description of the Columbus boosters' efforts to remake their town.

In their study of the Magic Valley, Brannstrom and Neuman admit that their approach "privileges elitist perspectives." Yet, as Shields theorizes, place myths can be multiple and contradictory. Therefore, although elites may attempt to construct hegemonic myths about certain places to further their own interests, people from other segments of the population can (and often do) conceptualize the same place in conflicting ways. The tendency to examine elite place myths is due to the fact that they are usually easier for researchers to see. It can be difficult to examine the perspectives of people who did not hold power in a given community. Additionally, groups from lower socio-economic segments of society might think of space and place in ways that differ from the elite perspective. Whereas elite actors tend to back a specific project to redefine the image of places like the Magic Valley or Columbus, other residents might view the same places with attitudes ranging from deep personal attachment (homeland) to a horrible, forsaken place to endure while on assignment (as in the case of many young soldiers stationed at Columbus between 1916 and 1923).⁷ In many cases, as geographer Yi-Fu

⁷ The references to the Pacheco family of the Columbus area (discussed in detail later in this chapter) contained in the records of the Secretaría de Hacienda Publica in Mexico City, as well as the *Deming Headlight* (and later the *Columbus Courier*) provides an example of the first. For one example of

Tuan has posited, the transformation of a certain space or landscape into a place is a deeply personal and perceptual matter. Analysis of the historical construction of place myths from above, then, is uniquely insightful, albeit limited.⁸

Although I will make some attempts to illustrate the formation of contesting place images and myths about Columbus around the turn of the twentieth century, I follow Brannstrom and Newman in privileging elite perspectives. I do so primarily as a starting point for piecing together a historical narrative specific to the town of Columbus around the turn of the twentieth century. Additionally, most of the available sources on the town's history, such as newspaper accounts and booster pamphlets, present the elite perspective. Yet, by also analyzing Mexican sources on the Palomas raids of 1896 and 1908, I am able to illustrate the dialectic of violence that presented a challenge to the elites' efforts at place construction in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Although the intention of the *revoltosos* was not to create an alternative place myth of their own, in targeting the clearest symbol of capitalist and nationalist development along the border—the customs house—they directly challenged the types of institutions that would have solidified the image of Columbus and Palomas as modern townships. Elite actors were not simply free to mold the towns as they saw fit.

An examination of the elite-generated place myth in Columbus brings into focus a historical narrative that centers on the border village itself. Such a narrative begins in the early 1890s when Colonel Andrew O. Bailey founded Columbus on lands abutting the

the second see Chester G. Bell Letters, MS 227, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico [hereafter RGHC].

⁸ Brannstrom and Neuman, "Inventing the 'Magic Valley,'" 125; Yi-Fu Tuan, "The Desert and I: A Study in Affinity" *Michigan Quarterly Review* 40, no. 1 (2001): 7-16.

international boundary. Yet Bailey's best efforts to attract investment and settlement to Columbus fell flat time and again. In June 1891 the prospects for the village seemed bright; a tiny community began to take shape around Bailey's two-story frame house adjacent to the border. The nearby ranch of Ireneo Pacheco and his family also represented some of the earliest Columbus settlers and hinted at the town's possibilities for growth. Following the disappointments associated with the Deming, Sierra Madra and Pacific venture, however, Columbus' already tiny population dwindled to the degree that the U.S. government discontinued its post office in early August 1893.⁹

Always intent on reversing the town's fortunes, throughout the decade of the 1890s Bailey kept a suite at New York's Astor Hotel where he met with prospective investors. He brought them to the Lower Mimbres Valley on regular occasions to examine the townsite and enjoy a duck hunting excursion at the Palomas Lakes—one of the region's principle attractions. During this period his primary residence was still the old Huller mansion near the largest of the Palomas Lakes. Locals referred to the dwelling as the "Casa Grande." His granddaughter, Irene, lived with her grandparents in the house for a period of years in the late 1890s. She recalled the house to be a wondrous place—the center of social and community activities in Palomas. She also marveled that "a home with no water or electricity could have been run on such a grand scale." Tom Phelps, "our colored man," cooked meals and oversaw "the help," as Irene described them. By her account, Bailey "spent most of his time at the Hotel Astor" but when he arrived home with guests they received the royal treatment. On such occasions, "he'd bring a Chinese

⁹ *Deming Headlight*, 12 August 1893; and Page, *Queen of the Mimbres*, 10.

cook and house boy with him from Deming. Rest assured, Grandmother did none of the work as you can tell by her beautiful hands.”¹⁰

As indicated by Irene’s account and corroborated by the work of local historian Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, Palomas was built by Americans. The variety of the racial backgrounds of the people who served the Bailey household illustrates the diversity of the local population, as well as the relative social and economic power relations between the different groups. Although most reports of life in the Lower Mimbres Valley (from local newspapers or recollections like Irene’s) paint relations in Palomas as having been harmonious, there were moments of struggle and violence that indicated animosities that lay beneath the surface of such relationships. In May 1895, for example, the *Deming Headlight* reported on a “reported outrage” against Bailey and his family at the Casa Grande. At that point in time, Bailey served as the manager of the Northwestern Colonization and Improvement Company, the reorganized corporation that had received the land and resource concessions initially made to Luis Huller. Reportedly, the trouble occurred at the end of April with “a party of Mexicans taking possession of part of the house which Bailey has occupied for the past three years and which the Mexicans claim as their property.”¹¹

Unfortunately, there are scant sources to shed light on this particular case, yet the story outlined in the *Headlight* indicates a group of local people who took issue with the

¹⁰ Bill McGaw, “Bailey Family, Founders of Columbus, Knew Tragedy,” *The Southwesterner* (April 1964): 20; and Richard R. Dean, “Founder of Columbus, Colonel A. O. Bailey,” unpublished manuscript, Personal Archive of Richard Dean, President of the Columbus Historical Society, Columbus, New Mexico [hereafter Dean Archive].

¹¹ *Deming Headlight*, 3 May 1895.

capitalist property and resource regime established initially by the Huller concession and perpetuated by Bailey's presence as Palomas' overseer. Apparently no physical violence other than the forced occupation of the home was perpetrated against the Bailey family. Bailey used diplomatic channels to seek redress for the "outrage"; he sent Acting U.S. Consul C. E. Wesche at Ciudad Juárez a statement regarding the matter "signed by three American citizens of Las Palomas." Wesche in turn wrote Chihuahua Governor Miguel Ahumada who subsequently promised to investigate the allegations with the municipal authorities. Ahumada assured Wesche that "prompt and full justice will be done. I shall never permit abuses and infractions of the law to go unpunished."¹²

On several occasions, in fact, local incidents connected to Bailey were elevated to the realm of international diplomacy between the United States and Mexico. In mid-March 1894, a little over a year prior to the "outrage" perpetrated against the Bailey family in Palomas, Col. Bailey found himself the target of an inquiry requested by Mexican Ambassador Matías Romero. Bailey's trouble began at about the same time that the pursuit of Víctor L. Ochoa and Santana Pérez was winding down in the Lower Mimbres Valley. In early March, Edwin F. Uhl, Acting U.S. Secretary of State, once

¹² *Deming Headlight*, 17 May 1895. Such events should also be understood within the context of the changing property and legal regimes of northwestern Chihuahua at the end of the nineteenth century. As Maria Aparecida de S. Lopes has illustrated in *De Costumbres y Leyes: Abigeato y Derechos de Propiedad en Chihuahua durante el Porfiriato* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2005), two different systems of law and property ownership came into conflict there at that time. As the Porfirian government organized the *deslindes* of lands, deeming many as *terrenos baldíos*, or vacant tracts, the modern tool of the land survey allowed government agents to sell such lands (and the resources they contained) to willing capitalists—often foreigners. Although the Porfirian legal system created a basis for such actions, the people of northwestern Chihuahua, including the section of the Lower Mimbres Valley that ran south of the border, found themselves under investigation and prosecution for using lands, forests, water, and other resources in usufruct, as they were accustomed to doing. In that context, many people used cattle rustling (abigeato), and the simple occupation of lands and continued use of resources as a means of challenging the modern legal system. See, for example, pp. 19-34, and 205-216. See also, Nicholas Blomley, "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey and the Grid" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 1 (March 2003): 121-141.

again refuted the accusation that Ochoa had fled to the area around Silver City to regroup in preparation for another attack on Mexican soil. Shortly thereafter, Uhl also responded to Romero's request that he investigate a reported violation of the 1884 Postal Convention between the two nations along the mail route between Palomas, Chihuahua, and Deming, New Mexico. Uhl did not respond to Romero's 20 April communication regarding the incident until 1 May. In his response he alerted Romero that he had relayed the case to the "Fourth Assistant Postmaster General for proper investigation by the inspector in charge of the New Mexico Division." In the case at issue, the Palomas Postmaster, H. Chapenel, lodged a complaint that the postal carrier, Julian Carreon, had been illegally detained by "two Americans" in violation of the 1884 convention between the United States and Mexico.¹³

Not until 17 November 1894 did Romero receive a detailed response regarding the case from Walter Q. Gresham, Secretary of State. At that point, he learned that George H. Waterbury, Inspector of the U.S. Postmaster General's department, had investigated the case and attempted to indict the "two Americans" involved, Andrew O. Bailey and Festus Sprague. Col. Bailey freely admitted that he had detained Julian Carrion on 17 March when he and Sprague encountered the mail carrier about six miles north of the border. At issue was a check for \$18.50 that Bailey had entrusted to Deming and Palomas merchant Frank H. Seibold to be placed in the mail at Deming. The check turned up missing; according to Bailey's affidavit in the matter, postmaster Chapenel alerted him that "a Mexican had shown him a check for \$18.50, and that said check

¹³ Diplomatic correspondence between Edwin F. Uhl, Acting Secretary of State, and Matías Romero, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, 1 May, 8 May, and 13 November 1894, Tomo 432, Archivo Embajada de México en los Estados Unidos Americanos [hereafter AEMEU], in Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México City, D.F [hereafter AHSRE].

belonged to” Bailey. During the encounter with Carreon, Bailey confronted him about the check and eventually Carreon admitted to having deposited the check in the National Bank of Deming to his own personal credit. By Bailey and Sprague’s accounts, the exchange was “conducted in a friendly manner, and that no threats whatever were made.” Carreon reportedly agreed to return to Deming with the Americans where he promised that he would return the check to Bailey.¹⁴

By all available accounts, it appears that Carreon indeed restored the amount to Bailey. This incident was intensely local, but it carried much larger implications because it occurred along an international boundary line. In terms of the episode’s diplomatic repercussions, U.S. officials involved (Secretary of State Gresham, Acting Postmaster General Kerr Craige, and New Mexico Postal Investigator George H. Waterbury) all concluded that the Mexican government had no case against Bailey and Sprague because their actions had not violated the 1884 Postal Convention. Instead, Bailey had acted against Carreon not “as a mail carrier for the purpose of interfering with the mail, but against the carrier [Carreon] as an individual” over the issue of the stolen check. Additionally, despite Waterbury’s attempts at a “vigorous prosecution” of the case, none of the Mexicans involved in the disturbance came forward to testify before the Grand Jury in Deming. Unfortunately, the voices of Carreon, Chapenel, and the mail contractor Miguel Zapata (also named in Waterbury’s report) were not only lost to the Grand Jury, but also to the historical record. The fact that Chapenel alerted Mexican diplomats to the

¹⁴ Diplomatic correspondence between Walter Q. Gresham, U.S. Secretary of State, and Matías Romero, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, 17 November 1894, Tomo 432, AEMEU, AHSRE. This set of correspondence includes the report of Kerr Craige, Acting U.S. Postmaster General, to Walter Q. Gresham, along with the affidavits of Festus Sprague and Andrew O. Bailey, both affidavits dated 14 May 1894.

case, however, indicates that they did not view the matter as having come to a friendly resolution through Bailey's confrontation with Carreon on the Deming-Palomas road.¹⁵

In the context of the major changes wrought on the Lower Mimbres Valley through the imposition of private property and resource control that began with Huller's acquisition of the Palomas tract, as well as the position of power claimed by Bailey on both sides of the line, we are left to wonder why the Mexican witnesses were so hesitant to testify in Deming. Or, perhaps, they realized that they did not have a legal leg to stand on. Whatever their reasoning, these events illustrate the struggles introduced into the Lower Mimbres Valley by the initiation of a capitalist economic system that was largely dominated by Americans on either side of the international line, in both Palomas and Columbus. Mexican residents of the area, such as Julian Carreon and H. Chapenel, attempted to maneuver within a world defined by economic bonds that were no longer based on kinship ties and customs. Instead, they were confronted with a system of private property—defined by abstractions such as legal codes and checks.¹⁶ Just as Bailey extended his influence across the border from his base as the manager of the Palomas concerns and then head of the Northwestern Colonization and Improvement Company, figures like Carreon and Chapenel sought to exploit economic opportunities in both New Mexico and Chihuahua to their benefit.

Lest I present Colonel Bailey simply as a cold-blooded, hardnosed power broker whose central ambition was to dominate commerce and development on both sides of the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Aparecida de S. Lopes, *De Costumbres y Leyes*, 205-212; and Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 149, 171, and 184-186.

border in the Lower Mimbres Valley, he was also very much a human being attempting to make the best of his situation. His family, as illustrated in part above, played a major role in his plans for Columbus (and Palomas). He arrived in Palomas not only with dreams of expanding his fortune and developing the area's cattle ranches and establishing new towns to connect the United States and Mexico. He also selected the dry climate of the Lower Mimbres Valley in an effort to improve his tubercular son Frank's health. Bailey was clearly a determined and dedicated person; he refused to give up on Columbus even when its prospects appeared to have completely vanished. His losses were also quite personal: in the period of less than a year he lost both of his sons, Will and Frank, the former to a ranching accident in June 1893 and the latter to his disease in April 1894. In 1901 Col. Bailey took pride in the marriage of his daughter, Birdina, to W. C. J. Quast, the Columbus customs house officer. Birdina also served as the Columbus postmistress when the Post Office was reinstated in February 1896. Bailey led his community as a member of the school board and foremost investor in several ranching, mining, and rail projects. In short, although Bailey had played a major role in creating a capitalist structure that dealt violent dispossession and subordination to Mexican people in the region, he did not do so intentionally or spitefully.¹⁷

In September 1895, Bailey was at the center of another effort to promote north-south traffic and international trade between Columbus and Palomas. Once again, his actions had implications for diplomatic relations between the two nations. That month, fifty American citizens living in southern New Mexico filed a petition with the U.S.

¹⁷ Page, *Queen of the Mimbres*, 9-10; Dean, "Founder of Columbus, Colonel A. O. Bailey"; McGaw, "Bailey Family Knew Tragedy," 3, 20; *Deming Herald*, 23 April 1901. For Bailey's mining and ranching interests, see Petition of F. H. Booz, and A. O. Bailey, Permission for Mining Exploration, Caja UI1351, expedientes 584 and 651, Fondo Hacienda Pública, Archivo de la Nación, México, D.F. [hereafter AGN].

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 there was a Mexican consulate in Deming to represent 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 in support of 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 [sic] 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.”¹⁸ 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.

Since the disputes between Mexican consular agents in the U.S. Southwest and Mexican Customs Agents at La Ascensión (outlined in Chapter 3), the very existence of the Customs House at Palomas had been rather precarious. In the weeks following the

¹⁸ Dispatch from Louis M. Buford to Secretary of State, 11 September 1895, roll 5, Despatches from United States Consuls in Ciudad Juárez (Paso del Norte), 1850-1906, File Microcopy of Records in the National Archives, No. 184 [hereafter, Microcopy 184].

November 1893 raid, the Customs House had been discontinued.¹⁹ As in the case of the government amnesty, the *Deming Headlight* reported on 24 March 1894 that “The Mormon colonists to the south are taking energetic steps to have the custom house at Las Palomas opened by July 1st and there is every indication that the Mexican government will take favorable action by that date.” In this case, the connection between the Mormon colonists and the Customs House was the logical key to its reopening. The Mormon colonists were the principal beneficiaries of the Palomas customs station; the bulk of the transit through that Port of Entry was directly tied to their colonies. Deming merchants stated as much in their 24 July 1894 petition to Ambassador Matías Romero; their argument was that the Mormon colonists suffered due to the fact that “Mexico had closed its ports with the United States for a distance of more than two hundred and fifty miles.” They further buttressed their call for the port’s reopening by reminding Romero of the mining activities near Sabinal that would also benefit from a more direct point of entry. Finally, they argued that “New Mexico does not have a Customs House to connect it with the neighboring Republic, thus forcing its inhabitants to go to Texas or Arizona to enter through Ciudad Juárez or Nogales.”²⁰ Not coincidentally, various Deming area entrepreneurs, including Col. Bailey, Frank Booz, Milton S. Ray, and W. W. Galbraith, had heavily invested in northwestern Chihuahua’s mines.²¹

¹⁹ For reports on the Customs House closure, see *Deming Headlight*, 18 November, 25 November, and 23 December 1893.

²⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 24 March 1894; and Petitions to Ambassador Matías Romero from Deming Merchants, 17 and 24 July 1894, Tomo 427, AEMEU, AHSRE.

²¹ For the connections between southern New Mexican businessmen and the Chihuahua mining, see Expedientes 464, 536, 584, and 651, Caja UI1351, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

Although the pages of the *Headlight* made it seem that the Customs House was bound to reopen any day, actual progress toward reopening the Palomas Customs House came in fits and starts. The initial 1 July deadline came and went without any success. In August, Romero passed the petition on to officials at the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City for their consideration. During the early months of 1895 Deming waited with bated breath for the promised reopening of a Customs House, reportedly to be at La Ascensión or Colonia Díaz, by the end of the current fiscal year. By April reports in Deming indicated that the renewal of the local Customs station was to take place once again at Palomas. The Palomas Customs House was unceremoniously reopened at the beginning of July 1895, one year following the date initially hoped for in Deming and Columbus. Although the residents of the Lower Mimbres Valley clamored for the customs house, diplomatic officials in both nations were not readily convinced of its necessity. In fact, had Salvador Mailefert, formerly the Mexican Consul at Deming, not held the position of Secretario de Hacienda Pública, the Palomas station might well have remained shuttered.²²

Mexican officials without ties to the Lower Mimbres Valley generally viewed the Palomas Customs House as unnecessary for the sparse population and transit generated in the region. Adding to their hesitancy regarding the post was the memory of the November 1893 raid; the insurrectionists had then identified Palomas as a weak point in the Mexican government's armor. Indeed, only a little over a year following the reestablishment of the Customs House it was once again targeted by revolt. This time, a

²² *Deming Headlight*, 5 February, 9 April, 10 May, 21 June, and 5 July 1895. The 21 June issue noted that "Mr. Mailefert, formerly the Mexican Consul at this point," then the Secretary of Treasury in Mexico City, was instrumental in reestablishing the Palomas Customs House.

band of insurgents with loose ties to Santa Teresa Urrea de Cabora, then living with her father in El Paso, enacted a predawn attack on the small outpost on 14 September 1896. Unlike the November 1893 episode, however, this band of about twenty-eight to thirty men was repulsed by a reinforced Customs Guard. Following a 12 August attack on the Nogales Customs House, led by Lauro Aguirre who also had ties to the Santa de Cabora, border officials shored up defenses along the line. In the days leading up to the attack, rumors abounded that a band of between 100 to 150 “Indians” and “bandits” were preparing to launch an assault on the Palomas border station. Accordingly, Chihuahua Governor Manuel Ahumada ordered a detachment of eighty cavalry of the Second Regiment to the border.²³

Between 10 and 13 September, the group which numbered only about twenty-eight insurgents, led by Pomposo Ramos Rojo and Demetrio Cortéz, made prisoners of several members of the Mexican Commission at work on the International Dam along the Rio Grande near El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. These five men were forced to accompany the band from the El Paso region to the Portillo Ranch on the U.S. side of the border, about twenty miles from Palomas. The captives later described the rebels as a motley group, the majority on foot and devoid of food until they slaughtered a cow at the ranch. Reportedly all were armed, although some “only had pistols,” and only eight or ten of them had horses. Off the record, Fernando Bernal, one of the five imprisoned men, claimed the rebel party was “made up of Mexicans from the smelter, Indians, and others of that ilk.” Despite their seeming lack of resources, their expressed goal was to “raise a

²³ Vanderwood, *Power of God*, 299-302; *La Voz de México*, 13 September 1896; *Boston Daily Journal*, 15 and 16 September 1896.

revolution against the government of Mexico,” beginning with an attack on the Palomas Customs House. Their effort was thus organized and launched from American territory; following the two-hour assault that left two of the rebels and one soldier dead, with three other Customs employees and numerous rebels wounded, a group of twenty or so retreated to the Florida Mountains between Columbus and Deming. Others fled in smaller parties. A group of three insurgents, Demetrio Cortéz, José Salazar, and Catarino Estrada were captured by the local police force in El Paso on 17 September. Unlike Santana Pérez’s earlier armed movement, these men did not possess revolutionary proclamations and idealistic visions for Mexico’s future. Instead, they carried in their possession Winchester rifles, cartridges, prayers to Santa Teresa Urrea, and a letter written by a man named Leonardo Pacheco.²⁴

Leonardo was a member of the Pacheco family whose ranch was part of the Columbus settlement. The family had acquired their land through what they characterized as a misunderstanding. At issue was a lack of demarcation of the international boundary near Palomas and Columbus. In 1888 the patriarch of the extended Pacheco family, which numbered about twenty-two in total, led the group from their home near Janos toward the Palomas colony. Their intention was to make good on the Huller company’s offer of prime cattle lands near the nascent town because they lacked sufficient pasturage for their animals near Janos. Upon their arrival they constructed small dwellings on the vacant lands they chose for the family. Shortly thereafter, however, they learned that they

²⁴ Telegram from Francisco Mallen, Mexican Consul at El Paso to the Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 15 September 1896, and Records from a hearing for Demetrio Cortéz, José Salazar, Catarino Estrada, 20 September 1896, Expediente 15-7-26, AHSRE; and *Deming Headlight* 18 September 1896. For the off-the-record comments of Bernal, see *Mexican Herald* [México, D.F.], 20 September 1896.

had built their homes, “about 100 or 150 *varas* from the dividing line and inside of American territory.”²⁵

By 1891 the family routinely butted heads with Mexican Customs agents in Palomas due to their cattle’s penchant to cross the border into Chihuahua territory to graze. Leonardo’s brother, Eduvigis, wrote a formal petition to the Secretaría de Hacienda Pública requesting that his cattle be granted duty-free passage across the line. His reasoning was that since they unintentionally constructed their homes in U.S. territory, and because the best pasture was near Palomas, there was nothing they could do to keep their animals from crossing the imaginary line that divided the two nations to forage. According to Eduvigis, the animals “are of the country [país], their haunts are on this side [the Mexican side] of the line.” Customs Administrator Francisco Raymunde affirmed the petition, and a representative for the Secretaría de Hacienda in Mexico City granted the request on the grounds that “the animals are of Mexican breed.” The only stipulation was that the Pacheco family also relocate to Palomas.²⁶

Yet by September of 1896 the Pachecos continued to inhabit their American ranch, although they also continued to frequent Palomas as well. Much like Col. Bailey, Deming merchants like Frank Siebold, and the agents of colonization companies, they had no problems in routinely crossing from one side of the international boundary to the other. Also by that point in time, Leonardo had become a naturalized American citizen,

²⁵ For the Pacheco family’s presence in the initial Columbus township, see F. Stanley, *The Columbus, New Mexico, Story* (Pep, Texas: Self-published, 1966), 4. Petition of Eduvigis Pacheco to the Secretaría de Hacienda Pública, 18 September 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1823, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

²⁶ Report of Francisco Raymunde, 9 October 1891; and Resolution from the Secretaría de Hacienda Pública, 4 November 1891, Caja UI1350, Expediente 1823, Fondo Hacienda Pública, AGN.

although it remains unclear whether other members of his family were as well. On the day of the failed Palomas raid, Leonardo was seen conducting three men towards Deming in his wagon. According to the *Deming Headlight*, “it has since been ascertained that they were three of the wounded thieves [Palomas raiders].” Pacheco, characterized by the paper as a “Palomas rancher,” yet also affirmed to be an American citizen, consistently denied the charges as did other members of his family. The Mexican Consul in Deming, Adolfo F. Domínguez, affirmed to his superiors at the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores that Pacheco had indeed conducted wounded members of the band toward Deming. Domínguez personally questioned Pacheco on the afternoon of the raid; Eduvigis led him to his brother about two kilometers northeast of the Deming town limits. Leonardo reportedly acted suspicious, dodging Domínguez’s questions and causing the Consul to repeat himself. Based on such suspicion, Domínguez recommended Leonardo’s arrest. Rather than enter into extradition proceedings, he and the Customs Administrator at Palomas waited until Leonardo crossed the border. Local authorities arrested Leonardo Pacheco for violation of neutrality laws on 19 September 1896 in Palomas.²⁷

In contrast with their approach to the 1893 attack on the Palomas Customs House, Mexican consular officials handled the fall 1896 raid much differently. Rather than working behind the scenes to control the story in the American press, the response, led by El Paso Consul Francisco Mallen and Ambassador Matías Romero, was instead to affirm the seditious nature of the raid. After initial complaints that American officials never took such matters seriously, their Mexican counterparts were pleased by the decision to

²⁷ Dispatches of Adolfo L. Domínguez to the Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 20, 22, and 29 October 1896, Expediente 15-7-26, AHSRE; *Deming Headlight*, 18 and 25 September 1896.

mobilize troops from Fort Bayard and set up a camp at Columbus to prevent any further violations of the neutrality laws. The documents located on the persons of Demetrio Cortéz, José Salazar, and Catarino Estrada that tied the raid to Santa Teresa (who subsequently denied any role in the attacks on Nogales and Palomas, and a later raid on Ojinaga), along with Leonardo Pacheco's letter seemed to determine the diplomatic course of action. Because Teresa Urrea and many of her supporters had fled to the United States, Mexican officials this time around had no interest in denying the revolutionary nature of the raids. Instead, by charging the perpetrators with revolutionary activity they were able to push American officials into further actions against Urrea and her father Tomás, both of whom had connections to unrest along the border since the early 1890s. American authorities captured Pomposo Ramos Rojo, the leader of the Palomas raid, near Las Cruces, New Mexico, on 30 October; he became an informant against the Urreas in an effort to reduce his own sentence.²⁸

Caught in the middle was Leonardo Pacheco; his arrest and imprisonment maintained the ties between the violence of the raid, the attempts of both national governments to stop such activities, and the landscapes of the Lower Mimbres Valley. Despite the charges against him, it remained unclear whether or not he had played any

²⁸ For the actions of Mallen, Romero, and agents of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, see Dispatches and Communications, 18, 19, 20 September 1896, Expediente 15-7-26, AHSRE. The idea that American officials ignored violations of the neutrality law is expressed in that correspondence, as is the welcome reception of Captain Pilcher's deployment from Fort Bayard to Columbus on 18 September. See also *Dallas Morning News*, 19 September 1896. For the focus on Santa Teresa and her father, see Correspondence between American diplomatic officials, including Matt W. Ransom, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, and Pedro A. Magaña of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 9 and 22 October 1896, Expediente 15-7-26, AHSRE. Rodolfo Acuña, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 110-11 discusses the capture of Ramos Rojo. Acuña incorrectly cites the date of the Palomas raid as 12 July 1896, placing it prior to the August attack on Nogales. Official correspondence in the AHSRE, corroborated with newspaper reports from the border affirms the 14 September 1896 date.

role in the planning stages of the Palomas attack. According to testimony and evidence, he had transported wounded insurgents northward into New Mexico, Consul Domínguez deemed his behavior to be suspicious, and he had provided the three insurgents captured in El Paso with a letter that gave them the right to take “a calf if they need it” from his ranch. Leonardo and other members of his family affirmed that he had not had any relations with the defendants until the day of the raid when they approached him on the road and asked to be transported toward Deming. Given that the band had taken cattle from the Portillo Ranch the day prior to the raid, it seems plausible that Pacheco had not given them his letter until after the raid. Although the available evidence does not provide enough of his story to know for sure, Leonardo Pacheco may have simply taken pity on three wounded men and attempted to aid them in their plight. At any rate, Judge Joseph Boone of Deming was called to Ciudad Juárez to represent Pacheco in late September 1896. The outcome of his trial was that he remained imprisoned in the Juárez jail until 30 November 1897, just over a year later, when American Consul in Ciudad Juárez, Charles Kindrick, secured his release from Chihuahua District Judge, B. Prías Camacho.²⁹

Leonardo Pacheco’s story not only illustrates the continued dialectic of violence at play in the Lower Mimbres Valley; his family’s presence in both Columbus and Palomas illustrates the strong ties between the two towns. Such ties were not only based on Col. Bailey’s status in Palomas; people of Mexican heritage from the surrounding region in northwestern Chihuahua settled in both towns. Yet, as illustrated above, the Columbus-Palomas trans-border connection was dominated by wealthy entrepreneurs. By

²⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, 1 December 1897; *Deming Headlight*, 3 December 1897; and Correspondence between Charles Kindrick and William R. Day, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, 24 and 30 November and 3 December 1897, roll 6, Microcopy 184.

the mid-1890s, cycles of violence caused both national governments to step up their efforts to solidify the nature of the border as a barrier.³⁰

In 1898 when the issue of whether or not to maintain the Palomas Customs House arose once again, Charles Kendrick, U.S. Consul in Ciudad Juárez reported that, following a thorough investigation of the matter, the maintenance of the Palomas station was entirely unnecessary and it was unprofitable for the Mexican government. His assessment of the situation countered the 1895 and 1898 petitions of Deming merchants; he reported that the trip to Ciudad Juárez took no more than three days round trip, concluding that it did not pose an inconvenience to the residents of Deming (a town of about 1200 residents). He further asserted that although the Palomas Customs House was inaugurated to serve the Mormon colonies in northwestern Chihuahua, the completion of the Rio Grande, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad (the successor to the proposed Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific, with its terminus at El Paso) further rendered the Palomas station irrelevant. The Mormon colonists, as well as residents of Casas Grandes had a more convenient tie to the United States via the new railroad.³¹ The earlier fears of Deming boosters had become reality.

Once again Col. Bailey's efforts to establish and promote the town of Columbus proved largely unsuccessful, yet it was the construction of another railroad that signaled a brighter future for the village. In 1901, the Phelps Dodge Company proposed a line to

³⁰ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después de la Revolución*, 74. For a somewhat literary and highly critical treatment of capitalist development in northwestern Chihuahua in the late 1800s, see Fernando Jordán, *Crónica de un País Bárbaro* (1956, repr., Chihuahua, Chih.: Ediciones del Azar, 2007), 255-260.

³¹ Dispatch from Consul Charles W. Kendrick to U.S. Secretary of State, 17 February 1898, Reel 6, Microcopy 184.

connect its smelters in Douglas, Arizona, to the thriving industrial hub of El Paso, Texas. Although 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, the El Paso & Southwestern (EP & SW) ultimately headed east along a line just to the north of the border.³² 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 then 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 based on its location as a railroad crossroads, similar to Deming, which in 1901 became the seat of the newly formed Luna County. Additionally, with the arrival of the EP & SW, the customs house was relocated to Columbus, making it the port of entry to Mexico.³³ 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 early 1907, James W. Blair, John Ross Blair, Louis Hellberg, and Charles L. Higday came together to form the Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company (hereafter Townsite Company). Their ideas about how to best promote Columbus differed greatly from those of Bailey. Whereas Bailey invested in railroads to

³² For references to the proposed “Bisbee railway,” see *Deming Herald*, 2 April 1901, p. 4; 16 April 1901, p. 1; 30 April 1901, p. 1; and 4 June 1901.

³³ Page, *Queen of the Mimbres*, 12; and Application for Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity—Colorado, Columbus and Mexico Railroad Company, 1922-1929, 1 folder, New Mexico State Corporation Commission Records, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter NMSRCA].

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 stated by editor Jesse Mitchell, “Every edition of the COURIER is a boosting edition for Columbus and the lower Mimbres valley.” Editors of both the *Columbus News* and *Columbus Courier* proudly admitted to mailing copies of the paper to prospective settlers across the United States.³⁴ 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 type of lifestyle that drew them to Columbus.³⁵

As the company name indicates, the four men owned and platted the Columbus townsite itself. The April 1913 *Columbus Courier* reported that Charles L. Higday was

³⁴ I view both the *Columbus News*, published 1909-1911, and the *Columbus 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 Courier*, 21 July 1911.

³⁵ Page, *Queen of the Mimbres*, 2-3.

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 configured a site for the town that was not far from the Bailey home, directly adjacent to the border. By that June, just after the Townsite Company was founded, Higday's partners persuaded him 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 thus differed from that of Bailey even in terms of location and proximity to the new railroad. The new townsite included an area of about 200 acres, purchased by the Company's members and filed on 16 May 1909 in the Luna County Courthouse in Deming. Almost immediately, they initiated promotional activities. They organized an excursion from El Paso on the EP & SW that brought prospective buyers 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 points in 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.³⁶

Such success depended upon the creation of new place images to replace existing, often negative, ones. Due to Columbus' isolation from population centers and most Americans' relative unfamiliarity with the Lower Mimbres Valley, the Townsite

³⁶ Ibid., 12-14; *Deming Graphic*, 14 June 1907; and Timothy Lorek, "All Along the Borderline: The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's Effect on Natural and Human Environments in Southwestern New Mexico," 12, unpublished manuscript, copy in author's possession.

Company was in a prime position to redraw the place myth to bolster their investment.³⁷ 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; absence of law and order; and the presence of Spanish-speaking Mexican people.³⁸ Members of the Townsite Company and the village's newspaper editors, Perrow G. Mosley and Jesse Mitchell, attempted to overcome such place images in their pamphlets and weekly papers. In a September 1911 editorial in the *Columbus 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 alludes to the cartoons printed in many eastern papers, "depicting a wild and wooly country on the ragged edge of nowhere," to report New Mexico's statehood bid. From his perspective, such views were "not only untrue, but unjust."³⁹

Mitchell's predecessor, Perrow G. Mosely, published a similar editorial in November 1910. In a short article that otherwise extolled the benefits and virtues of living in Columbus, he concluded: "Social surroundings here are as good as the best, with

³⁷ 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 took place following this change in ownership. See *Columbus Courier*, 4 March 1910, pp. 1-2.

³⁸ 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, *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).

³⁹ *Columbus Courier*, 8 September 1911.

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.”⁴⁰ 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 isolation, lawlessness, and disorder were connoted by that phrase. Mosely went a step further to connect the “native Mexican” population to those types of problems. His claim was that even if people of Mexican heritage create 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, however, the idea that so few people of Mexican heritage were present was not founded on empirical evidence. The 1910 U.S. Census 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 numbers indicate that approximately 24.6 percent of Columbus’ total population was Mexican, a larger proportion than reported by Mosely.⁴¹ Still, the Census figures also indicate that the efforts of the Townsite Company had attracted large numbers of people from places like New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, California, and Germany. Perhaps Mosley and the other boosters

⁴⁰ *Columbus News* 25 November 1910. The preoccupation with New Mexico’s image as comprising a wild frontier was shared by the editor of the *Deming Herald*, see 7 May 1901.

⁴¹ Thirteenth Population Census of the United States, 1910, microfilm edition, reel 915, frames 728-733, “1910 New Mexico Federal Population Census Schedules—Grant, Lincoln, Luna, and McKinley Counties. Accessed at archive.org, 15 March 2011. The figures of Mexican demographics in Columbus are based on the author’s count. The Twelfth Population Census of the United States (1900) records that 33.1 % of the local population was of Mexican background, indicating that the overall percentage of Mexican people had decreased by 1910.

were hoping that continued settlement would further dilute the proportion of Mexican-heritage people in the overall population.

Interestingly, in the same editorial, Mosely 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 1916.⁴² 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 Courier*. That masthead appeared regularly between 1914 and 1916 as well.⁴³ Such preoccupation with the customs house and port of entry, read together with Mosely’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 capitalists along the line quite wealthy. Despite an emphasis on irrigated farming (a mythically American enterprise that will be discussed below), Columbus capitalists were tied to Mexican trade, especially to the cattle industry. Indeed, until he installed an irrigation pump in late 1909, Col. Bailey, the town’s original and most distinguished resident (as reported in the papers), had dedicated his land to ranching. As early as November 1909, the importation of large numbers of cattle dominated the front page of the *Columbus News*. New stockyards were constructed

⁴² *Columbus News* 25 November 1910.

⁴³ The masthead proclaiming the Columbus port of entry first appeared in late 1911 and reappeared intermittently in 1914, 1915, and early 1916.

in town to accommodate the trade, and in April 1910 locals expressed the vision that “Columbus stock yards may someday rival Chicago’s mammoth pens.”⁴⁴ Yet the town’s proximity to the border did not, from the booster perspective, indicate that the lower Mimbres Valley was dominated by Mexican people. Columbus was a place that was to be settled by white people who espoused American economic values. In other words, Mexico could (and should) be embraced economically and simultaneously held at arm’s length socially.

The introduction to a 1912 pamphlet published by the Townsite Company to attract settlement also supports the idea that American nationalism was a crucial element in the Columbus place myth. The American ideals promoted in this pamphlet focused not only on economics, but on the U.S. political system and family values. The first item of business discussed in the pamphlet is New Mexico’s statehood. New Mexico’s new status as a state within the Union emphasized its dedication 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.” Columbus was part of an American state, no longer a subjugated territory, with people dedicated to exploiting and developing its vast, untapped natural resources. 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

⁴⁴ *Columbus News* 26 November 1909 and 10 April 1910, quoted in Lorek, “All Along the Borderline.”

already reportedly well-established. The authors 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.”⁴⁵ 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 News* reported that none other than Col. A. O. Bailey had been re-elected to the board. The service of a prominent and well-known local citizen in that capacity further indicated the level of local dedication to children’s instruction.⁴⁶ Such emphasis on the educational system emphasized the boosters’ desire to attract hard-working, American families to Columbus. Additionally, it illustrated the level of organization and order that had been achieved by local officials.

Elite boosters’ attempts to overcome former place images that depicted Columbus as a desert worked in tandem with promotional images of the town as essentially American. Alongside an article on the feasibility and virtues of irrigation, the *Columbus Courier* printed a cartoon that depicted 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.”⁴⁷ 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 prime for agricultural production.

⁴⁵ Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, Hellberg & Blair, “Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley, New Mexico” (El Paso, Tex.: Columbus & Western New Mexico Townsite Company, 1912), 3-4.

⁴⁶ *Columbus News* 8 April 1910.

⁴⁷ *Columbus Courier* 30 June 1911; and Lorek, “All Along the Borderline,” 17-18.



Figure 5.1: *Columbus Courier*, 30 June 1911

Two of the main reasons that agriculture was a central element of the place myth surrounding desert land in southern New Mexico can be connected back to white, American values. First, boosters sought to make good on the myth of the garden that was one of the most prominent place images connected to the American West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was 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 of people familiar to Columbus boosters and residents, had done just that in their settlements near La Ascención and Casas Grandes.

Also, in November 1910, the *Columbus News* pointed out that “a typical pioneer ranchman of over twenty years’ residence here, is fast converting his cattle ranch into a veritable garden,” referring to Col. Bailey’s homestead.⁴⁸ Second, the extension and redefinition of federal Homestead Acts were literally personified in the cartoon described above. In 1909, revisions to the original legislation promised 320 acres of unsettled federal land to settlers willing to improve the tract and establish farms. Accordingly, the *Columbus* papers repeatedly reported that “Uncle Sam is looking for more Homesteaders,” and that prospective residents should disabuse themselves of the “erroneous idea” that all government land in the fertile lower Mimbres Valley had been appropriated.⁴⁹

In order to tout the profitability of crops such as beans, alfalfa, and milo maize in the lower Mimbres Valley, elite boosters (over)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 viability of the underground water supply that was described by members of the Townsite Company and newspaper editors alike as “inexhaustible.” Articles describing the viability of pump irrigation to support agriculture regularly accompanied local success stories in the pages of the *Columbus* weeklies. In

⁴⁸ *Columbus News* 25 November 1910. For the 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 Juárez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City, Ut.: Deseret Book, 1954); and Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (1938, repr., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ Lorek, “All Along the Borderline,” 13; and *Columbus Courier* 21 July 1911.

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 prominent headline on the same page was “The Virtue of the Pump,” describing the ability 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.”⁵⁰ Additionally, the 1912 Townsite Company pamphlet included a photograph of an irrigation pump on “the Pierce place” which supplied between 1500 and 1800 gallons of water per minute. In the photograph, Mr. Pierce and a ranch hand are standing behind the pump as water gushes out in a torrent. The pamphlet also included a photograph of the Gibson well, providing an equally impressive supply of irrigation water. Below the photos, the story of John Hund, “a farmer living in the lower Mimbres Valley,” relates the profitability of his enterprise. His net profits in 1911 from his alfalfa and bean crops, respectively, were \$1292.50 and \$1005.20.⁵¹

Yet, by emphasizing the viability of pump and artesian irrigation, boosters 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 effort because the “inexhaustible” water supply was hidden beneath the earth’s surface. And, along with promising water, land, and business opportunities, Townsite Company advertisements in both Columbus papers underscored that the local climate was

⁵⁰ *Columbus Courier* 30 June 1911.

⁵¹ Townsite Company, “Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley,” 10-11.

conducive to good health.⁵² According to the company, along with Frank Bailey, thousands of people came to New Mexico and the larger 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. Thus, the promise of health was based on the aridity of the locale. Additionally, many residents' crops failed despite their best efforts at irrigation. Although Col. Bailey's 185-foot-deep well, powered by a 16 horsepower Stover engine, capable of pumping 1,800 gallons per minute, made the front page of the *Columbus News* in April 1910, in July 1911 the *Courier* reported 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, seasonal rains created an unpredictable and damaging situation for many who pinned their hopes on farming in and around Columbus.⁵³

As indicated by the preceding discussion, the Columbus place myth was constructed by elite boosters, including members of the Townsite Company and newspaper editors, between 1909 and 1911. These people portrayed Columbus, New Mexico, as quintessentially American, based on demographics (very few "native Mexicans"), American economic and family values, and a propensity for irrigated agricultural production in the area. This place myth was perpetuated in the Columbus papers between 1912 and 1916 through the publication of articles that extolled the

⁵² The ads, such as those that appeared in the *Columbus News*, 15 April 1910, and the *Columbus Courier*, 30 June 1911, were recurring fixtures of the publications between 1909 and 1916. The ad also reappeared in the *Columbus Courier*, 29 August 1919 in an offer of land to soldiers returning from service in Mexico.

⁵³ *Columbus News* 15 April 1910; *Columbus Courier* 28 July 1911; and various issues of both papers, with short articles calling on local residents to not give up when their crops fail.

benefits of things ranging from irrigation pumps to “Uncle Sam’s fine dirt” to educational opportunities afforded in the community’s school system. At this point, it might be easy to conclude that such efforts worked to create a town dominated by American values, and white American people with family roots in the east. As indicated by a local census made in 1913 in an attempt to incorporate the village, however, the exact opposite seems to have been the case. The 1913 census counted 373 residents in the town of Columbus, a marked increase from the 1910 total of 268. The overall percentage of people with Mexican (Spanish) surnames and given names, however, increased significantly as well from about 24.6 percent of the total in 1910 to 40.7 percent in the 1913 headcount.⁵⁴ These figures seem to indicate that the Columbus place myth was not overly effective.

The reason for the boosters’ failure can largely be attributed to one final pillar of the local place myth that was added to the mix due to events in Mexico beyond the control of the Townsite Company or local newspaper editors: the region’s history of violence. As an analytical paradigm, the concept of the place myth does not provide space for forces that the local elites could not possibly have controlled. In order to adjust, Columbus boosters sought to erase the longstanding violent dialectic that had played a role in creating the enterprises and settlements in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Yet such efforts provide futile time and again. Only a year after the Columbus townsite was relocated to the EP & SW thoroughfare, Palomas once again was the target of a violent raid directed at unseating Porfirio Díaz. On 1 July 1908, Práxedes Guerrero and Enrique Flores Magón led a group of eleven members of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) in

⁵⁴ Collection XII: 1913 and 1919 Columbus Census, Dean Archive; Columbus, N.M., Census (1913), Folder 52, Box 1; and Petition to Incorporate Columbus, N.M. (1913), Luna County, N.M., Records, 1901-1970, NMSRCA.

another early morning raid on the Palomas Customs House. A few days previously, the group's effort to foment a rebellion in Ciudad Juárez was foiled when their El Paso neighbors alerted local police to suspicious activity in the residence they were using as a base of operations. Guerrero and his small group evaded capture but not notice as they left El Paso. Police informed Mexican officials that the band was armed and marching toward the border, so Palomas was prepared to repulse the small band of revolutionaries. In the ensuing battle that raged in the vicinity of the Customs House, Guerrero's close friend and associate, Francisco Manrique, was captured, interrogated, and executed. The other assailants fled: one small group toward Casas Grandes and another in the direction of the Florida Mountains to the west of Deming.⁵⁵ As in the case of the 1896 raid, a coordinated effort between U.S. and Mexican officials thwarted the attempt on the Palomas Customs Station.

Indeed, coordinated efforts of both governments (at the behest of Porfirio Díaz) plagued the PLM from the beginning of the group's exile to the United States beginning in 1903. Most of the group's adherents were middle class intellectuals who initially rallied behind Camilo Arriaga in San Luis Potosí in February 1901. Arriaga proved to be more moderate in his views than Ricardo Flores Magón, whose name has become synonymous with the PLM. As the group radicalized under Flores Magón's influence and spoke out against the Díaz regime's deviation from the liberal ideals of Mexico's 1857 Constitution, they faced increasing state repression. They fled to St. Louis, Missouri, then

⁵⁵ Charles Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter, eds, *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2005), 65-67; *Deming Graphic*, 3 July 1908; and *Regeneración*, 24 September 1910. Práxedes Guerrero wrote an account of the Palomas battle and a description of the brave death of his close friend at the hands of the Mexican Military. Reportedly, when authorities interrogated him prior to his execution, Manrique told them that his name was Otilio Madrid in an attempt to shield his fellow revolutionaries from capture. See also Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 73-74.

to Canada, then to Los Angeles, always pursued by agents of the Porfirian regime as well as Pinkerton detectives and U.S. spies. In 1906, from St. Louis (although many of the principal leaders, including Ricardo Flores Magón, were in Canada), the PLM was officially constituted and issued its *Programa y Manifiesto*. The *Programa* was far more radical than the liberal agenda initially expressed by Arriaga; it called not only for free speech and the reestablishment of the liberal Reforms of the 1857 Constitution, “but also the suppression of the *jefaturas*, the abolition of conscription, progressive tax reforms, improved education, ‘protection for the Indian,’ agrarian reform, and a range of labor legislation embodying an eight-hour work day, minimum wages, accident compensation and a ban on child labor.” Many of these types of provisions were later codified in the Mexican Constitution of 1917.⁵⁶

By 1906, Práxedes Guerrero rose to prominence within the PLM through his activities as a “special delegate” in communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Born in 1882, Guerrero himself was raised in a privileged, landholding family in Guanajuato. As a young boy, he was educated in schools in the city of León and he was a voracious reader. At the age of 18, along with his schoolmate and friend Francisco Manrique, Guerrero left home and went to San Luís Potosí where the pair labored in the brewing

⁵⁶ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (1986, repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 44-47; Ward S. Albro, *To Die on Your Feet: The Life, Times, and Writings of Práxedes G. Guerrero* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996), 15-20; and Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 257, n.1. Both Knight and Alonso are critical of the historiographical trend that characterizes the PLM as a “precursor movement” to the Mexican Revolution, crystallized by James D. Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). As Knight argues, causation cannot be inferred from the similarities between the 1906 Plan of St. Louis and the Constitution of 1917. If causation is to be proved, the ideas “must be shown to thread through the actions and decisions of men in the intervening years” (p. 47). Similarly, Alonso contends that the Constitution of 1917 “replicated and coopted many of the positions of the Magonista Liberal Party’s 1906 platform” (p. 257).

and smelting industries. After this experience in supporting himself economically, he reportedly returned home “more serious and thoughtful.” In 1902 and 1903, he gained military training as a member of the Second Military Reserve under General Bernardo Reyes in Nuevo León. In April 1903, Guerrero broke with Reyes when the General used the forces at his command to quash a demonstration led by one of his political opponents. After a short time back with his family in Guanajuato, he and Manrique left for the United States in the fall of 1904. Throughout all of his experiences with the military and labor, he continued to read and write actively. He consumed the works of Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pyotr Kropotkin. Once in the United States, he went to work in the mines of Morenci, Arizona, where he further galvanized his ideas about social justice and anarchism. Following his association with the PLM, he became a close associate of the Flores Magón brothers. Between 1906 and his death in an ill-fated attack on Janos in 1910, Guerrero wrote, organized, and took up arms to oppose what he saw as the tyranny of the Díaz government and to agitate in favor of social justice through anarchism.⁵⁷

Early in 1908, Guerrero’s efforts with the PLM brought him to La Ascensión. As a special delegate of the organization he not only spread the liberal message, but he also worked to funnel funds, arms, and ammunition into Chihuahua and Coahuila. Along with Ricardo Flores Magón, José Ines Salazar, and Francisco Manrique, he rallied Ascensionenses in the town plaza. The group of liberals thus included several of the principal participants in the subsequent 1 July raid on the Palomas Customs House. Although many of the locals were unwilling to openly affiliate with the PLM due to their prior experience following the 1892 election riot, many sympathized with the cause.

⁵⁷ Albro, *To Die on Your Feet*, 2, 7-14 (quote on p. 9, from Guerrero’s sister).

Indeed, in her study of northwestern Chihuahua during the Porfiriato, historian Jane-Dale Lloyd emphasized the region's support for the PLM. She argues that the reason for such support was that the impact of capitalist development was particularly acute there around the end of the nineteenth century. Local rancheros and medieros did not participate in the material gains enjoyed by American and Mexican capitalists. Communities such as La Ascensión and Casas Grandes felt the direct impact of Porfirian economic development proposals and attempts to quash regional revolts, but Palomas itself, as a township created by the deslindes and corporate investment, was a symbol of the capitalist program.⁵⁸

As in 1893, the significance of the raid was cast differently depending on who attempted to broadcast or control the story, although the 1908 narrative was far less contentious due to the failure of the assault. The official word from Mexico City was that the attack on Palomas, as well as the PLM assaults on Las Vacas and Viesca, Coahuila, had no political or revolutionary goals. Porfirian officials branded the participants as “bandits,” although Guerrero and his associates emphasized that their efforts were a response to the “repressive violence” of the regime. In his characteristically poetic prose, Guerrero recalled the bravery of his friend Francisco Manrique who “saved the Revolution and his companions” when faced with execution by lying about his true name. To the revolutionaries, Palomas was not the primary target of their efforts, but they attacked to preempt the vigilance of the Customs Guards and Rurales garrisoned there as they attempted to cross the Chihuahua desert. Tragically, especially at a personal level for

⁵⁸ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascension Antes y Después*, 73-74; and Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Proceso de Modernización Capitalista en el Noroeste de Chihuahua (1880-1910)* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1987), 9-14.

Guerrero, Palomas became significant to the story of their movement because it was the site of Manrique's martyrdom.⁵⁹

In the Lower Mimbres Valley north of the border, reports from the two Deming newspapers told conflicting stories of the attack. The front-page headline on the 2 July issue of the *Headlight* read "No Excitement Here." According to the report, the "old-timers" in the town had grown accustomed to the frequency of "Mexican Revolutions" along the border. Such "'revolutions' occur almost semi-annually and amount to a few men killed and a number of horses stolen, that's about all." Despite the *Headlight's* nonchalance, the pages of the *Deming Graphic* indicated the occurrence of a failed "Mexican Revolution." Reportedly, the foreman for the EP & SW at Mimbres, seven miles west of Deming, indicated that "a band of armed Mexicans gathered at that place" following the failed raid. The foreman believed that several "New Mexico Mexicans" had been involved in the attempt, and the *Graphic* noted that Columbus was preparing to "repulse any attack that may be made on the town." The development of the young town of Columbus had come under the purview of the Townsite Company only a year previously and already it was in the path of a Mexican insurgency. Although their publicity apparatus had not yet hit full gear, the PLM raid on Palomas reflected the necessity of a new place myth if the company's dreams were to materialize.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Regeneración*, 24 September 1910; Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 67; and Dave Poole, *The Anarchists and the Mexican Revolution: Práxedes G. Guerrero (1882-1910)*, Kindle Edition (1977, repr., London: Christie Books, 2012), loc. 119-124.

⁶⁰ For the Madero Revolution, see Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: vol 1*, 76-77, 172-175. Deming *Headlight*, 2 July 1908; and *Deming Graphic*, 3 July 1908. Columbus did not have a newspaper at this point; the *Columbus News* was founded in 1909.

In November 1910, Francisco Madero's Plan de San Luis Potosi ushered in the Mexican Revolution. Throughout 1911, pitched battles took place at various sites along the U.S.-Mexican border in support of the revolution, aimed at ousting the aging Mexican dictator, Porfirio Díaz. Although these events centered on Ciudad Juárez, the most urbanized of border settlements at the time, the fear of Mexican insurgents perpetrating violence against smaller towns like Columbus had an enormous local impact. As the Columbus publications, including the *News*, *Courier*, and the Townsite Company's 1912 pamphlet, continued to broadcast the village's potential for agricultural and economic prosperity, their reports on revolutionary activity reflected the reality that the place myth could not erase the Lower Mimbres Valley's transnational dialectic of violence. So, instead, boosters adapted the myth in an effort to coopt and sanitize the continuing cycles of violence. Their endeavor included the efforts, described above, to emphasize the border's power as a barrier to revolutionary activity, even as they continued to paint proximity to the international boundary as advantageous to commerce.

Unsurprisingly, then, Columbus elites attempted to downplay the potential for revolutionary violence spilling into the Lower Mimbres Valley. Perrow G. Mosely of the *Columbus News* didn't include a report on activities in Mexico until 25 November 1910, although Madero's revolution began on 10 November.⁶¹ Even then, the article in the *News* claimed that "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 rebels to attack the port of entry any day. Such reluctance to report on violence near the border, especially

⁶¹ The Deming newspapers and their Columbus counterparts previously exhibited a pattern of reporting on revolutionary activities by casting them as caricatures of "the Mexican race"—especially to downplay any perceived threat to settlements in southern New Mexico. Thus, editor Mosley's silence on the Revolution seems to indicate more than an attitude of patient waiting.

since the paper was used as a booster tract to draw settlement, continued until February 1911 when Troop C of the 4th Cavalry was stationed at Columbus to guard against Mexican “revoltosos.” In reporting the arrival of the cavalry, the *Columbus News* focused 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, is violence in Palomas recognized. To editor Mosely’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.”⁶²

The presence of Troop C (and subsequently assigned units) was incorporated into the local place myth; the soldiers provided Columbus with safety and security despite its physical proximity to Mexico. With the arrival of the troops, regular reports on their activities became the norm. Instead of discussing the violence in Mexico that might cross the border into town, Mosely and Mitchell reported on social events that included the 4th Cavalry. For example, to celebrate the Fourth of July in 1911, soldiers and civilians competed 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 as well. Teams

⁶² *Columbus News* 25 November 1910 and 24 February 1911.

representing the town and the 4th Cavalry participated in a summer baseball tournament, and periodic social gatherings included both military men and civilians.⁶³

Although the 4th 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 meant that the military presence would become permanent between 1912 and the early 1920s. On 25 March 1912, Pascual Orozco, the Chihuahuense general who had led the charge that unseated Díaz in 1911, took up arms against his former ally Francisco Madero, the newly elected Mexican President. Following his election, Madero instantly faced the difficult problem of balancing the interests of various classes and factions in Mexican society. Several of his most ardent lower-class supporters, like Orozco, felt betrayed by Madero's willingness to grant political patronage to wealthier, better-educated figures. The desire of the former ruling oligarchy in Chihuahua, led by Luis Terrazas, to undermine Madero's leadership added a spark to the tinder. With their implicit backing, Orozco declared a renewal of hostilities in Chihuahua. As historian John Mason Hart has argued, however, despite the support of the oligarchy "Orozco sincerely believed in his program." Indeed, his *Pacto de la Empacadora* (Orozco's 25 March 1912 revolutionary proclamation) was a "far-reaching reform package that equaled the 1906 PLM social program." Among its reforms were promises of a ten-hour workday, railroad

⁶³ *Columbus Courier*, 30 June and 28 July 1911. This is not to say that the Columbus papers never 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 Courier* 11 August 1911, p. 6. See also *Columbus Courier*, 19 July 1912, for another report on the ongoing baseball competition between Columbus residents and the 4th Cavalry.

nationalization, minimum wage proposals, and, perhaps most importantly for Orozco's agrarian supporters in Chihuahua, "a far-reaching land reform."⁶⁴

Based on Orozco's prior defiance of Madero's authority at Ciudad Juárez in April 1911, combined with his wide-ranging support in Chihuahua, the latter recognized Orozco's potential for rebellion. It was the action of Generals Orozco and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, contrary to the will of Madero, that allowed for the revolutionaries' success at Ciudad Juárez in April and May 1911, the battle that signaled the end of the Díaz regime. Although the conflict of authority between Orozco, Villa, and Madero was smoothed over shortly after the battle, Madero had already begun to move against PLM revolutionary commanders that continued to push for their own autonomy. As early as April 1911, Madero arrested several of them due to their unwillingness to submit wholeheartedly to his leadership. These included Luis A. García and five others in Chihuahua who marched beneath a red banner that read "Tierra y Libertad." Once

⁶⁴ "Troops leave Columbus," *Columbus Courier* 18 August 1911; John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 254-256; and Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 139-146. Hart emphasizes Orozco's "rank and file support of the northern working class as a popular nationalist revolutionary" (p. 254). As Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver point out, Orozco's original proclamations were also "strongly anti-U.S., although he later retreated from this position and even apologized to President Taft." Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution and the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 46. Relative to the Terrazas family's support of the Orozco rebellion, Mark Wasserman adds that the revolt's failure "forced much of the family into exile in the United States." Most of the Terrazas, including the patriarch Luis, remained on the U.S. side of the border (either in Los Angeles or El Paso) throughout the violent phase of the revolution. Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 165. For Madero's political difficulties as president, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (1986, repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), Chapter 5.

Madero took office, those who continued to wear the distinctive red of the PLM were considered to be in rebellion against the government.⁶⁵

During the same time frame in northwestern Chihuahua, many of those who had supported Guerrero and the other members of the PLM (either implicitly or overtly) threw their support behind Orozco's Chihuahua rebellion. In fact, on 13 April 1911 Lino and Santos Ponce, prominent residents of Casas Grandes who also had friendly dealings with Mormon colonists in the region, organized a group of socialists to support Madero, Orozco, and Villa's efforts in Ciudad Juárez. The Casas Grandes group wore red armbands to show their dedication to a socialist revolution. For that reason they became known as the *colorados* or Red-Flaggers, south and north of the border, respectively. Their loyalties lay with the chihuahuense general; in the spring of 1912, they made the decision to throw in their lot with Orozco. By April or May most of Orozco's supporters had adopted the use of the armbands and also the title of colorados/Red Flaggers.⁶⁶ As historian Friedrich Katz has argued, such developments underscored "Madero's lack of

⁶⁵ Ralph H. Vigil, "Revolution and Confusion: The Peculiar Case of José Inés Salazar," *New Mexico Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (April 1978), 148; and Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors*, 183-184. In his work, Vigil argues that although the members of the PLM were known as "Liberals," they are more accurately characterized as socialists.

⁶⁶ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 77. Here, I follow Ramírez Tafoya's use of the term "socialist." By his account, chihuahuense socialists were those who nominally had been drawn to the ideas of the PLM but had not actively supported the Flores Magón brothers' efforts. In 1912 many such figures threw their support behind the Orozco movement. Orozco himself had a connection to the PLM through his father, Pascual, Sr., who had supported the Flores Magón brothers and their associates against the Díaz regime prior to Madero's Revolution. Pascual Orozco, Jr., offered his resignation twice to Francisco Madero before the latter accepted it in February 1912. A month later, Orozco officially declared his rebellion against the president. See, Don M. Coerver, Suzanne B. Pasztor, and Robert M. Buffington, *Mexico: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Culture and History* (ABC-CLIO, 2004), 360.

effective control over most of the revolutionaries” that had supported his cause, particularly in the north.⁶⁷

The resumption of hostilities in Chihuahua cast a dark cloud over the early 1912 celebrations of New Mexico’s statehood in Columbus and Deming, although regional publications continued their efforts to build the local place myth. Such efforts were dampened by the Orozquistas’ dominance of the region that encompassed the Mormon Colonies, La Ascensión, and Casas Grandes. Palomas and Columbus were the most direct point of connection for residents of Colonia Díaz and La Ascensión with the United States, so the violence occasioned by the struggles between Orozco’s followers and federal forces posed a direct problem for Columbus boosters and Mormon colonists alike.

In Colonia Díaz, revolutionary threats strained the typically friendly relations with the Mormons’ Mexican neighbors in La Ascensión. As noted in Chapter 3, Ascensionenses allowed the first Mormon refugees in Mexico to stay on their lands and even plant crops while their own land acquisitions were arranged. Along with land, the colonists negotiated with leading figures in La Ascensión for access to water. One of the first agreements was for access to the nearby La Palotada canal. By 1888 the Mormons had also secured deals with the locals as well as *compañías deslidadoras* and officials in Mexico City for the construction of three other canals to irrigate agricultural terrain in their new town of Colonia Díaz. Between 1890 and 1910, Colonia Díaz and the other five Mormon settlements in northwestern Chihuahua prospered, notwithstanding the failure of John W. Young’s “Mañana Railroad” (as the locals had derisively nicknamed it).

⁶⁷ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 90.

Beginning in 1894, the Díaz colonists held a fair at the end of the harvest that attracted visitors from the other Mormon Colonies, Deming, Palomas, and La Ascensión, as well as a few from outside the immediate region. As colonist Annie R. Johnson remembered, “invitations were sent to the Governor of the State of Chihuahua, Miguel Ahumada, and the Municipal Council, also the citizens of La Ascensión.” Although Ahumada was unable to attend and a representative came in place of the La Ascensión municipal president, the fair became an annual event that showcased the agricultural and economic prosperity of the colonies. In 1896 an invitation was extended to Porfirio Díaz himself; he did not attend but sent Governor Ahumada in his place to preside over the ceremonies.⁶⁸

Despite scholarly evaluations that the relationship between the Mormon colonists and their neighbors was strained due to the economic bounty of the former, the relationship between residents of Colonia Díaz and La Ascensión was by-and-large harmonious.⁶⁹ Tensions between the colonists and their neighbors heightened with the initiation of the Mexican Revolution in November 1910, but even then confrontations with revolutionaries were not the norm. In December 1910, Elder Anthony W. Ivins, member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the LDS Church’s governing body) and former ecclesiastical leader in Colonia Juárez, counseled the colonists to maintain strict

⁶⁸ Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 75-76; Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 95, 128. As early as 1890, Díaz colonists invited Ascensionenses to participate in their community celebrations. See *Deming Headlight*, 3 January 1890, 26 July 1895, 16 August 1895, 6 September 1895, 21 August 1896, and 9 October 1896.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 90-91; Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Proceso de Modernización*, 87, 90, 123-124; B. Carmon Hardy, “The Mormon Colonists in Northern Mexico: A History, 1885-1912,” (Ph.D., diss., Wayne State University, 1963), 115-117. In a separate article B. Carmon Hardy goes so far as to argue that “the unwillingness of most Mormon colonists to compromise their traditional loyalties contributed to an uncomfortable cultural isolation” from their Mexican neighbors. See, “Cultural ‘Encystment’ as a Cause of the Mormon Exodus from Mexico in 1912, *The Pacific Historical Review* 34, no. 4 (November 1965): 439.

neutrality and to “judiciously seek for the protection of each faction as it comes into power.”⁷⁰ For the first two years of the revolution, this policy proved to be a success.

With the initiation of the Orozco rebellion, however, the colonists found that their fields, livestock, homes, canals, and other possessions were no longer overlooked by revolutionary factions. Adding to their precarious position was the arms embargo enacted by the Taft Administration in the spring of 1912 in response to Orozco’s break with the Madero government. *Colorado* troops under the command of José Inés Salazar began to molest the colonists as early as February 1912. Mormon leaders hoped that they had halted such harassment when a meeting between stake president⁷¹ Junius Romney and Salazar resulted in an order from the General that all Orozquista forces in the region respect the Mormons’ neutrality. That same month, in response to a complaint filed by Romney, U.S. Consul in Ciudad Juárez, T. D. Edwards, also petitioned Enrique Portillo, *jefe politico* of the Galeana District headquartered at Casas Grandes, to end his demands on the colonists’ property—specifically their weapons and ammunition. Despite such orders, however, revolutionaries began to levy supplies, horses, ammunition, and foodstuffs from the colonists. Most of the time, such items were taken by force. The Mormons patiently bore the afflictions placed on them by Salazar’s Red Flaggers, as they referred to them. Although their stated policy was to “turn the other cheek” and hand over

⁷⁰ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 301. Her account of Ivins’ declaration was based on her personal memories of the event. For more on the harmonious relationship between Colonia Díaz and La Ascensión, see Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 20-52; and *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión*, 39-43.

⁷¹ A stake president is an ecclesiastical leader in the Mormon Church. He generally is called to preside over a geographical area, consisting of smaller divisions, known as Wards. Bishops lead the Wards and are responsible to the stake president. President Junius Romney was the main ecclesiastical leader in the colonies in 1912, headquartered in Colonia Juárez, located on the Piedras Verdes River, west of Casas Grandes.

any supplies demanded of them, they continued to petition revolutionary leaders, such as Salazar, as well as the U.S. Consul in Ciudad Juárez, T. D. Edwards, for relief. And, the colonists fortified their local militias; Levi S. Tenney, “a man who had received military training and had served in the Philippine War, was chosen to act as captain and to organize a band of ‘Minute Men.’”⁷²

The anxious state of affairs in northwestern Chihuahua created animosity between the Díaz colonists and some Ascencionenses who supported the colorados. Residents of Columbus and Deming were also dragged into the fray. On 2 May an attempt to rob Frank Whiting’s store in Díaz sparked one such conflict. During the course of the robbery, one of the perpetrators was killed. In response, La Ascensión resident Cesario Gonzales “claimed the dead man as a brother he had not seen in five years.” Gonzales then threatened to “get ten *Mormones* in retaliation for his brother’s life.” By Annie R. Johnson’s account, Gonzales “was not a stranger to the Diazites.” His land bordered on that of colonist James D. Harvey, separated by the La Palotada canal a few miles from both Colonia Díaz and La Ascensión. Prior to that time Harvey and Gonzales had a history of cooperation and mutual aid: “for years Harvey had practically kept the Gonzales family in potatoes and flour,” according to Johnson. On 4 May Harvey, who had no knowledge of the robbery attempt, paid a visit to Gonzales in order to inform him that his horses had crossed the canal onto Harvey’s land. Gonzales threatened Harvey with a pistol and then chased him around the house several times before he shot the Mormon colonist between the eyes, killing him instantly. Harvey’s young son Willie fled

⁷² Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 305-308; and Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 151-157.

to Colonia Díaz to bring help; Mexican officials arrived soon thereafter, and took the body to La Ascensión in Harvey's wagon. The body was then returned to Harvey's wife, Nancy, following the inquest.⁷³

Many of the men in Colonia Díaz hastily formed a posse hell-bent on taking action against Gonzales. At that time, however, Bishop Ernest V. Romney (a merchant who had also issued several complaints that revolutionaries had looted his stores), James Jacobson, and Charles Whiting were able to talk some sense into the men before they went against Gonzales, and by extension the community of La Ascensión. Johnson reported that Romney, Jacobson, and Whiting provided "wise counsel and calming influence" that served to unite the community in "fellowship rather than violence." According to Mormon historian and former colonist Thomas Cottam Romney, however, "war between the two communities seemed inevitable." President Junius Romney brought together officials from both towns to work out a compromise that restored the peace. The agreed upon terms were that the Mormon men implicated in the death of the thief turn themselves in to authorities at Casas Grandes. Following their trial, they were cleared of all charges. Gonzales, however, was "never brought to justice although well known in the vicinity and he continued to live openly." From the Mormons' perspective, such was the typical state of affairs in northern Mexico.⁷⁴

A tense peace lasted until early July when Díaz colonist William Adams was killed by revolutionaries outside the home of his father-in-law, Bishop William Derby

⁷³ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 311-312.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; and Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 169.

Johnson, Jr.⁷⁵ On 3 July 1912, Adams' wife Domer passed away. At that time, the Adams' daughter, Edyth Parks, lived with her husband Charles in Columbus. In order to attend the funeral, Charles asked Columbus resident Arthur J. Evans to drive him and his wife to Colonia Díaz. As the group passed through Palomas, Customs Administrator Juan Carreon gave them the go ahead to continue to the colony but failed to provide them with a written pass. Upon arrival at Díaz, Edyth found her mother lying in state at Bishop Johnson's home. Not long after their arrival, a party of six men (described variously in different reports as fiscal guards, rebels, or Red Flaggers) arrived at the home and demanded that Evans and Mr. and Mrs. Parks provide passports to prove their authorized passage into Chihuahua or pay a fine. Adams confronted the armed Mexicans and attempted to explain that the group from Columbus had received verbal permission to pass through Palomas. The men refused to acknowledge his statements and attempted to arrest the three Columbus residents. When the leader of the Mexican posse drew a gun, Edyth jumped between him and her father but he fired over her head and shot Adams in the neck. He died almost instantly, falling into the arms of his son, Lorin.⁷⁶

Although the Parks were able to remain with family members in Colonia Díaz following the murder, Evans was imprisoned at La Ascensión. Junius Romney fired off petitions that Adams' killer be arrested to Enrique Portillo, General Salazar, and Consul

⁷⁵ The revolutionaries are described as both "rebels" and "Red-Flaggers" in the Mormon records, although the colonists were not particularly precise in identifying the various factions that operated in northwestern Chihuahua during the Revolution.

⁷⁶ The episode is related in various sources, including Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz*, 312-314; Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 169-170; *Deming Headlight*, 12 July 1912; *Columbus Courier*, 12 July 1912; and "Killing of William Adams, Colonia Díaz," General Minutes, Colonia Juárez Mexico Stake, reel 1, LR 528 11, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter CHLA]. The *Headlight* report states that Adams "became angered and slapped the officer, who then shot and killed Mr. Adams." None of the other accounts mention any aggression on Adams' part.

Edwards, and, through Orson Pratt Brown, at that time legal agent for the colonists at El Paso, Romney relayed telegrams to U.S. Senators Reed Smoot (Utah) and Albert B. Fall (New Mexico). In Columbus, Evans' brother worked through local channels in the Lower Mimbres Valley to secure his release. He elicited the aid of A. I. Boyd, Columbus customs agent, and Juan Carreon to free Evans from the "vermin infested" jail in La Ascensión. When notified of the situation, Carreon immediately sent word to La Ascensión that Evans be freed. Not until he and Boyd personally went to the prison, however, did local authorities heed his demand. Upon his subsequent release, Evans praised Boyd and Carreon for "moving heaven and earth" in order to secure his freedom.⁷⁷

On the editorial page of the *Columbus Courier*, Editor Mitchell condemned Adams' murder as the work of "dastardly, licentious, blood thirsty black-guards and outlaws." In pointing out that nine Americans had been murdered in cold blood near the Mormon colonies without any sort of justice or redress, his commentary echoed the complaints of President Romney and other Mormon colonists. Mitchell also condemned American politicians who "sit in their palatial offices in Washington, calmly reading the news of murder, rape and pillage going on across the International line" for their unwillingness to intervene in Mexican affairs. In its tone and content, the editorial walked a fine line that contrasted the continued safety and growing prosperity of Columbus against the intense violence of the Mexican Revolution. By Mitchell's reasoning, the border itself was the shield that protected Columbus from the extreme brutality in

⁷⁷ Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 170; *Deming Headlight*, 12 July 1912; *Columbus Courier*, 12 July 1912; and *El Paso Morning Times*, 4 July 1912.

Mexico. On the pages of the paper, juxtaposed with the editorial were mundane commentaries on the need for more sanitary conditions in Columbus, promotions of artesian agriculture, a baseball game, the coming Sunday's sermon, and the ice cream social to be held by the Ladies Aid Society.⁷⁸ The message sought to promote the boosters' place images of Columbus in contrast to Mexican "injustice and backwardness" that, although nearby, could not touch the burgeoning townsite, at least not within the framework of the community place myth.

The violence enacted against Harvey and Adams was not entirely unsurprising to the Díaz colonists, despite their generally friendly relations with Ascensionenses. As Annie R. Johnson's comments about Harvey and Gonzales' relationship (based on Harvey's ability to keep "the Gonzales family in potatoes and flour") subtly imply, Mormons generally believed themselves to be superior to their Mexican neighbors, even when they were on good terms. Such attitudes were based on contemporary racial theories combined with Mormon theology.⁷⁹ Thomas Cottam Romney explained this dynamic in some detail in his 1938 *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*. From the Mormon perspective, the two peoples were fundamentally different. Since the Mormons were of "Nordic extraction," they were naturally less emotional and more practical. On the other hand, the Mexicans were largely "Latin," given to emotion and little practicality. Most of

⁷⁸ *Columbus Courier*, 12 July 1912.

⁷⁹ For ideas on racial ideologies that were current in North America at the turn of the twentieth century, see, for example, Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Introduction; Alexandra Minna Stern, "Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood: Medicalization and Nation-Building on the U.S.-Mexico Border" *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (February 1999): 41-81; and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

the Mexicans lived in serfdom, while the Mormons remained independent. The colonists believed that their “methods of farming, of business, and of travel were on a higher plain [sic] than that of their neighbors.”⁸⁰ In Romney’s mind, these attitudes drove a permanent wedge between the two groups of people and fostered great resentment toward the Mormons by their neighbors.

The Mormons certainly held a paternalistic attitude toward Mexicans. Juárez colonist Earl Stowell recalled his father “buying” a Mexican laborer named Trinidad Saenz out of debt peonage. His father paid off Saenz’s debt, allowing him to work for the Stowell family. Instead of being subjected to debt peonage, Saenz now received a dollar per day, as well as an eight-hour work day and room and board.⁸¹ Some of these laborers became close friends of Mormon families, while others resisted Mormon patronage. As indicated by Romney, the Mormons did not view Mexicans as social and economic equals. The Mexican work ethic was generally viewed as inferior to their own.⁸² Further, Mormons believed Mexicans to be the descendants of a people known as Lamanites in *The Book of Mormon*. The Lamanites belonged to the House of Israel but had fallen away from the truth. The Mormon mission was to be their “nursing fathers and mothers,” in order to return them to the true faith.⁸³ Yet, in spite of the racist overtones of this paternalism, many Mexican laborers befriended their Mormon employers. When the

⁸⁰ Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 146-147.

⁸¹ Earl Stowell, Canute Breinholt, Alma Walsler, Charles Burrell, and Wives, p. 7, folder 9, box 93, Mormon Colonists in Mexico Interviews Oral History Project, BYU Archives Oral History Interview, 1960-1964, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah [hereafter TPSC-BYU].

⁸² Bill L. Smith, “Impacts of the Mexican Revolution: The Mormon Experience, 1910-1946” (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 2000), 14.

⁸³ *The Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 22:6.

Mormons evacuated their colonies in late July and early August 1912 (in what they remember as their Exodus), in Colonias Juárez and Dublán Mexicans who had long been employed as agricultural laborers by certain Mormon families stayed behind to care for their employers' holdings. Saenz was one such man who chose to remain behind. Both colonies were reestablished by early 1913, largely due to the efforts of the agricultural laborers.

However, Colonia Díaz was never reclaimed by the Mormons following their Exodus, an abandonment that had been occasioned by General Salazar's demand that the colonists relinquish all of their weapons and ammunition to the colorados. Unlike the residents of the larger Mormon Colonies of Juárez and Dublán, the residents of Díaz were unable to access the Mexican Northwestern Railroad to make their escape to El Paso. Instead, they fled to Hachita, New Mexico, by means of horse and wagon teams. The entire colony, comprised of about 800 people, heeded President Junius Romney's call to abandon homes and possessions and flee to safety in the United States.⁸⁴ The body of colonists set out from Díaz on 28 July 1912 with whatever they could transport with their teams and wagons along an indirect route that avoided the main thoroughfare which connected Díaz to Palomas and Columbus. They followed an older trail that many of the original colonists had used as they fled south from Arizona in the mid-1880s. This path

⁸⁴ For the impacts of the Exodus on the residents of other Mormon colonies, as well as the disputes between ecclesiastical leaders over the question of whether or not Junius Romney's decision to abandon the colonies had been prudent, see Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, Chapters 14 and 17; Smith, "Impacts of the Mexican Revolution," 67-76; and Fred E. Woods, *Finding Refuge in El Paso: The 1912 Mormon Exodus from Mexico* (Springville, Utah: CFI, 2012). Woods includes two important pieces of archival information, published in their entirety. The first is a 1912 account of the Exodus made by the Juárez Stake Clerk, Alonzo L. Taylor (housed in the Taylor Orden MacDonald Collection, 1857-1980, MS 9548, reel 1, Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter ACJCLDS]). The second is the "Juárez Stake Relief Committee Minutes," recently donated to the Church History Library by Joseph B. Romney, Junius Romney's grandson.

took them to the Corner Ranch at the top of the New Mexico bootheel and then on to Hachita, their initial point of refuge. There the U.S. government provided them with rations, tents, and other forms of aid to alleviate their difficult circumstances.⁸⁵ As James Jacobsen remarked, “I don’t know what we would have done without the timely assistance of the U.S. I am surely grateful for what was done for me.”⁸⁶

From bases in Hachita and Columbus, many of the Díaz colonists launched attempts to recover some of the crops, implements, machines, furniture, and other property they had left behind during the latter half of 1912. Although La Ascensión chronicler Ramón Ramírez Tafoya has emphasized the idea that several of the Mormons, including Zeno Johnson, Lorin Adams, and members of the Richens family, maintained friendships with Ascensionenses, the Mormon accounts state that Mexican squatters occupied their homes almost immediately following their flight. A few men had remained behind to protect the town, but only held out for a week or two before joining the main body of the colonists in Hachita. By Christmas Eve insurgents occupied La Ascensión itself as the battle continued to rage between the colorados and Mexican federal forces. Many Ascensionenses, as well as local political leaders in Casas Grandes and throughout

⁸⁵ Although Ramón Ramírez Tafoya (p. 42) indicates that the Exodus followed the well-worn trail through Palomas and Columbus along the grade of the proposed railroad, most Mormon sources on the Exodus from Díaz indicate that they stayed for a time at the Corner Ranch before moving on to Hachita.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Bill L. Smith, “Impacts of the Mexican Revolution,” 71-72. *Deming Headlight*, 9 and 16 August, 1912; *Columbus Courier*, 9 August 1912; Ramírez Tafoya, *Asención, Antes y Después*, 41-42; and Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, Chapter 11. The refugees were guided to Hachita by Line Rider Jim Robinson of the U.S. Customs Service, Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 341. Multiple colonists recalled similar feelings of gratitude toward the U.S. government. See, for example, Mrs. Mortensen Jones Oral History Interview, 29 January 1960, Virden, New Mexico, Folder 1, Box 1, Eva Jane Robeson Papers, 1959-1960, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico [hereafter RGHC]; Lorna Call Alder Oral History Transcript, 28 June 1976, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, LDS Polygamy Oral History Project, TPSC-BYU; John Whetten, “Recollections of his Life,” MS, n.d., Compiled by Blanche W. Peterson and Thomas F. Peterson, p. 15, TPSC-BYU.

northwestern Chihuahua sympathized with Orozco's cause. General Salazar himself had earlier connections with the PLM and was quite vocal about the need for land reform and social leveling in Mexico.⁸⁷ As the year wound to an end, however, the toll of extended military campaigning weighted heavily on the Colorado militants. General Francisco Miranda, a resident of La Ascensión who joined Orozco's movement early on, was unable to control the whims of his men as they were forced to retreat from the town. They set fire to the Municipal Offices and then moved on to Colonia Díaz, only a few miles away, and burned most of its homes, barns, and the community chapel to the ground.⁸⁸

For many of the Díaz colonists, the earlier ties that were forged with Deming and Columbus settlers through the failed Deming, Sierra Madre & Pacific Railroad venture translated into new opportunities north of the border following the Exodus. Zeno Johnson officially relocated his family to Columbus in November 1912. By early 1913, James Jacobsen, Ernest V. Romney, Peter K. Lemmon, Levi S. Tenney, and several other Díaz residents also made the decision to relocate permanently to Columbus. Still others, such

⁸⁷ Salazar has been viewed as revolutionary chameleon. Vigil's "Revolution and Confusion: The Peculiar Case of José Inés Salazar" provides one of the more detailed histories of the revolutionary figure, although he still awaits a biographer. Salazar had been with the group of revolutionaries led by Práxedes Guerrero and Enrique Flores Magón when they raided the Palomas Customs House in 1908. Salazar served as the party's guide to navigate the northwestern Chihuahua desert on their retreat to Casas Grandes, but he abandoned them as they made their flight. Flores Magón recalled, "José Inés Salazar became afraid and abandoned us in the middle of the desert, unknown by us. At a later date we learned that he had fled and took refuge in an abandoned mine, where one of his brothers [had] worked" (p. 147). Other descriptions of Salazar's conviction were even less flattering, but many of his closest associates remembered him as deeply committed to social reform, a man of "good character, industrious, and a law abiding citizen whose character could not be questioned" (p. 147).

⁸⁸ *Deming Headlight*, 13 December 1912; Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión: Antes y Después*, 42-43, 88-92; Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Juárez*, 334-338. Díaz colonists Lester Gruwell, Wallace Galbraith, and Lynn Richardson made several trips to Díaz in order to recover their cattle. Lester and Aaron Gruwell also traveled to La Ascensión where they hired Francisco Fernández to maintain their property. Fernández continued his efforts, often ineffectual, to protect and maintain the Mormons' property long after the Revolution had ended. Colonist Flay Peterson, following the lead of his father Andrew C. Peterson, also pursued legal avenues to protect Mormon lands in Díaz from expropriation from the period immediately after the Exodus well into the 1940s. See, Ramírez Tafoya, *Antes y Después*, 44-45, 48-52.

as the Mortensen Jones family, made their homes in Deming. Few remained at Hachita and none attempted to resettle Colonia Díaz (although many maintained legal claim to their lands there for several decades following the Exodus). A return had seemed a possibility prior to the colony's final annihilation on 31 December by the retreating insurgents. For the refugees, however, the promise of Columbus as an up-and-coming town seemed bright. Although skirmishes with Mexican revolutionaries occurred in Palomas in August and November 1912, the first of which involved U.S. Customs officials and a contingent of the 4th Cavalry at the Pacheco Ranch on the American side of the border, the promise of security north of the international line in a place so near their former homes was inviting.⁸⁹ The refugees did not need the impetus of the Columbus place myth in making their decisions to locate there, but its reassurances of safety and prosperity no doubt provided them some comfort. Ernest V. Romney and Peter K. Lemmon quickly established their mercantile establishment, a business that had been so often raided by revolutionaries in Díaz, in the safety provided by Columbus' location on the other side of the border. (Unfortunately for them, their store became one of the main targets of the villista raiders in March 1916.)⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *Columbus Courier*, 16 August and 29 November 1912; and *Deming Headlight*, 16 August 1912. Isidoro Pacheco, one of the other members of the Columbus-Palomas Pacheco family, was arrested for allegedly smuggling weapons to the colorados in Palomas. Characteristically, Editor Mitchell buried the details about Pacheco's involvement, as well as other details that would have indicated connections to Mexico based on violence, on the third and fourth pages of the paper, although the main story ran on the first page.

⁹⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 13 December 1912; Collection XII: 1913 and 1919 Columbus Census, Dean Archive; Columbus, N.M., Census (1913), Folder 52, Box 1; and Petition to Incorporate Columbus, N.M. (1913), Luna County, N.M., Records, 1901-1970, NMSRCA.

Our examination of the construction of the Columbus place myth between 1907 and 1912 underscores the Townsite Company's concerted, but very limited attempt to redraw Columbus as an agricultural paradise for white, American settlers. Federal and local censuses as well as recorded revolutionary violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley indicate that the myth was not successful in erasing Columbus' 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 violence of the Mexican Revolution. Most of the early fighting occurred along the border with the United States, and the violence caused many Mexicans to migrate to safety north of the line.⁹¹ U.S. cattle interests in Chihuahua ensured the centrality of the customs house to Columbus' economy, although small-scale agriculture failed to take hold. In March 1916, Pancho Villa's raid on the village reinvigorated local attempts to equate the U.S. military presence with the guarantee of safety. Paradoxically, the raid also initiated an economic boom for Columbus due to the heavy presence of military personnel that lasted until Camp Furlong was discontinued in 1923. The next chapter will examine that most infamous of violent events in the Lower Mimbres Valley, Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus on 9 March 1916.

⁹¹ For Mexicans seeking refuge in the United States during the Revolution, see Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, Chapter 8.

Chapter 6: Pancho Villa's Raid on Columbus: The Transformation of the Local Place Myth

“Violence didn't arrive with Pancho Villa”—Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera, *Porque Villa Atacó a Columbus*.¹

Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s pre-dawn raid on Columbus on 9 March 1916 was the singular event that lifted the small town, and the Lower Mimbres Valley along with it, to international notoriety. Such attention was not the type of publicity that Columbus’ boosters had in mind, but they subsequently invested much of their time and energy to transform the violent attack into a positive turn in their narrative for the region. Regular editorials that decried those who considered Columbus unsafe or vulnerable to revolutionaries graced the pages of the *Columbus Courier* in 1916 and 1917. The boosters’ argument was that Villa’s raid had actually brought the protection of thousands of National Guardsmen and other soldiers connected to General John J. Pershing’s Punitive Expedition. Indeed, given the security provided by the increased military presence, Columbus’ population mushroomed to 2,110 in 1920, a respectable figure in largely rural New Mexico. In his publications, editor G. E. Parks walked a fine line between insensitivity to the casualties of the raid and bombast in his claims about the boom that the raid had unintentionally created for the small border town.²

¹ Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera, *Porque Atacó Villa a Columbus (Intriga Internacional)* (México, D.F.: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1971), 13.

² See, for example, *Columbus Courier*, 2 March 1917.

Yet, the relationship between General Villa and the Lower Mimbres Valley was considerably more complex than has been indicated in the scholarly literature on the Mexican Revolution or the booster tracts of the Townsite Company.³ Villa had built friendly relationships with people in the area in the years leading up to the Mexican Revolution. Oral histories from residents of La Ascensión tell of his arrival in their town around the turn of the century. According to their memories, Villa was an agent for the Palomas Land and Cattle enterprise. Mormon colonists in Colonias Díaz and Dublán also forged ties with the revolutionary leader between 1910 and 1913. Díaz colonist Jesse Taylor fondly recalled Villa's affection for his own daughter and other children in the colony; Ara O. Call of Colonia Dublán shared similar memories.⁴ Following the

³ Generally, the story of Columbus and the Lower Mimbres Valley has been given a cameo appearance in the literature on the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, as well as literature on the Mexican Revolution. For examples of such works, 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* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006); and Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Knight's interpretation of Villa's actions differs significantly from most of the others. He argues that in the raid on Columbus Villa acted recklessly, without thought or strategy. Most of the other works cited explain Villa's strategic motives for the attack, no matter how foolhardy such a move seemed at the time. See *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, *Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*, 330-347.

Two notable exceptions to the historiographical trend in which Villa's Columbus raid gets a cameo appearance are Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Cal.: 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* Kindle Edition (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006). Neither of these books center 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, NM, 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.

⁴ Jesse M. Taylor Oral History Transcript, 10 November 1959, p. 20, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, LDS Polygamy Oral History Project, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee

assassination of Francisco Madero, Villa used the region around La Ascensión to rally supporters in opposition to the leadership of Victoriano Huerta. During the summer of 1913, Villa reorganized his forces and commissioned his fabled Dorados in La Ascensión. There, many locals who had long held an affinity for the ideals of the PLM sympathized with his call for renewed revolution to unseat Victoriano Huerta, as well as with his proposals for social and land reform. In August 1914, Villa passed through Deming on the Southern Pacific Railroad, where he was received as a celebrity. Villa's ties to Columbus during that same time period were more indirect. Through his agent, Candelario Contreras, he contracted for arms and other supplies with Columbus merchants.⁵ In 1913 and 1914, Villa worked hard to cultivate an image of himself as the revolutionary leader who protected both the demands of Mexican peasants as well as American interests.⁶

The events of 9 March 1916, however, redirected Villa's legacy along the Columbus-Palomas corridor. Instead of solidifying his image as a protector of Mexican social rights and a friend to Americans, the raid recast him as a violent bandit with no clear ideology or direction. Such was certainly the case in Columbus and Deming, although the situation was more complicated for Mormon colonists and Mexican residents of the municipio of La Ascensión. South of the international line, Villa was still

Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah [hereafter TPSC-BYU]; and Ara O. Call Oral History Transcript, 9 September 1971, p. 3, Weber State College Oral History Project, TPSC-BYU.

⁵ Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después de la Revolución* (Chihuahua, Chih.: Instituto Chihuahuense de la Cultura, 2011), 121.

⁶ For recent studies that outline Villa's attempts to fortify his own reputation, see Mark Cronlund Anderson, *Pancho Villa's Revolution by Headlines* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); and Miguel Angel Berumen, *Pancho Villa: La Construcción del Mito*, 2d. ed (México, D.F.: Cuadro por Cuadro, Imágen y Palabra, 2009).

regarded by many as a hero for daring to take on the United States. Many of the Mormons that had returned to Colonias Juárez and Dublán justified the general's actions as an understandable response to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's decision to recognize Villa's rival, Venustiano Carranza.⁷ They also understood Villa's decision to bypass Colonia Dublán as he fled with his men from the Columbus attack as a manifestation of divine intervention to protect their families, lives, and property.

Although Pancho Villa's pre-dawn raid on Columbus has been the subject of countless reports and scholarly treatments of the Mexican Revolution, it has yet to be explained within the context of the Lower Mimbres Valley's historical dialectic of violence. This chapter focuses on Villa's complex relationship with Columbus, Deming, Palomas, La Ascensión, and the Mormon colonies during one of the fiercest phases of the Mexican Revolution. As local boosters, including *Columbus Courier* editor G. E. Parks, vilified Villa and simultaneously glorified the increased presence of U.S. military forces in an attempt to salvage the local place myth, Columbus and Palomas became sites of both retribution and refuge for different groups of people. Between 1916 and 1920, town promoters capitalized on the aftermath of the *villistas'* violent actions as Columbus' population and business prospects boomed in connection to the Punitive Expedition headed by General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing and the continued presence of troops to support Camp Furlong until it was closed in 1923.

During that same period of time, however, Columbus received hundreds of refugees that were deported from Bisbee, Arizona, as part of Sheriff Henry Wheeler's

⁷ In this chapter, I present several of the ideas and arguments that I first discussed in, Brandon Morgan, "From Brutal Ally to Humble Believer: Mormon Colonists' Image of Pancho Villa" *New Mexico Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (spring 2010): 109-129.

attempt to rid his county of union agitators and others that he considered un-American. As the refugees settled in, African American members of the 24th Infantry were exiled to Columbus for their participation in a race riot in Houston (discussed below in more detail). In response to the racial and social tensions created by the convergence of so many transformative events in Columbus over such a short period of time, the Mexican Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores created a consular agency in Columbus headed by Antonio Landin. Although Villa's raid was an act of violence that brought Columbus to a breaking point, the combined efforts of locals and officials like Landin served to diffuse much of the tension.⁸ Yet as had so often been the case in the Lower Mimbres Valley, the violence of the period between 1916 and 1920 transformed and defined its human landscapes. This redefinition is clearly seen in the cases of Villa's complex relationship to the Lower Mimbres Valley, the economic boom following his raid, the refuge and exile there of the Bisbee deportees, the imprisonment there of members of the 24th Infantry, and the lasting connections that such crises forged between Columbus and Palomas despite the place myth's concerted efforts to dilute such ties. Ultimately, Columbus and Palomas' apex of growth was created and sustained by Villa's raid and the heightened military presence that lasted until 1923. Villa's legacy in the Lower Mimbres Valley solidified the continuation of the region's historical tug-of-war of violence, as well as its image as an empty and desolate place.

⁸ For a recent study of the events surrounding the Bisbee deportation, see Katherine Benton Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009). Robert V. Haynes, *A Night of Violence: The Houston Riot of 1917* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976) provides a comprehensive analysis of the riot and the exile of the 24th Infantry. And, the information regarding Consul Landin is located in the *Columbus Courier*, as well as "Antonio Landin, su expediente personal," expediente 3-19-40, Archivo Historico Génaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México, D.F. [hereafter AHGESRE].

To understand fully this legacy in the Lower Mimbres Valley, an examination of the revolutionary's reputation and legend is necessary. Separating Villa the man from Villa the myth is a difficult undertaking. As historian Friedrich Katz has posited, three legends shroud the memory of Villa. First, the white legend paints Villa as a generally good man, while also mentioning a few of his faults. Second, the black legend depicts him as an evil villain, a cold-blooded murderous bandit. Third, the epic legend portrays him as a noble hero who constantly battled for the rights of Mexican peasants; a "Mexican Robin Hood."⁹ These differing perceptions of Villa have created a mythologized, larger-than-life historical figure. Interestingly, Villa's history of interactions with residents of Columbus, Deming, La Ascensión, and the Mormon colonists incorporates bits and pieces of all three legends. Members of those communities were well aware of his brutal nature. Mormon colonist Earl Stowell commented on Villa's harsh treatment of his men, claiming "it didn't bother Villa at all to shoot a man."¹⁰ Such brutality was nearly always justified in the Mormons' minds because Villa needed to maintain order among his troops. The Mormons appreciated that discipline; they believed it was Villa's harsh punishments that protected them from the whims of his followers. Villa was their protector, a good man with some faults, who they remembered as a heroic figure. Similarly, he was regarded as a hero in the corridor from La Ascensión to Deming in the years leading up to March 1916, principally because he actively worked to cultivate a reputation as a friend of the United States.

⁹ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3–8.

¹⁰ Earl Stowell, Canute Breinholt, Alma Walsler, Charles Burrell, and Wives, folder 9, box 93, Mormon Colonists in Mexico Interviews Oral History Project, BYU Archives Oral History Interview, 1960–1964, TPSC-BYU.

Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, La Ascensión's regional historian, has collected oral histories of Ascensionenses regarding Villa's earliest interactions with people in northwestern Chihuahua. According to the oral histories, Villa began to travel throughout the region in connection with the cattle industry just after the turn of the twentieth century. Depending on the account, he was either described as an official purchasing agent of the Palomas Land and Cattle interests, or as a cattle rustler. Ascensionenses Salvador Beltrán and Luis Fernández remembered Villa in connection with formal agreements to purchase cattle from their families and others. Alternatively, however, Sarah Parks and Juan Favela, Columbus residents interviewed in La Ascensión in the 1950s, recalled that "Villa had robbed many head of cattle from the Palomas Land and Cattle Company" beginning prior to the revolution. At the time of Villa's raid, Favela served as an agent of the company stationed at Columbus. He was personally threatened by the villistas prior to their assault on the town, and he played an instrumental role in saving several of the tenants of the Commercial Hotel from death on the morning of the raid. That his memory of Villa's interaction with the people of the Lower Mimbres Valley differs from that of Beltrán and Fernández, then, should not seem surprising. In their own accounts, Ascensionenses remembered Favela's warnings that Villa was operating in their region in late February 1916, but they disregarded his reports. Indeed, no one from the town was willing to accompany Favela to El Paso where he intended to inform U.S. authorities of Villa's presence. Ramírez Tafoya concludes that their actions indicate their sympathy to Villa's revolutionary agenda.¹¹

¹¹ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 110-114; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 2290; and Affidavit of Juan Favela in connection to the James O'Neal murder, 8 May 1920, Columbus, New Mexico, Dean Archive.

According to Ascensionense Benjamín Fernández, Villa struck up friendships with various members of the community during his visits in connection with the cattle industry. In particular, he became a friend of the Fernández family, including Francisco Fernández, who also became the local agent for Mormon landowners following the 1912 Exodus. It was Francisco that first introduced Villa to the Díaz colonists in the early years of the revolution.¹²

Villa also created connections with other Mormon colonists of his own accord. By the first decade of the twentieth century, several Mormons had attempted to diversify economically by working for regional cattle companies, including those owned by the family of Francisco Madero. One such colonist was Jesse M. Taylor. Prior to the revolution, Taylor worked for Madero as a cattle vendor to the railroad camps in the region near the Mormon colonies. Shortly following the revolutionaries' success at the battle of Ciudad Juárez, in the summer of 1911 Villa came into contact with Taylor near Casas Grandes where he confronted Taylor about killing cattle. Taylor provided documentation that showed it was part of his job. Villa then left him to his work. He told Taylor that "the war is over and there is going to be peace." Villa also mentioned his need of a saddle, inferring his intention to take Taylor's. Taylor talked him into riding with him to the next camp in order to buy a saddle. As they rode, they conversed freely. Taylor remembered Villa being "as good and pleasant as any guy." Once Taylor had secured a saddle, Villa "took out a roll of greenbacks that would choke a mule," offering to repay

¹² Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 113-114.

him. Taylor told him payment was unnecessary. From that point on the two men had “lots of dealings.”¹³

Taylor again spoke personally with Villa when Villa and his men were staying in Colonia Dublán, sometime in early 1913. At that time, Taylor lived in Hachita, New Mexico, but made regular trips through Colonia Díaz and also transported sugar throughout northern Chihuahua to earn a living. On one occasion, he was taken to speak with Villa, who had ordered that anyone passing through Colonia Dublán be brought to him. Taylor fondly remembered Villa taking off his hat and playing with his seven-month-old daughter, Jessie at that time. Dublán colonist Ara Call, son of Bishop Anson B. Call, also spoke of an instance as a small child in which Villa picked him up and held him.¹⁴ Such interactions, no doubt stemming in part from Villa’s commitment to protect American lives and property, created a lasting alliance between the revolutionary and Chihuahua’s Mormon colonists.

As Mexican historian Miguel Angel Berumen has argued, Villa’s attempts to construct an image of himself as a larger-than-life military and social leader began in 1913 shortly after his return to Mexico from a brief exile in the United States. At that point, his foreign policy was “to develop and nurture a cordial relationship with the United States,” as characterized by historian Mark Cronlund Anderson.¹⁵ Although he had shown his loyalty to President Francisco Madero in 1912 by once again taking up arms to combat the threat of the Orozco rebellion in Chihuahua, Villa butted heads with

¹³ Jesse M. Taylor Oral History Transcript, 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18; and Ara O. Call Oral History Transcript, 3.

¹⁵ Berumen, *Construcción del Mito*, 25-27; Anderson, *Villa’s Revolution by Headlines*, 18.

the leader of Mexico's federal military forces, Victoriano Huerta. On Huerta's orders, Villa was nearly executed for insubordination during the campaign against the colorados. Instead, he was imprisoned at Mexico City's infamous prison, the "black palace" of Lecumberri.¹⁶ Following his escape from prison in December 1912, Villa fled to Tucson, Arizona, and then El Paso, Texas.¹⁷ According to legend, Villa reentered the Revolution in early March 1913 when he crossed into Chihuahua with only eight poorly equipped supporters. Despite his lack of funds and supplies, Villa knew that he had the backing of most of the people of Chihuahua, especially those living in the northwestern section of the state near La Ascensión.

On 9 or 10 June 1913, after months of campaigning and organizing in the region, Villa arrived in La Ascensión and used it as his base of recruitment to construct his army. The choice made sense due to Villa's knowledge of the town and his association with its residents. Additionally, La Ascensión was a "seedbed of liberal adherents to the Flores Magón brothers." A contingent of 700 men arrived with Villa in early June, nearly doubling the local population of 1150. At the time, Refugio Sáenz was the municipal president in La Ascensión; he expressed great apprehension at the arrival of the renowned revolutionary general despite the overall feeling of support. Sáenz's reservations stemmed from his uncertainty about Villa's intentions toward the existing municipal

¹⁶ "Pancho Villa en Lecumberri," Pamphlet to accompany a temporal exhibition at the Archivo General de la Nación, 7 June-7 November 2012, in author's possession; Archivo General de la Nación, *El Palacio de Lecumberri* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 168-185. Madero and Pino Suarez were en route to Lecumberri when they were assassinated. Pancho Villa holds the distinction of being one of the two only known escapees from the prison during its operation as a penitentiary between 1900 and 1976. The building currently houses the Archivo General de la Nación.

¹⁷ Letters from Mexican Consul at Tucson, Arizona, to Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., 5 and 6 March 1913, Tomo 34, Archivo Embajada de México en los Estados Unidos Americanos [hereafter AEMEUE], Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México City, D.F. [hereafter AHSRE].

government. From La Ascensión's earliest days, local autonomy in government had been a paramount concern. Indeed, the 1892 election riots against Rafael Ancheta were fueled in great part by the sentiment that Ancheta's election was an outside imposition. Much to Sáenz' relief, then, Villa immediately recognized his leadership and also appointed a military guard over the community because, as recalled by his granddaughter, Sáenz was "already old and tired" by that time.¹⁸

From La Ascensión Villa united and organized various Chihuahuense revolutionary bands that had been operating independently. These included the groups headed by Tomás Urbina, Calixto Contreras, Eugenio Aguirre Benavides, José Isabel Robles, Pánfilo Natera, and Maclovio Herrera. It was at Colonia Díaz, then a blackened remnant of the formerly prosperous town, that Venustiano Carranza's emissaries Juan Sánchez Azcona and Alfredo Breceda invited Villa to join the Constitutionalist revolutionary forces as brigadier general under the command of Sonoran General Alvaro Obregón. Villa refused and insisted that he retain his own autonomy over his Chihuahua forces. Although Villa united his División del Norte to the Constitutionalist cause, he never fully trusted the hacendado Carranza. The two men came from very different social backgrounds and had distinct visions for the future of Mexico. Perhaps most importantly, Villa refused to allow Carranza to assume political authority over the areas captured during the conflict to oust Victoriano Huerta from power in Mexico City. Their

¹⁸ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 115. La Ascensión was also the site of Huerta's sentence of execution against Villa, see Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 211. For the 1892 La Ascensión riot, see Chapter 3; José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization in the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially Chapters 6 and 7; Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 53-67; and Ramírez Tafoya, *De La Mesilla a La Ascensión* (Chihuahua, Chih.: Instituto Chihuahuense de Cultura, 2009), 125-127.

dedication to the battle against Huerta was the single conviction that the two leaders seemed to share.¹⁹

As Villa's star began to rise in Chihuahua, he never lost sight of the need to cultivate positive relations with the United States. Despite the embargo that remained in place until 3 February 1914 to prevent the sale of U.S. arms and ammunition to Constitutionalist forces, Villa relied on his proximity to the border as a means of securing smuggled weapons and supplies. He also realized that U.S. support was crucial for any revolutionary movement to achieve success in Mexico. By the late summer of 1913, the relatively new American President, Woodrow Wilson, had lost all hope of securing democratic reforms in Mexico as long as Huerta remained in power. As was the case with most European and American political leaders, Wilson held two key conditions for leadership in Mexico, a nation considered to be backward and underdeveloped from his perspective. These criteria were for the leader to both maintain order and to protect American interests. Relative to the second, Wilson championed the preservation of private property in Mexico. Additionally, Wilson wanted democratic leadership in Mexico under a group of men "willing to implement the same kind of democratic system in Mexico as existed in the United States."²⁰

When Carranza rejected Wilson's proposal that U.S. forces occupy major Mexican Gulf port cities in order to enable the Constitutionlists to take control of

¹⁹ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 117-118; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: vol. 2, Counter-revolution and Reconstruction* (1986, repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 109; and Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 334-337.

²⁰ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 309-311; Clarence C. Clendenen, *The United States and Pancho Villa: A Study in Unconventional Diplomacy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), 50-60.

Mexico City and depose Huerta, Wilson began to court Villa as a prospective alternative for political and military leadership on a national level. Carranza realized that in making such an agreement with the United States, he would be considered a traitor by most Mexicans. In Villa, Wilson saw a rough-around-the-edges military commander who possessed the ability to maintain order and protect U.S. interests in Mexico. Villa's insistence that his confiscation of large estates in Chihuahua was not an expropriation but merely the collection of unpaid taxes may have also assuaged Wilson's dedication to private property, especially because Villa purposely avoided the confiscation of American holdings. As provisional governor of Chihuahua in 1913 and 1914, Villa restored political, social, and economic order. Although Villa exhibited no personal dedication to democratic governance, he advocated his close advisor, former federal general Felipe Angeles, as one of the best prospective candidates for the Mexican presidency. This combination, along with public statements in which Villa affirmed and reaffirmed his affinity for the United States, as well as his willingness to receive Wilson's representative, convinced Wilson that Villa was a prime candidate to end the revolution and restore order in Mexico. Indeed, as Villa commented to one American newspaper reporter, "What I want is peace in Mexico. Not the kind of peace we had under Díaz, when a few had all and the many were slaves, but such a peace as you have in the United States where all men are equal before the law and where any man who is willing to work can make such a living for himself and his family as only the very wealthy in Mexico can enjoy."²¹

²¹ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 311-312. (Quote from n. 6, p. 312, *El Paso Daily Times*, 16 February 1914); Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 58; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 1, 330, 459; and Anderson, *Villa's Revolution by Headlines*, 36-39. For Wilson's proposal to Carranza, see

Villa's popularity not only surged within the Wilson administration; beginning in late 1913, he rose to prominence in the U.S. press as well. On Christmas Day 1913, *Leslie's*, "one of the most influential magazines in the United States with a circulation exceeding 400,000 copies," placed Pancho Villa on its front page. The caption characterized the revolutionary as "Huerta's Nightmare—the Daring 'Bandit' Leader."²² Villa personally attended to his image, inviting film crews to document his battles, dressing "in costume" on such occasions, posing for photographs, and inviting interviews with American reporters. As the editor of the *Fort Worth Record* pointed out in December 1913, Villa understood well the importance of publicity—to the extent that he was "slave to his own typewriter." As Miguel Angel Berumen has argued, this characterization was a bit overstated, yet Villa clearly understood that he could control his own public image through the use of mass media such as film and newspapers.²³ To create an effective publicity enterprise, Villa "employed publicists in the United States, bribed reporters and editors there, funded his own propaganda organ in Mexico, provided financial support to other publications in both Mexico and the United States, sold his story to the motion pictures, and charmed, bullied, deceived, censored, and cajoled foreign news reporters into casting him in a favorable light."²⁴

Essential to Villa's public image in the U.S. borderlands was his ability to promote himself as a "man of peace," despite his history of violence. For those who

also Michael J. Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 107-111.

²² Berumen, *Construcción del Mito*, 24-25.

²³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴ Anderson, *Villa's Revolution by Headlines*, 45.

inhabited the border region, the Mexican Revolution was a source of fascination as well as fear and tension. During the earliest days of revolutionary violence, many Americans viewed the conflict south of the border as an attraction. Various hotels and other structures in El Paso allowed spectators to watch the 1911 battle in Ciudad Juárez from rooftop vantage points.²⁵ When violence in Mexico reignited with the Orozco rebellion in early 1912, residents of the border (on both sides) became increasingly uneasy. A number of American men headed south to participate in the fighting; most sought the thrill of battle. The execution of Villa's American artillery captain, Thomas Fountain, at the hands of Salazar's forces during the April 1912 battle of Parral heavily impacted his home community of Las Cruces.²⁶ Around the same time, citizens in Columbus petitioned authorities at Fort Bliss for military protection. Only a few months earlier the departure of Troop C, Fourth Cavalry, from the town seemed to signal the end of border hostility related to the Revolution. Although contemporary residents had no way of knowing, the violence had not yet reached its apex. The 1912 petition illustrates

²⁵ David Dorado Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (El Paso, Tex.: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005), 86-87.

²⁶ For Thomas Fountain's story, see Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 140, 160. Although Katz describes Fountain as a soldier of fortune, he was one of many borderland residents with deep ties to both New Mexico and Chihuahua. Fountain had a wife and home in the town of Parral and he maintained regular contact with his own family in the Las Cruces, New Mexico area. His father was Colonel Albert Jennings Fountain, a figure of infamy in New Mexico's territorial period. The elder Fountain disappeared in the early 1890s as he traveled between Las Cruces and Alamogordo, ostensibly murdered although his body was never located. For more on the story of Thomas Fountain, see Albert B. Fall Family Papers, 1905-1941, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces [hereafter RGHC]; *El Eco del Valle* (Las Cruces, N.Mex.), 21 July 1906; *El Labrador* (Las Cruces, N.Mex.) 12 April 1912; and *La Estrella* (Las Cruces, N.Mex.) 12 and 13 April 1912. I've also drawn on ideas that first appeared in, Brandon Morgan, "On the Trail of Pancho Villa in New Mexico: The Impact of the Mexican Revolution on the Citizens of New Mexico," Online Digital History Project, New Mexico Office of the State Historian. Accessible at: http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=22167.

Columbus citizens' renewed fears that their lives were threatened and that revolutionary violence was far from over.²⁷

From 1912 through the end of the Mexican Revolution, the *Deming Headlight* ran regular reports on the progress of the war. These reports frequently mentioned attempted attacks on towns just north of the border. For example, on 25 April 1912 revolutionaries attempted to “invade American territory near Fabens, Tex.” but were prevented from doing so “by a cool headed American lieutenant and a couple of Texas rangers, backed by troop B, 4th cavalry.”²⁸ Such threats of bombardment coincided with the very real murder of William Adams, discussed in Chapter 5, to create an atmosphere of fear. The relocation of Orozquista troops to Palomas compounded this fear in southern New Mexico in August 1912. On this occasion U.S. troops engaged Mexican revolutionaries seeking weapons at the Pacheco Ranch near Columbus. It was in this type of environment that the editor of the *Las Cruces Citizen* noted, “Even El Pasoans are becoming nauseated with what they once considered so amusing,” taking a jab at those who treated the revolution as a spectator sport.²⁹

These types of stories were printed much more infrequently in the *Columbus Courier*. The reason for this was Columbus residents' desire to attract settlers and investment to their town through the creation of the local place myth. They did not want to publish that fact that the area was dangerous. This trend even continued in the local

²⁷ *Deming Headlight*, 16 February 1912 and 8 March 1912; and *Columbus Courier*, 18 August 1911.

²⁸ *Deming Headlight*, 31 May 1912.

²⁹ *Deming Headlight*, 16 August and 22 November 1912; and *Las Cruces Citizen*, 21 December 1912.

newspaper following the 1916 raid. The attack was not mentioned in detail until a few weeks after the fact. Then, throughout subsequent years only passing references to the raid were made in an attempt to paint the town as secure.³⁰

When Villa held control of Chihuahua in 1913 and 1914, however, he maintained an office in Columbus itself. Although it is unclear how often he visited the office, the presence of his officers there seemed to provide many Columbus residents a sense of calm in the middle of the revolutionary storm. As line rider and cattle agent Daniel J. “Buck” Chadborn recalled, “To show how cooperative Villa was he gave me a safe conduct pass for my protection though I didn’t ask for it. It was presented to me in Villa’s Columbus office by two of his right-hand men, Leoncio J. Figueroa and Antonio Moreno.”³¹ Chadborn’s work as a line rider for the U.S. Customs Service, as well as his personal interest in a local cattle enterprise, meant that the gesture was important for building peaceful border relations between villista forces at Palomas and citizens of Columbus.

American border merchants seeking to turn a profit from arms trade, intermittently allowed by law during the revolution, also brought potential violence to the area. The economic success of the Lower Mimbres Valley was very much connected to the sale of weapons during the decade of the Mexican Revolution. Such was the case in

³⁰ See, for example, *Columbus News*, 25 November 1910 and 30 June 1911; *Columbus Courier*, 22 June 1917 and 9 March 1917.

³¹ Daniel J. “Buck” Chadborn Interview, in Jessie Peterson and Thelma Cox Knowles, eds., *Pancho Villa: Intimate Recollections by People Who Knew Him* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 204; and Letter from Albert B. Fall to Sam Ravel, 14 September 1914, reel 38, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico [hereafter UNM]. In the letter, Fall explained to Ravel that although Figueroa had been operating as a Mexican Consular Official, he had no authority to do so from anyone except Villa.

the skirmish just outside Columbus in August 1912, in which U.S. Customs Agents and the 4th Cavalry captured smugglers at the Pacheco Ranch. Arms trade is also at the heart of one of the many theories behind Villa's motivation for the Columbus raid. Local merchant Sam Ravel reportedly either sold the general faulty ammunition or completely failed to deliver munitions that had been bought and paid for. Ravel and his brothers vehemently denied any dealings with Villa for decades following the attack in an attempt to prove that their actions had not caused the raid. Whether or not the Ravels did deal with Villa specifically, they admittedly sold weapons to other revolutionary factions. In late July 1914, Sam was taken prisoner by a group of "Villa's men." Villa himself was not present, although his agents Leoncio J. Figueroa, Captain Azcarate, and Captain Arroyo were the officers that detained and threatened Ravel with execution for allegedly supplying the Roque Gómez gang with weaponry. Luna County Sheriff D. B. Stephens intervened with the Mexican consul in Columbus to secure Ravel's release in that instance. Ravel also used his connections to New Mexico Senator Albert B. Fall in order to gain his freedom. On that occasion, he was allowed to return to Columbus after being held for two days.³² Whatever Ravel's later dealings with Villa, his relations with them during their occupation of Palomas and their Columbus office had turned sour.

³² Correspondence between Sam Ravel and Albert B. Fall, 26 July-14 September 1914, reel 38, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Zimmerman Library, UNM. John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War*, 288; and Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1393. *Deming Headlight*, 31 July 1914; "Did Villa Raid Columbus After Merchant Refused to Sell Guns?: Mexican Writer Contends He Did," *The Southwestern* (Columbus, N.Mex.), November 1961; and Howard Bryan, "Albq's Arthur Ravel Walked Close to Death When the Villa Raiders Hit Columbus," *Albuquerque Tribune*, 11 March 1970. See also Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 118-121; and Alberto Calzadías Barrera, *Villa Contra Todo y Contra Todos* (México, D.F.: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1963).

The tense atmosphere also affected race relations in southern New Mexico. Local newspapers tended to associate Mexican people with laziness, violence, and drunkenness, among other reprehensible traits.³³ This racial issue was also germane to New Mexico's battle to earn statehood. In order to highlight their American attributes, New Mexicans of Mexican descent disavowed any connection to the mestizo race that dominated the nation south of the border. Instead, they emphasized their genealogical ties, more imagined than real, to the original Spanish conquistadores, calling themselves Spanish-Americans rather than Mexican-Americans.³⁴ Despite these distinctions, it is difficult to discern whether all those referred to as Mexican were in fact nationals of Mexico. In certain situations Mexican nationals who did not fit the common stereotypes were not labeled as such. Esequiel Orozco, a cousin of General Pascual Orozco, lived in Deming with his wife and children in 1912. In August of that year he was killed in a barfight at the Palace Saloon. His murderers were described as drunken Mexicans, who fled to seek refuge of the law south of the border. Orozco himself was painted as a family man and consequently not labeled a Mexican, despite his Mexican heritage.³⁵ Race was a highly complex issue based on actions and status, as well as national origin, among other things.

The context of racial and social relations in southern New Mexico, as well as Villa's concerted efforts at self-promotion, provide a frame through which to understand

³³ See, for example, editorials in *Deming Headlight*, 15 March 1912, 5 July 1912, 9 August 1912, and 3 January 1913.

³⁴ John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Nieto-Phillips, "Spanish American Ethnic Identity and New Mexico's Statehood Struggle," in *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 128-131; and Charles H. Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³⁵ *Deming Headlight*, 9 August 1912.

the general's reception in Deming as he passed through the town on the Southern Pacific Railroad in August 1914. The revolutionary was accompanied by General Alvaro Obregón, a thirty-five member bodyguard, and "an escort of twelve non-commissioned officers of the 6th U.S. Infantry." The generals had been granted special federal and state permission, in a telephone communication with New Mexico governor William C. McDonald, to cross through U.S. territory as they traveled to meet with Sonoran Governor José María Maytorena.³⁶ When the group stopped in Deming to eat breakfast on 27 August 1914 and news of Villa's presence circulated, "half the town turned out to see him." He addressed the group in Spanish from his private rail car assuring them that the violence in Mexico would soon come to an end. The general also encouraged any Mexicans in the area to return to their home country where they would be given land upon which they could raise their families in peace. Considering himself a "man of the people," Villa maintained that he wanted "to see the Mexican people united in one solid nation, living in peace and happiness." He also promised to forgive any who had formerly been his enemies, inviting them to return to Mexico where he would treat them as brothers.³⁷

³⁶ Maytorena, a supporter of *villismo* (or Pancho Villa's revolutionary movement), had been at odds with Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles, supporters of the larger Constitutionalist movement under the command of First Chief Venustiano Carranza. The conflict between Maytorena and Obregón was for control of the state of Sonora. By the summer of 1914, Villa had openly broken ties with Carranza. Villa and Obregón's attempt to hold a conference with Maytorena and Calles was intended to smooth out the difficulties that plagued the various figures that were purportedly fighting for the same cause. In the end, the meeting resulted in an open feud between Villa and Obregón themselves. See, Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 361-364.

³⁷ Quotes from *Deming Headlight*, 28 August 1914, ran a brief report of Villa's visit. The competing *Deming Graphic*, 28 August 1914, ran a much more extensive account of the event. That the *Graphic* was a bilingual paper, whereas the *Headlight* was not, perhaps helps to explain the extended account of the former. Additionally, Seaman Guiney, a Deming resident that drove Villa from the rail depot to Camp Cody, the local National Guard installation, recalled Villa's trip through Deming in a 1980 interview with Virginia Measday. See, Virginia Measday and George Pete Measday, *History of Luna County, Supplement*

Villa's speech reflected the key elements of the image of himself that he sought to create: he was an able general, but one that only wished to translate military force into peace in Mexico for all of its inhabitants. The extent to which he actually held these attitudes has been debated by historians.³⁸ The local reaction in Deming indicates that Villa's self-promotion had been a great success. As reported in the *Deming Graphic*, no ceremony had been planned to commemorate the generals' stop in the town, but "many of the citizens of Deming were received in audience, and General Villa twice addressed the expatriate Mexicans who clustered about the station." The fact that the townspeople turned out in great numbers to meet him suggests that they viewed him as someone who honestly sought to resolve the violent conflict that so often threatened border settlements. In response to Villa's speech, the expatriates stood in silence as "the Americans alone raised their voices in 'vivas' and responded to his words with handclapping," reactions that suggest that the Americans were far more convinced by Villa's claims than the audience to whom such statements had been directed.³⁹

Interestingly, the *Headlight* failed to report on the Deming residents' reactions to Villa at the time, but in the aftermath of the Columbus raid in 1916 the paper's editor sarcastically commented, "What has become of all the photographs of our prominent citizens falling over themselves to shake hands with Villa when he visited Deming two

One (Deming, N. Mex.: Luna County Historical Society, 1982), 56-57. All accounts emphasized the contrast between Villa's "civilian dress" and Obregón's formal military attire.

³⁸ For an overview of the debate, see Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol 2, 120-125, 186; and Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 409-423. Knight doubts the extent to which Villa was actually a dedicated social reformer; Katz asserts Villa's intentions in regard to social and economic reform, while highlighting their limitations.

³⁹ *Deming Graphic*, 28 August 1914.

years ago?”⁴⁰ The editor’s tone indicates that Villa, who immediately became redefined as a horrific villain in southern New Mexico following the raid, had been treated as a hero in Deming only two years earlier. General Obregón was not a subject of the town’s intense interest in the way that Villa was. Obregón’s presence is only mentioned in passing as part of Villa’s entourage, yet Obregón was arguably the most successful general involved in the revolution. This discrepancy is a direct result of Villa’s campaign to magnify his image on both sides of the border. He sought recognition as *the* protector of American lives in Mexico and as *the* general who would bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In return he hoped to gain the support of the U.S. government. Obregón, on the other hand, did not attempt to build a larger-than-life image for himself.⁴¹ The fact that Villa addressed the citizens of Deming while Obregón apparently did not underscores this vital difference between the two men.

Villa maintained a similar pattern of public visibility and speechmaking throughout the entire course of the journey along the Southern Pacific that August. The day prior to the Deming stop, Villa and Obregón posed at Fort Bliss in El Paso with General John J. Pershing. Villa repeated his Deming performance at Benson, Arizona, a few days later. According to former Mormon colonist Bertha Whetten Shupe, who was about twelve years old at the time, her entire family turned out at the local station through which Villa’s train was to pass. The general stopped and addressed the massive throng that had gathered to see him. Shupe did not understand his speech because she did not

⁴⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 24 March 1916.

⁴¹ For Obregón and his role as the general that essentially won the revolution, see Linda B. Hall, *Alvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981). Anderson, *Villa’s Revolution by Headlines*, Chapter 3; and Clendenen, *The United States and Pancho Villa*, 44, 47.

she speak Spanish, but she was impressed by his appearance. He struck her as handsome, wearing a grey suit, shiny brown “leggens” on his boots, and a grey Stetson hat. As Villa spoke the crowd, including her father and grandfather, broke into chants of “¡Viva Villa!”⁴² Although the exact details of Shupe’s account may have been blurred by memory and the passage of time, the positive attitude of the Arizonans seems to jibe with the reaction of the Deming residents.

Beginning in the summer of 1915, however, Pancho Villa’s star began to fade. Following his decisive break with Carranza and Obregón’s Constitutionalist movement at the Convention of Aguascalientes in October 1914 and a triumphal entry into Mexico City alongside southern revolutionary General Emiliano Zapata the following December, Villa experienced a string of humiliating defeats at the hands of his former ally turned nemesis, Alvaro Obregón.⁴³ The alliance between the two men devolved into a deeply personal feud shortly after the pair’s meeting in Sonora with Governor Maytorena. Upon returning to Chihuahua, Villa ordered Obregón’s execution. Although cooler heads prevailed when Villa’s advisors convinced him to rescind the order, the damage had been done. From that point forward, Villa and Obregón became more than simple rivals, but competitors in a deeply violent blood feud. At Celaya, Obregón shattered the División del Norte’s reputation of invincibility when he routed the villistas by employing modern warfare techniques, such as the use of barbed wire, trenches, and machine guns.⁴⁴

⁴² Bertha Whetten Shupe, Oral History Transcript, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, LDS Polygamy Oral History Project, interviewed by Jessie L. Embry, 9 January 1981, p. 7, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁴³ For the Convention of Aguascalientes, see Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, Chapter 6.

⁴⁴ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 487-496; and Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 321-326.

By that time, Villa's prowess relied almost exclusively on the fear instilled in his enemies through his invincibility myth. Indeed, he assumed that if he were ever to retreat rather than face an enemy, his reputation would be shattered. The general was overconfident to the extent that he seems to have believed he could pursue a battle on multiple fronts (he had sent troops to Jalisco and Tampico) despite a severe lack of supplies and ammunition. In fact, his go-to strategy, even in the face of defeat, was to charge the enemy at the head of his famed cavalry. Obregón realized that Villa was the type of leader who operated on "stubborn pride" more than planning and tactics. In fact, his entire strategy banked on this understanding of Villa. As it turned out, Obregón had perfectly anticipated Villa's willingness to charge into a battlefield without sufficient reconnaissance or munitions, handing the Centaur of the North his first defeat at Celaya on 13 April 1915. A string of subsequent defeats followed. Over the course of a year, Villa fell from a national revolutionary leader to a regional guerilla fighter, confined to his stronghold in the Sierra Madre of northwestern Chihuahua.⁴⁵

Villa's fall from national prominence and, most directly, Woodrow Wilson's decision to recognize the de facto presidency of Carranza in October 1915 definitively ended Villa's attempts to cultivate his image as the protector of American interests and Mexico's man of peace. Given Wilson's earlier overtures toward Villa, Carranza's recognition came as a staggering blow. When he heard the rumors of Wilson's impending decision the day before it was announced publically on 9 October 1915, Villa threatened that such a decision would "not bring order to Mexico. It will bring revolution after

⁴⁵ Hall, *Alvaro Obregón*, Chapter 8; and Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 488-495.

revolution, the war of the last four years will be like child's play."⁴⁶ Despite the various defeats, however, Villa hoped to reverse his fortunes and fortify the Division del Norte through a campaign into Sonora. The Chihuahua revolutionary considered such action a necessary step toward the renewal of his myth of invulnerability, and exactly what he would need to acquire new supplies and supporters. When he had last visited the northwestern state, it had been under the control of his ally Governor Maytorena. Villa planned to join forces with Maytorena's supporters to take the border town of Agua Prieta and defeat the Carrancista forces under General Calles. Among the flaws in his plan, Villa's relationship with Maytorena had deteriorated over a heated disagreement on land reform and forced loans on wealthy Sonorans, both of which Maytorena opposed. In mid-September Maytorena fled to the United States rather than face Villa in Sonora. Villa did not know that his erstwhile ally had gone into self-imposed exile and that General Plutarco Elías Calles, ally of Obregón and Carranza, had fortified the Carrancista stronghold at Agua Prieta.⁴⁷

On 20 September 1915, before setting out across the inhospitable Sierra Madres toward Sonora and prior to Wilson's recognition of Carranza, Villa quartered his men at Colonia Dublán. In this instance, Villa fell back on the relationships that he had cultivated in previous years. Bishop Anson B. Call allowed the villistas to set up camp in town near the tithing house, and the revolutionaries stayed in town for a period of about twenty-two days. Although dejected by their defeats, their arrival in Dublán was striking.

⁴⁶ *El Paso Morning Times*, 8 October 1915, quoted in Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 524; and Hall and Coerver, *Revolution and the Border*, 58-59.

⁴⁷ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 524-525; and Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Border* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 171.

By one account, the villistas arrived with “nineteen trainloads of troops and equipment. . . . In the cars were loaded horses, cannons, and ammunition, provisions, etc. Improvised hammocks, lashed to the cars contained camp followers, the wives, children, dogs, hogs, monkeys, parrots, songbirds, and all kinds of domestic pets. There were in all more than ten thousand persons and about eight thousand horses.”⁴⁸ Villa once again guaranteed that none of his men stole the goods that they needed from the Dublán colonists, but the scrip that they used as payment was worthless given the sharp decline in Villa’s fortunes.⁴⁹

The villistas’ presence was certainly a major imposition on the colonists on several fronts, but one that they endured. According to Ara O. Call, Bishop Call’s son, one morning one of the “Mexican ladies” connected to the villista contingent built a cooking fire too close to an ammunition stockpile, resulting in a great explosion that shook the entire town. Many of the colonists were awakened by the blast that shattered most of the windows in the community. Call remembered that several Mexicans were killed or wounded in the blast, but none of the colonists were harmed. He and a half-brother and sister, Anson, Jr., and Lorna, all recalled that the children in town collected and played with discarded shells and cartridges that the villistas left behind when they set out for Sonora across Púlpito Pass in late October. As Ara Call understood the situation, Villa’s intent was to seal off the pass, an action that would have required advancing

⁴⁸ Lucy Brown Archer, “Mexican Revolution and the Mormon Colonies,” compilation of family history information contributed by descendants of colonist Orson Pratt Brown, <http://www.orsonprattbrown.com/MexRev/revolution-revolt.html>, accessed 24 March 2013. Although the accuracy of this inventory is difficult to deduce, based on the other oral history sources also cited here it seems that the Mormons were overwhelmed by the size of Villa’s contingent and supplies.

⁴⁹ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: vol. 2*, 331.

Carrancista forces to travel as far south as Guadalajara to find a passable route to Sonora.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for Villa, such action was taken far too late.

As Villa passed through the former Mormon settlement of Colonia Morelos in Sonora on 26 October, his attitude toward the Mormons had seemingly changed dramatically. Between his time at Colonia Dublán and his entry into Sonora, the Wilson administration had offered formal recognition to Carranza and imposed a new embargo on arms and ammunition. To Villa, both developments constituted a major betrayal on the part of the U.S. administration.⁵¹ Before a crowd of local Mexican *vecinos* of the Mormon colony that had been abandoned by its founders during the 1912 Exodus, Villa decried the “tyranny of the North American Mormons, who exploit, vilify, and assassinate the Mexicans in this region.” He offered to support the locals in their efforts to forcibly prevent Mormon settlement in the area. About sixty of the local inhabitants signed the proclamation, indicating their support of Villa’s assessment of the Mormons as well as his call to action against them. His speech and proclamation indicated a major about face in his attitude toward Americans in general, and Mormons specifically.⁵² Yet,

⁵⁰ Ara O. Call Oral History Interview, 3; Anson B. Call Jr. Oral History Transcript, 17 July 1976, pp. 6-7, and Lorna Call Alder, Oral History Transcript, 28 June 1976, p. 4, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, LDS Polygamy Oral History Project, TPSC-BYU.

⁵¹ Although Villa was aware of Carranza’s recognition by that point, most of his men were not. Keeping the information from them was part of Villa’s attempt to prevent further desertions from his ranks. See, Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 333-334; and Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 524-526.

⁵² Proclamation made at Colonia Morelos, Sonora, 26 October 1915, Pancho Villa Documents Collection (bound volume), Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter FACHL]; and Charles H. Harris, III, and Louis R. Sadler, “Pancho Villa and the Columbus Raid: The Missing Documents” *New Mexico Historical Review* 50, no. 4 (October 1975): 335-346. At the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C., Harris and Sadler located the set of documents that included Villa’s Colonia Morelos proclamation, a letter to Emiliano Zapata, and other correspondence between the general and his supporters. The documents had been found on the body of a villista killed during the Columbus raid in March 1916, but were then lost to researchers until they were discovered by Harris and Sadler. Copies of the document set were distributed to several archives in New Mexico and Chihuahua, including the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library. For more on the impact that the missing

as will be addressed in more detail below, Villa subsequently renewed friendly (albeit tense) relations with Mormon colonists in northwestern Chihuahua despite his proclamation at Colonia Morelos. Judging from his later actions, Villa's threatening words seem have been the product of his notoriously explosive temper rather than an abiding commitment to force the Mormons from Mexico. Significantly, he issued his inflammatory proclamation from a colony vacant of Mormon settlers.

Villa's anti-American tirade was fueled by his loss to General Calles' forces at Agua Prieta on 1 November 1915. Like Obregón, Calles utilized modern war techniques that had been recently pioneered in Europe. Although Villa planned on a short engagement against the small border garrison, he did not realize that the Wilson administration had allowed Carrancista troops to travel along the Southern Pacific from El Paso to Douglas, Arizona, and then across the border to Agua Prieta. When Villa attempted one of his famous pre-dawn attacks, his forces were blindsided by barbed wire, trenches, machine-gun fire, illuminating floodlights, and an enemy force thousands of men larger than they had anticipated. In Villa's mind, Wilson's betrayals compounded; he had recognized Carranza, reinforced Calles' forces, and initiated a new embargo. Following the rout, villistas deserted in droves. Hundreds of them made their way back to Colonia Dublán where they were received by the colonists. Many of the villistas reportedly attended Mormon religious services, held in Spanish for their benefit, during their stay in the colony. Bishop Joseph C. Bentley, leader of the Mormon settlers at Colonia Juárez, reported that "good seed has been sown that will bring forth good fruit in

documents had on the historiography of the Columbus Raid, see E. Bruce White, "The Muddied Waters of Columbus, New Mexico" *The Americas* 32, no. 1 (July 1975): 72-98.

time to come.”⁵³ This group of disheartened and defeated villistas did not take their general’s 26 October proclamation to heart. By that point, Villa’s movement had lost coherence.

Villa, on the other hand, remained in Sonora for a time before returning to Chihuahua. On 9 November, from Naco, he issued the longest, most substantive revolutionary manifesto of his career. In its pages, he asserted his newfound anti-American attitude, and he levied the charge that Carranza had essentially sold out Mexico’s best interests in order to gain U.S. recognition. Villa pointedly claimed that the price of the Carrancistas’ passage on the Southern Pacific to Agua Prieta had been “the sale of our country by the traitor Carranza.” Despite rumors that Villa would seek asylum in the United States, villista aggression against Americans was reiterated in a January 1916 letter from Villa to General Zapata, as well as the massacre of a group of American mining engineers at Santa Ysabel, Chihuahua, on 10 January. Almost immediately, members of the U.S. Congress placed pressure on Woodrow Wilson to intervene in Mexico, something that Wilson had taken great lengths to avoid. As historians Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver have shown, Wilson resisted direct intervention but he took his appeal for improved U.S. military preparedness to the American public at that time. Wilson worked to balance his desire to lead peace efforts in Europe (World War I was raging there), maintain distance from the Mexican conflict, and strengthen the U.S. armed forces in a way that would allow him to achieve the other two. That same month, Villa initiated a plan to attack a Texas settlement in the vicinity of the Ojinaga, Chihuahua-

⁵³ Joseph C. Bentley, “Starving Constitutionalist Soldiers under the Command of Pancho Villa arrived in Colonia Dublan,” folder 4, box 1, Nelle Spilsbury Hatch Research Papers, TPSC-BYU; Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 526; and Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 334.

Presidio, Texas, border crossing. That plan was abandoned, however, when he realized that the proposal to lead a campaign directly against a U.S. town increased desertions among even some of his trusted officers. Only two months later, Villa presented Wilson with a situation that caused him to abandon his resistance to directly intervene in Mexico in order to preserve the possibility of leading the peace process in Europe.⁵⁴

Villa's trip to Colonia Dublán, the occupation of Palomas by Carrancista forces, and Villa's increased violence following Agua Prieta only served to intensify fears and tensions along the U.S.-Mexico border in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Despite the noted security provided by the 13th Cavalry at Camp Furlong in Columbus, an atmosphere of rumors and uncertainty shattered the calm of the local place myth. Underlying racial suspicions intensified. Even prior to Villa's decline, residents of nearby Rodeo, New Mexico, petitioned New Mexico Governor William C. McDonald for either troops or arms to guarantee Rodeo's protection from Mexican revolutionary violence. The small community was concerned not only that revolutionaries might cross the border to wreak havoc on their town, but also feared "the Mexicans at and around the Mining Camps in Arizona north west [sic] of us that might want to return to Mexico and would probably take this route on account of it being rough and unsettled, and that they would rob and murder on their way, not only for revenge but also to get outfits together."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 527-531, 557, 560-561; and Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, "Woodrow Wilson, Public Opinion, and the Punitive Expedition: A Re-Assessment" *New Mexico Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1997), 182-186.

⁵⁵ Letter from A.I. Prattier to Governor William C. McDonald, April 24, 1914, box 30, folder 408, Governor William C. McDonald Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico [hereafter NMSRCA].

By 1915 and 1916 constant rumors of attacks on border towns further advanced the environment of fear, just as Villa was making plans to carry out such an assault. Most of the threats never materialized, so new rumors were routinely dismissed by U.S. military commanders in the region. Such was the case just prior to the 9 March 1916 raid on Columbus. The day prior to the attack *La Prensa*, of San Antonio, Texas, reported that Gabriel Gavira, the constitutionalist commander of Ciudad Juárez, had warned General Pershing that Villa planned to invade the United States at or near Columbus, New Mexico. Colonel Herbert Slocum who commanded the 13th Cavalry, stationed at Columbus when the raid occurred, had also reportedly been warned of the impending attack. Juan Favela, an agent of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company mentioned above, alerted Slocum that three of the company foremen, Arthur McKenney, Bill Corbett, and James O'Neil, had been imprisoned by Villa's men south of Palomas. The three were subsequently killed. Under current legal conventions between the United States and Mexico, Slocum was unable to send forces across the border to investigate the claims. Even with such limitations in mind, he dismissed Favela's warning out of hand. He told the local rancher that he had sent men to the Bailey Ranch to the east and the Gibson Ranch to the west, further stating that if Villa was in fact nearby, "he will come by one or the other. A reception will be waiting for him."⁵⁶ Both Slocum in Columbus and Pershing in El Paso, therefore, disregarded the reports as pure speculation. They had heard similar

⁵⁶ Quote from an interview with Juan Favela, in Jessie Peterson and Thelma Cox Knowles, eds., *Pancho Villa: Intimate Recollections by People Who Knew Him* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 216; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, Chapter 7; and Frank Tompkins, *Chasing Villa: The Story Behind the Story of Pershing's Expedition into Mexico* (1934, repr., Silver City, N.Mex: High-Lonesome Books, 1996), 42-47. "Gavira Notificó Al Gral. Pershing Que Villa Se Acerca A Columbus," *La Prensa*, 8 March 1916, located in box 16, folder 4, Albert B. Fall Family Papers, 1905-1941, RGHC; Richard R. Dean, "Pancho Villa Raids Columbus," unpublished manuscript, Dean Archive; and "Villa Kills American Cowboys On Way To Columbus Raid: McKinney, Corbett and O'Neil Slain," *The Southwesterner*, December 1961.

unfounded rumors so frequently that they took every such piece of intelligence with a grain of salt.

Unfortunately for the 13th 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 and toward the sleeping New Mexico town.⁵⁷ 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. Colonel Candelario Cervantes led the advance guard and Colonel Nicolás Hernández, General Pablo López, General Juan Pedrosa, and General Francisco Beltrán each 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 Sam Ravel who was away in El Paso for minor nasal surgery at the time.⁵⁸

Years later, Favela recounted his shock that Colonel Slocum had disregarded his warnings. At the time, he reasoned with himself that Slocum must have had intelligence

⁵⁷ 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, no. 1 (February 1970), 77, provides the most accurate count at 485. That number jibes 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.

⁵⁸ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 560-566; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, Chapter 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, Zimmerman. 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).

that was withheld from the local residents since he seemed so sure that attack was not imminent. However, he recalled, “Later we learned that Colonel Slocum, after sending most of his men out of town [to their posts at the Bailey and Gibson Ranches], left with almost all the officers and their families. I’ll always think that Colonel Slocum believed me all right, and that he took care of his own skin and that of his family.”⁵⁹ Even line rider and cattle inspector Daniel J. “Buck” Chadborn remarked, “I’m one of those who could never figure out why he [Slocum] didn’t pay more attention to Juan Favela and his warnings. Favela was well known in the community as an honest man and good citizen.”⁶⁰ Indeed, both Chadborn and Favela risked their own lives to aid others as the battle raged in Columbus between villistas, the 13th Cavalry, and locals.

Although Senator Albert B. Fall sharply criticized Slocum along similar lines, Colonel Frank Tompkins stood behind the commanding officer of the 13th Cavalry. According to Tompkins, after every major disaster the public targets a scapegoat; Colonel Slocum was the “victim chosen in this case to bear not the sins of the people but the sins of the Mexican policy of the United States.” Tompkins clearly believed that the U.S. government should have taken a harder line to prevent violence along the border. Indeed, he led troops into Chihuahua, with the express permission of Colonel Slocum, following on the heels of retreating villistas on the day of the raid. By Tompkins’ account, Slocum’s long and distinguished military record spoke for itself, and as a member of the 13th Cavalry, Tompkins argued that Slocum reacted appropriately given the information at hand and the context of rumored raids and violence. In the end, Generals Pershing,

⁵⁹ Peterson and Knowles, *Pancho Villa*, 216.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 208.

Frederick Funston, Tasker H. Bliss, and Hugh L. Scott agreed with Tompkins and Slocum was vindicated officially.⁶¹

By the end of March, Columbus residents had shown their support for the 13th Cavalry, refuting charges that the unit had been unprepared for the raid. Such accusations were reproduced in the U.S. press throughout the entire month. On 19 March, for example, a letter written by Marcus M. Marshall, son of the president of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, was published in the *New York Times*. He levied the charge that the “blame for the Columbus affair should rest on the United States Army” because its officers had been warned of the impending raid. Due to Slocum’s failure to act on the information he received, by Marshall’s account “Villa found the border unguarded.”⁶² In his memoir, Tompkins sharply refuted such claims. In the *Columbus Courier*, Editor Parks criticized Slocum but praised the efforts of the soldiers of the 13th Cavalry who were “as much surprised as the citizens” by the raid. Parks praised the daring of Lieutenant Castleman who rallied machine gunners to repulse the villista attack.⁶³ Despite Tompkins’ defense of Slocum’s actions, popular sentiment ran against him in Columbus and the United States more generally immediately following the attack. At the same time, a clear distinction was drawn between Slocum’s failure to act preemptively and the ability of his men to salvage the situation.

The ensuing conflict lasted for a total of about six hours; although the fighting in the town itself concluded at about 6:15 a.m., Colonel Frank Tompkins and other members

⁶¹ Tompkins, *Chasing Villa*, 60-64.

⁶² *New York Times*, 19 March 1916.

⁶³ Tompkins, *Chasing Villa*, 60-61; and *Columbus Courier*, 31 March 1916.

of the 13th Cavalry pursued the villistas on their retreat into Chihuahua for almost four additional hours. Despite Villa's own hesitation just prior to cutting through the international fence, his senior advisors persuaded him to go on with the raid. They argued that to turn back would be a signal of weakness to his men, most of whom had been forcibly impressed into service. In this category were many former members of the División del Norte that had returned to their homes in the Chihuahua community of Namiquipa following the general's spectacular downward spiral. Additionally, the officers convinced Villa that their success was guaranteed because of the miniscule size of the Columbus garrison.⁶⁴

Once again, however, Villa and his men were thwarted by their overconfidence. They committed a series of tactical blunders that allowed the sleeping members of the 13th Cavalry to organize and repel their attack. Such mistakes hinged on faulty reconnaissance, including 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, which subsequently spread to the Commercial Hotel, the advantage of the pre-dawn darkness evaporated in the firelight. In accordance with their need for supplies, including funds, arms, ammunition, clothing, and food, the villistas were focused on looting rather than on military strategy or even murder, although that charge was subsequently levied against them. Despite Villa's string of anti-American proclamations following Agua Prieta, the actions taken by his men during the raid show that they were not simply after vengeance and American lives. When the dust settled, eighteen Americans (eight soldiers

⁶⁴ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 563; Tomkins, *Chasing Villa*, 55-59; and Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera, *Porque Atacó Villa a Columbus (Intriga Internacional)* (México, D.F.: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1971).

and ten civilians) had been killed compared to about eighty or ninety villistas. Many others on both sides were wounded, and several villistas were taken prisoner.⁶⁵

Tactically, the Columbus raid was another defeat for Villa; he lost nearly one-fifth of his entire force and his men came away with very little in terms of supplies and ammunition. Symbolically, however, the raid was a great success. 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 create a situation in which American intervention in Mexico became 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 of the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, most Mexican people 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 to his side against the *norteamericanos* when General Pershing was sent 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.⁶⁶

As historian E. Bruce White argued in 1975, the historiography of the Columbus raid has remained clouded by a multiplicity of perspectives and a dearth of direct evidence about Villa's motives. Such questions remain, even with the more recent publication of Friedrich Katz's monumental *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* in 1998.

⁶⁵ White, "Muddied Waters," 77-80; Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 566.

⁶⁶ For Villa's resurgence due to the raid, see Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, Chapter 15.

A number of theories have been articulated to explain the Villa's possible reasoning in launching the attack on Columbus. Some, such as historian Alan Knight, argue that by early 1916 Villa had simply gone mad. His actions were erratic, clouded by rage and a drive for vengeance without a larger goal.⁶⁷ Others, such as the Mormon colonists, point to the idea that Villa, perhaps justifiably, sought revenge against the United States for Wilson's recognition of Carranza and support of his men at Agua Prieta. Folklorist Haldeen Braddy argued that Villa simply raided Columbus to replenish his army's arms, ammunition, and other supplies. Because Villa's character was steeped in machismo and bravado, he didn't think twice about crossing the international border for such a short-term objective.⁶⁸ Namiquipan historian Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera alternatively argued that Villa chose to raid Columbus to settle a personal score with merchant Sam Ravel due to his failure to deliver ammunition that had previously been purchased.⁶⁹

Finally, the most comprehensive and distinguished Villa scholar of recent years, Friedrich Katz, has argued persuasively that Villa was convinced that Carranza had made a pact with the Wilson administration that would have converted Mexico into a U.S. protectorate. Although no such agreement ever existed, Villa was fully convinced that it did—reason enough for him to act to prevent such an outcome. Katz's position is convincing because it accounts for elements of all of the others (even Villa's moments of intense rage that made him appear temporarily insane at times). He shows Villa to have

⁶⁷ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 345-348.

⁶⁸ Haldeen Braddy, *Cock of the Walk: Qui-qui-ri-quí, The Legend of Pancho Villa* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1955).

⁶⁹ Another take on this theory is that Ravel had purposely sabotaged the ammunition that he sold to the villistas, causing it to misfire and cause injury. See Calzadiaz Barrera, *Porque Atacó Villa a Columbus*, 106-112.

been a brutal and capricious person, as well as someone who exhibited fierce loyalty to those that he felt had earned it. Those to whom he maintained the most intense loyalty were the martyred Francisco Madero, the Mormon colonists, and his trusted advisor, General Felipe Angeles. With a clear understanding of these elements of Villa's complex character, as well as his complex relations with inhabitants of the Lower Mimbres Valley, his raid on Columbus no longer appears random or crazy. He acted to protect Mexican sovereignty and regain some of his lost status as a military leader in a desperate attack on a small American town with which he and his supporters had prior experience.⁷⁰

Indeed, Villa's raid did provoke the ire of the United States, from the Wilson administration all the way down to the citizenry. When the Pershing Punitive Expedition entered Chihuahua in mid-March 1916, many former supporters once again rallied to Villa's side. Venustiano Carranza was confronted with an "insoluble dilemma"; to allow U.S. forces into Mexico unconditionally would have given strength to Villa's accusations and weakened Carranza's position as a Mexican nationalist, but to refuse any type of U.S. intervention outright would have also placed him at odds with his supporters in the Wilson administration. Villa's movement resurged from mid-1916 through early 1918 as he "became a symbol of national resistance in Chihuahua" as a direct result of the raid.⁷¹

As I have outlined here, most scholarly treatments of Villa's Columbus raid focus on the General's possible motives, the impact of the raid on his revolutionary movement, and the Pershing Expedition. Yet, by directing the scope of analysis away from the raid's

⁷⁰ Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico" *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 1978): 101-130; and Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 551-553.

⁷¹ Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," 128.

impact on Villa and his movement back to the landscapes of violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley itself, new insights on Villa, the development of the New Mexico-Chihuahua border, the legacy of the Mexican Revolution emerge. As Eileen Welsome has adeptly illustrated in *The General and the Jaguar*, the raid's human toll in Columbus was immense. Not only was the town's business district decimated by fire and machine gun damage, the lives of Columbus residents were devastated as well.⁷²

By most accounts, and as indicated by the present-day physical landscape, the Commercial Hotel was the epicenter of the raid's damage to the built and human landscapes of Columbus.⁷³ As the operators of the Commercial Hotel, the Ritchie family was perhaps the Columbus family most directly impacted by the raid. By March 1916, William and Laura Ritchie had lived in Columbus for about five years with their three daughters, Edna, Blanche, and Myrtle. The family arrived as homesteaders and William built the Commercial Hotel during a brief economic boom. After the sale of the hotel to

⁷² See, Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, especially Chapters 7-10.

⁷³ 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. Those who engage the tour 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. 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. Description based on author's visits to Columbus, December 2010 and August 2012. Richard R. Dean, *The Columbus Story* (Deming, N.Mex.: J & J Printing, Inc, 2006), is a pamphlet that visitors can use as a guide for the walking tour.

Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, revised ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 5-6, discusses the significance of leaving sites of violence in a state of ruin as opposed to communities that decide to rebuild and develop such sites. As he puts it, "What I mean is that the evidence of violence left behind often pressures people, almost involuntarily, to begin debate over meaning. The sites, stained by the blood of violence and covered by the ashes of tragedy, force people to face squarely the meaning of an event. The barbed wire and brick crematoria of the concentration camps cannot be ignored; they demand interpretation" (p. 5). The way in which the Columbus site has been preserved and remembered indicates that many locals, certainly those with economic and political power, desire to maintain the open wound—the memory of the violence perpetrated against the town on 9 March 1916.

Sam Ravel in 1914, the Ritchies continued to run its day-to-day affairs. Ravel took up residence in Room 13. On the night of 8 March, the family participated in a Methodist convention that had brought many visitors to town and filled the hotel with guests. Early on the morning of the 9th, Laura Ritchie was the first to realize that the hotel was under attack when she heard the sound of gunshots, breaking glass, and shouting in Spanish. Blanche was also awakened by the tumult that only increased when a group of villistas broke down the front door, which had been locked by her father. As the men entered the building, they began to rob the guests and excitedly asked for the whereabouts of Sam Ravel. William Ritchie tried to pacify the group, telling them that Ravel was not in town. One of the regular guests, Steven Burchfield, also worked to keep violence to a minimum by writing out checks to each of the assailants.⁷⁴

Later in her life, Blanche Ritchie recalled that the villistas were “all armed to the teeth . . . with bullets on ‘em like you’ve seen pictures of, and very dirty and not regular soldiers or anything, just kinda crude.”⁷⁵ The men robbed the guests, stealing Laura Ritchie’s jewelry, William Ritchie’s wristwatch, and all the cash they could find on the guests. When they were convinced that Ravel was not present, they ordered all of the male guests, including William Ritchie, to go out the front door and into the street. As each man exited, Blanche, Laura, and the other guests heard gunfire. William was the last to go, protesting that “I cannot go and leave the women and children to protect

⁷⁴ Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1827; Interview with Blanche Dorsey, Re :Raid on Columbus, 2 May 1981, Interviewed by Martinell Ash, Pancho Villa Raid—Oral Histories, Folder 1, Box 5870, New Mexico Adjutant General Records, NMSRCA; and Affidavit of Myrtle Ritchie English, 17 June 1916, and Correspondence of Laura Ritchie to Albert B. Fall, 4 April 1916 and 9 February 1919, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Zimmerman.

⁷⁵ Interview with Blanche Dorsey, 2-3.

themselves.” Before Senator Albert B. Fall’s Mexican Affairs Subcommittee in the Senate, Laura recalled that as he was forced down the stairs her girls pleaded, “don’t go, daddy! Don’t go!,” to which he responded, “I’ll be back in a minute.” As he exited, gunfire roared in the street below. Not long after the men were killed in front of the hotel, Juan Favela entered through the back and helped the women and children escape before fire engulfed the structure. As they fled, Blanche noticed the villistas “pouring oil on the Mormon store and settin’ it afire and knocking items off the counter.” Overall, Blanche said that she “felt very indignant that it [the raid] had happened to me, that I had to spend all my life without a father.”⁷⁶

In an unfortunate twist of fate, Ernest V. Romney, the former Colonia Díaz Bishop, lost his mercantile business in the raid. The Lemmon and Romney Store was the Mormon establishment, located across a narrow alley from the Commercial Hotel, mentioned by Blanche Ritchie. Columbus had been a site of refuge and safe haven for his and other Mormon families after their 1912 Exodus to escape the threats of General Salazar’s Colorados. During the Orozco rebellion, Romney had vocally complained that his stores in Colonias Díaz and Dublán had been the constant target of looting and damage. Then, almost four years later, his livelihood was once again devastated by Mexican revolutionary forces. As reported by *Columbus Courier* editor G. E. Parks shortly after the raid, Romney and Lemmon’s establishment was the first to be looted. “After everything of value that they could take was carried out,” the villistas then applied oil and set fire to the structure. For Romney, the Villa raid represented a breaking point;

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Testimony of Mrs. Laura Ritchie, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 1601-1602; and Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1882.

shortly thereafter he sold his remaining stake in the mercantile business to his partner, Peter K. Lemmon, a fellow colonist that had also taken refuge in Columbus, and relocated his family away from the borderlands.⁷⁷

The stories of Archibald D. Frost and Susan Parks became the stuff of local legend in Luna County and beyond following the raid.⁷⁸ Frost was forced to flee with his wife, Mary Alice, and their six-month-old son, Douglas, from his home behind the furniture store that he owned in town. He was alerted to the raid when the distinct sound of a Mexican bugle awakened him.⁷⁹ After surveying the situation from the porch at the front of the store, he decided to take Mary Alice and the baby and make a run for it in their new Dodge touring car. As he started across the porch, however, he was shot in the right shoulder and sent tumbling to the ground. He crawled through the store as bullets shattered the front windows, and when he reached the garage with his wife and son, he felt fortunate that the automobile started right up. With villistas firing on them, the Frosts exited the garage and drove down the dirt road toward Deming (the old grade that had been originally completed for the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad). In the

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 335, 359383-385; Affidavit of Peter K. Lemmon, 27 June 1916, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Zimmerman; *Deming Headlight*, 17 March 1916; and *Columbus Courier*, 31 March 1916. That issue of the *Courier* reported that the new partnership of Lemmon & Payne, “formerly Lemmon and Romney, have opened their new store in the old postoffice building and are now ready for business” (p. 1).

⁷⁸ Parks story was recounted in the *Tacoma (Washington) News Tribune*, 22 April 1981; *Albuquerque Tribune*, 28 June 1981 to commemorate her death. Her story was also told in contemporary papers: *El Paso Morning Times*, 13 March 1916; *Columbus Courier*, 1 September 1916; *Deming Headlight*, 1 September 1916.

⁷⁹ From his account, “it must have been a Mexican bugle, for its call was different from any bugle I had ever heard.” See, “The Story of Archibald Frost,” narrative to accompany exhibit at Pancho Villa State Park, Columbus, New Mexico.

deluge of bullets, Frost was struck in the left arm. As he drove toward Deming, he became faint due to the loss of blood and Mary Alice took the wheel.

As the family continued, Douglas was thrown into the air when the car hit a bump in the road; luckily, the baby landed in the front seat unharmed. When the Frosts finally reached Deming and arrived at the Ladies Hospital, they realized that Douglas' fortuitous bounce wasn't the only miracle they had experienced that morning. Upon closer examination, they realized that the car was riddled with bullet holes in the metal frame behind the driver's seat; the passenger's seat had also been pierced by a bullet. Doctors in Deming were unable to extract the bullet from Archibald's shoulder because it had landed too near his spine to be safely removed. They concluded that if the bullet had gone one inch further into his body, it could have severed his spine and killed him.⁸⁰

The Frosts' frantic flight confirmed the news of the raid that had already reached Deming and other points in the borderlands. The daring persistence of the nineteen-year-old telephone operator, Susan Parks, meant that calls for help went out from Columbus just as the raid began.⁸¹ The telephone office was located in a small house next to the Hoover Hotel and the Columbus State Bank, west of the main body of commotion that engulfed the Commercial Hotel. With her baby girl, Gwen, Susan hunkered down in their room and cautiously watched through the window. Outside, she saw a group of villistas conferring nearby, and she was convinced that a uniformed man who seemed to be

⁸⁰ Afadavit of Archibald D. Frost, 3 May 1916, Albert B. Fall Microfilm Collection, Zimmerman; 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.

⁸¹ Susan Parks was the wife of *Columbus Courier* editor G. E. Parks. See *Deming Headlight*, 17 March 1916.

leading the conversation was Villa himself. Despite the imminent danger to herself and her daughter, she went to the switchboard and lit a match to be able to see what she was doing. In response, a barrage of bullets burst through her window. Crouching near the floor, Parks hid the baby under the bed and then returned to the switchboard where she telephoned Fort Bliss and informed military personnel there of the raid.⁸²

Many other examples of heroism and bravery were recorded during the Fall Subcommittee hearings in the Senate, as well as in oral history accounts made in the 1980s. The cases of the Ritchies, Romneys, Frosts, and Parks best illustrate the types of destruction on Columbus during the raid itself. Additionally, the well-documented efforts of members of the 13th Cavalry, including Lieutenant John P. Lucas, James P. Castleman, and Colonel Frank Tompkins, tell the story of the villistas' inability to escape from town with any significant gains in terms of arms, munitions, or supplies. Colonel Tompkins led his detachment in pursuit of the villistas across the border and into Chihuahua—a move that was not sanctioned by international conventions between the two nations. His efforts led to the death and capture of at least twenty more members of Villa's band.⁸³

Although oral history accounts suggest that there was virtually no animosity held toward Mexican people in general following the raid, evidence exists that captured villistas and even Mexican-heritage residents of the Columbus area faced intense

⁸² Susan Parks Binder, Dean Archive; Testimony of W. S. Murphy, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 1583-1584; and Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 1914.

⁸³ Tompkins, *Chasing Villa*, 48-59; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 2123; and Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 383-387.

harassment in the days following.⁸⁴ Several were even summarily executed by local townsfolk that sought vengeance for Villa's attack. In Columbus and Deming alike, survivors were understandably outraged. Most made no distinction between the group of villistas that had assaulted Columbus, however, and the general populace of Mexican heritage people that inhabited the New Mexico-Chihuahua border area. Neither was there any discussion about or comprehension of the status of Villa's men, most of whom had been forcibly impressed into service in the villista army. In a letter to his sister, former *Columbus Courier* editor Perrow G. Mosely remarked, "Most of our local Mexicans have been made to leave and many of them have died very unnatural deaths since the battle. Our people are very bitter and the soldiers are letting them (our people) do pretty much as they please—all the Mexican Prisoners were taken out of camp and turned loose—our citizens were informed of what was to be done and shot them as they were turned loose."⁸⁵

Along with many of the locals, Colonel Herbert Slocum, the commander of the 13th Cavalry at Columbus who took a lot of criticism (notably from Senator Fall and a scathing editorial published in the *New York Times* on 19 March 1916) for his inability to prevent the raid, believed that local Mexican residents had supported the raid and perhaps aided the villistas. Several Mexican residents of Columbus were charged with espionage

⁸⁴ For that group of oral histories, see *Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Findings of the Committee on Foreign Relations*; Blanche Ritchie Interview; the accounts of Susan Moore and Mary Means Scott, in Oscar J. Martínez, ed., *Fragments of the Mexican Revolution: Personal Accounts from the Border* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 177-189; and William Clark and Jack Parsons, "Pancho Villa's Columbus Raid," (New York: Cinema Guild, 1983); DVD.

⁸⁵ "Columbus Editor Writes Letter Home," P. G. Mosely to Mrs. M. R. Huffman, 13 March 1916, Binder III, Dean Archive; Mosely turned the *Courier* over to G. E. Parks in September 1914; see *Columbus Courier*, 4 September 1914. After a battle with tuberculosis, Mosely died a few weeks after the Villa raid.

and arrested. In the case of Pedro Sanchez, a young man that lived in the Columbus area, the evidence against him consisted only of his possession of a pair of field glasses. A group of the alleged spies and coconspirators were rounded up; Slocum gave them until sundown on the evening following the raid to evacuate the town and “most have not been heard from since,” according to E.B. Stone, a military investigator that visited Columbus following the raid. Stone also reported that an elderly man named Hidado Vavel failed to leave town. The night following the raid, “he [Vadvel] was seen in the brush about ½ mile from camp here by the sentries who ordered him to halt; instead of halting, the old man kept running; the sentries shot him down and killed him.” By another account, “local old-timers” spoke in hushed voices, “saying that many of the wounded villistas were wounded after fighting. Some were said to be relieved of their suffering by having their heads slammed against wagon wheels.”⁸⁶

However they met their death, the bodies of slain villistas were gathered and burned within a day or two of the raid. In her recollections, Blanche Ritchie described the smell permeating the town for days afterward. And, as another indication of the desire for vengeance and the difficulties in coming to grips with the raid, Virgil Williamson of the 20th Infantry was photographed with three young women from town (Dorothy, Sallie, and Anita Eaton who lived in the “Dobie House back of where the Mexicans were burned”) and a few other members of his unit alongside the charred bodies. In one particularly macabre photo, Williamson posed holding the hand of one of the corpses with his left hand, causing the charred body to sit upright, while pointing a revolver at the corpse’s

⁸⁶ Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, loc. 2235-2256; *Columbus Courier*, 24 March 1916.

head with his right. The girls and other members of his unit looked on.⁸⁷ [Insert photo] Whatever the import of Pancho Villa's actions for his renewed role in the Mexican Revolution, the result in Columbus was a renewal of the dialectic of violence that had historically defined the Lower Mimbres Valley since the time of the Apache conflicts.

Villa's relationship to the Mormon Colonists in Colonia Dublán was also brought into question immediately following the raid. As early as 10 March 1916, the day after the Columbus attack, the Mormon colonists received word that Villa was headed in their direction. He was reportedly so incensed by his defeat that he was determined to murder all Americans in his path.⁸⁸ Bishop Anson B. Call met with Colonia Dublán's ecclesiastical leaders to discuss the best course of action for the colonists. Some wanted to attempt an escape to the United States, but others feared that in doing so, they would run right into Villa. Others wanted to seek the protection of Carrancista forces, but feared the loss of Mormon neutrality. After praying about the matter, Bishop Call told the group he felt inspired that they all should return to their homes, turn out the lights, and go to bed as if all was well. One anonymous colonist retorted, "Well, that would be a damn fool thing to do." Still, all of the colonists in Colonia Dublán followed the instruction of their Bishop. During the night of 13 March 1916 some reported feeling a sense of peace, while others felt great anxiety.⁸⁹ The following morning came without incident. An investigative party found tracks left by villista horses near the town. The tracks showed

⁸⁷ Photo album, Virgil R. Williamson—20th Infantry Co. C Binder, Dean Archive.

⁸⁸ "Suspense in Colonies," by James H. Marineau, folder 2, box 2, Nelle Spilsbury Hatch Research Papers, TPSC-BYU.

⁸⁹ Ara O. Call Oral History Interview, 5; Lorna Call Alder Oral History Transcript, 7; and "Suspense in the Colonies," TPSC-BYU.

that the men had circled Colonia Dublán and then passed it by. The colonists attributed their salvation to the hand of God.⁹⁰

Among the several descriptions left by the colonists to discern Villa's rationale that night, two major themes emerge: Villa was either discouraged from attacking by lights in the colony or by the voice of God. Most Mormon accounts were formulated from reports made by Mexican friends who had been impressed into Villa's army at that time. Various colonists remember the account given by Maximano Rubio, Roberto Salgado, and Ramón Quintana, Mexicans who had been impressed into Villa's army and who were with him the night he abandoned his attack on Colonia Dublán. The three men gave a signed statement of the night's events to colonists Alma Walser and Delbert Brown. According to their account, the villistas approached Colonia Dublán around three o'clock in the morning of 13 March. Villa reported seeing lights burning in the town, though none of his men, including the three informants, saw any lights. When his men told him there were no lights in the town, Villa became angry, reiterating that there were indeed lights on and fires burning. He declared there must be many soldiers in the town, and ordered his men to change direction.⁹¹ This was the version remembered by the majority of the colonists and it was popularized for Mormon children in *Saved by Faith and Fire*.⁹²

⁹⁰ Ara O. Call Oral History Interview, 5, TPSC-BYU; and W. Ernest Young, *The Diary of W. Ernest Young* (Provo, Ut.: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), 135.

⁹¹ "The Diary of W. Ernest Young," 137–138.

⁹² Frances Burk Perry, Claudia Heaston, ill., *Saved by Faith and Fire* (Provo, Utah: Perry Enterprises, 1984).

Another perspective on Villa's decision to bypass Colonia Dublán was given by Theodore Martineau. Villa's secretary, who Martineau does not name, reportedly told him it was "Villa's intention to slaughter the colonists as he had done in Columbus just a few days before." Villa was desperate to give the United States a reason to intervene in Mexico, believing such an intrusion would enable him to rally Mexicans to his cause against a new common enemy, the United States. But as the villista troops looked over Colonia Dublán the morning of 13 March, Villa went for a walk and had a change of heart. He had reportedly been impressed by "some unseen power" that "any such act upon his part would bring upon himself the vengeance of a just God."⁹³ In this account, the miracle was the direct influence of God on Villa.

While the various accounts of the salvation of Colonia Dublán relate different ideas of what Villa himself was thinking, all attribute his decision to abandon his attack on the colonists to divine intervention. This reasoning indicates the colonists' belief that God was on their side, and also that God was working miracles on the heart of Villa. The Mormon colonists knew of his brutal nature and his fits of anger and rage. Yet in his general dealings with colonists between 1911 and 1915 he had been gracious and amiable. He had repeatedly guarded them from atrocities committed by other rebel factions and his own troops. And he championed the revolution, which would allow the Mormons to expand their faith in Mexico.

Additionally, given Villa's attitude during his stay in Colonia Dublán just prior to his Sonora expedition, he arguably never changed his attitude toward the colonists. His

⁹³ Romney, *Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 240.

harsh declaration in Colonia Morelos just before his staggering defeat at Agua Prieta may have been an effort to rally locals to his cause, and it also provides evidence of Villa's notoriously explosive temper. Yet, as noted above, he did make his threats in a town that was abandoned by the Mormons—none of them were there at the time. The return of many of his men in November 1915 to Colonia Dublán and his failure to eradicate the colony in March 1916 further suggest his feelings toward the Mormons may never have changed. If there is any truth to accounts related to colonists by villistas, Villa may have been creating excuses not to attack the colony. His stated objective of killing the inhabitants of Colonia Dublán may have been solely for the benefit of his men. It is also possible that Villa did have a change of heart. His desire to force U.S. intervention through his anti-American actions has been substantiated. He may have remembered the colonists' consistent kindness in providing aid and decided at the last minute not to attack. Whatever actually occurred, the Mormons believed that Villa had been touched by the power of God.

Back in the Lower Mimbres Valley, however, racial tensions hit fever pitch. Six villista survivors of the attack were hanged in Deming in the wake of the raid. The men were tried as murderers, not as conscripted members of an army. Specifically, they were accused of the murder of Charles D. Miller, one of the eighteen Americans killed during the attack.⁹⁴ The trial was carried out hastily following the raid. Seven villistas, Eusebio

⁹⁴ Ten American civilians and eight servicemen were killed during the course of the raid. The civilians: W. A. Davidson, Harry Davis, James T. Dean, Dr. H. M. Hart, Bessie James, C. C. Miller, C. D. Miller, J. J. Moore, William T. Ritchie, and J. W. Walker. The servicemen: Pvt. Thomas F. Butler, Sgt. Mark A. Dobbs, Pvt. Fred A. Griffin, Pvt. Frank T. Kindval, Sgt. John G. Nievergelt, Cpl. Paul Simon, Pvt. Jessie P. Taylor, Cpl. Harry E. Wiswell. The names are all listed on a memorial plaque, erected 9 March 1991 directly to the south of the Columbus Historical Museum at the old E.P. & S.W. Railroad depot. By comparison, between 80 and 100 villistas lost their lives in the raid. See, Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 566; and White, "Muddied Waters of Columbus," 78-79.

Rentería, Taurino García, Juan Castillo, José Rangel, Juan Sánchez, José Rodríguez, and Francisco Alvarez, were sentenced to death by hanging by Judge Edward L. Medler in Deming on 27 April 1916. Although the men were found guilty of First Degree Murder in the death of Charles D. Miller, the state District Attorney had only proven that they were in Columbus during the raid, not that they had actually murdered Miller.⁹⁵ The condemned villistas were described as “ignorant and misguided” by a patronizing *Deming Headlight*. The paper contrasted the “children of the desert” with the many Americans who had gathered at the courthouse to hear the verdict read. The villistas were all dressed alike in overalls. They were bandaged from the wounds they received during the raid. José Rangel was carried into the courtroom on a stretcher because he could not walk. Many of the other defendants supported themselves on crutches. The sandals they wore appeared out of place when compared to the “footwear of those who moved noiselessly about the room,” including lawyers and spectators.⁹⁶

Throughout the account the Villistas were characterized as “backward Mexicans.” When the defendants spoke out, with the aid of interpreter Miguel Marrufo, declaring their innocence on grounds that they had been forced to serve in Villa’s army and they had no idea that they had crossed into the United States on the night of the raid, the author of the article seemed to pity their childlike ignorance. Rangel broke down in tears when the sentence was issued and the author could not help but remember “another trial when the populace cried out ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’” The reference to Christ was

⁹⁵ *Deming Headlight*, 21 April 1916. For a book-length treatment of the case, see James W. Hurst, *The Villista Prisoners of 1916-1917* (Las Cruces, N.Mex.: Yucca Tree Press, 2000).

⁹⁶ *Deming Headlight*, 28 April 1916.

made to indicate that the trial resembled a witch hunt, not to infer that the villistas possessed any Christ-like qualities themselves. The article concluded with the question, “What does death mean to men who have never lived?”⁹⁷ This final statement attempted to close the matter with the justification that the villistas’ lives were not worth much in the first place.

Although Governor William C. McDonald postponed the executions on two separate occasions, six of the men were put to death in June 1916. Even as a gallows was being erected in May 1916, McDonald granted the villistas a twenty-one-day reprieve in order to investigate the matter more fully. President Woodrow Wilson had also voiced his opinion that the men should not be hastily executed. Following the governor’s inquiry, José Rodriguez’s sentence was commuted to life in prison but the others were hanged in Deming. As stated by the editor of the *Deming Headlight*, their death served to “pay their debt to the state of New Mexico for their share in the massacre of American citizens in the little border town three months ago.”⁹⁸ Although Laura Ritchie had agreed to be the one to cut the rope to hand the men, at the last minute she could not bring herself to do so.⁹⁹

The quick execution did seem to satisfy many of the residents of Columbus and Deming, but there were also some who believed that the villista’s deaths would do more damage than good. The 19 May 1916 issue of the *Deming Headlight* included the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ *Deming Headlight*, 19 May and 30 June 1916; and Marie Evans, “Six Hanged for Villa Raid,” *Deming Headlight*, 5 January 1978.

⁹⁹ Interview with Blanche Dorsey, 3, NMSRCA.

opinions of several of the town's residents regarding the hanging. Many echoed the sentiments of L. W. Taylor: "I do not think there is any other way of punishing these men, for death is about all they fear. On account of the lack of protection and the fact that the Villistas were captured by federal troops on Mexican soil, I do not see why they should not be hung in Deming." But others believed that hanging the villistas would "only make matters worse." G. G. Crichton opined, "If we hang those Mexicans we make ourselves worse than they are."¹⁰⁰ Columbus and Deming, therefore, were not simply caught up in a vengeful frenzy. The situation was more contentious and complicated than that.

In Columbus itself, the Villa raid in March 1916 and the subsequent punitive expedition that returned from Mexico in February 1917 greatly increased the number of servicemen in town. Editors, members of the Townsite Company, and other boosters alike attempted to reinstate the local place myth in the days and months following the raid. As a result, the editor of the *Columbus Courier* worked to equate the soldiers with safety. No mention of the raid appeared in the paper until 24 March 1916. In that issue, only a short paragraph on the front page under the headline "No Need For Alarm" mentioned the raid in making the larger point that the military had regained control of the situation. Additionally, pieces titled "Telephone Line Kept Busy," "Colors First to Cross," and "Major Semple in Command" also referenced the raid, but only to support the idea that the military presence in town had once again secured the locale. Indeed, the

¹⁰⁰ *Deming Headlight*, 19 May 1916.

masthead was “The Future Has Never Looked Brighter For This Section Than It Does Today.”¹⁰¹ The same masthead continued to introduce the weekly for most of that year.

In the 2 March 1917 issue of the *Courier*, editor G. E. Parks included 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 once again that the military presence, continued in force even following the withdrawal of Pershing’s expedition, 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.”¹⁰² These types of articles illustrate the attempts made by local boosters to incorporate the military presence into the local place myth in an effort to continue local development and demographic growth. The persistence of such arguments, however, also suggest that people in the region and beyond maintained apprehensions about Columbus’ proximity to the border and the potential for future violence.

Despite such arguments against the suggestion that conditions were unsettled in Columbus, the town experienced an economic and demographic boom on the heels of the raid. Most of the newcomers were enlisted men connected first to the Pershing expedition and then to Camp Furlong following the troops’ exit from Mexico. The revival of the place myth and the economic boom were both based on the presence of squadrons of troops in town. Indeed, one observer quipped that Columbus was on track to become

¹⁰¹ *Columbus Courier*, 24 March 1916. The 10 and 17 March issues made no mention of the raid, although the *Deming Headlight* ran a front page story on the raid on 10 March. Additionally, Editor Parks of the *Courier* made a report on the raid, in which he praised the heroism of his wife, Susan, in the 17 March edition of the *Headlight*.

¹⁰² *Columbus Courier* 2 February, 2 March, and 21 September 1917.

New Mexico's largest city in only a short period of time. Plans were even revived for a north-south rail line to connect New Mexico to Chihuahua through Columbus with a revival of A. O. Bailey's 1905 Colorado, Columbus and Mexican Railroad Company.¹⁰³

Two other major events, the deportation of striking miners—many of them associated with the International Workers of the World (I.W.W. or Wobblies)—and the exile of the Colored 24th Infantry to Columbus, served to reshape the town's place myth just as local elites worked to reinforce it. The two instances caused Columbus residents to examine their ideas about racial relations and their close ties to Mexico, both in terms of geographic proximity and human connections. Whereas Villa's raid had shattered such connections and created a wave of violence against Mexican people, the Bisbee Deportation and the presence of the 24th Infantry showed that the idea that Columbus should be a town for white American homesteaders, as trumpeted by the architects of the place myth, was not the local reality.

On 12 July 1917, about 1200 striking mineworkers were rounded up in Bisbee, Arizona, forced onto El Paso and Southwestern Railroad boxcars, and ejected from town. The I.W.W. had been one of the major groups behind the strike, but many of the deportees were not directly associated with their movement. In all, the deportees “included men of thirty-four nationalities, but half came from Mexico or the Slavic regions of eastern Europe.” Within the context of the nearby Mexican Revolution and the

¹⁰³ For the renewed railroad talk, see, for example, *Columbus Courier*, 14 September, 9 November, and 28 December 1917; and Application for Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity—Colorado, Columbus and Mexico Railroad Company, 1922-1929, 1 folder, New Mexico State Corporation Commission Records, NMSRCA. For the continued economic boom and its connection to the military presence in town, see, for example, *Columbus Courier*, 18 April, 9 May, 16 May, June 6, and September 12 1919.

U.S. entry into World War I, Sheriff Harry Wheeler and the Bisbee residents that composed his posse were concerned that the I.W.W. and the strikers, a majority of whom were Mexican and Slavic immigrants, represented an attempt to subvert the local order. Indeed, as historian Katherine Benton-Cohen has illustrated in her study of Cochise County and the social context of the deportation, at issue was whether or not the strikers could even be considered American. The short answer at the time was no. The socialist Wobblies and the Mexican and Slavic workers were deemed a threat to the U.S. war effort. Of course, to the executives of the Phelps-Dodge Company, the strike was a direct threat to the company's livelihood.¹⁰⁴

Once on the train, the deportees were transported 180 miles eastward to the New Mexico desert near Hermanas (just to the east of Columbus) and left to fend for themselves. Although some people in the Lower Mimbres Valley took issue with the idea that the Phelps Dodge Company and Bisbee community leaders would think to exile this bunch of rabble to their doorstep, most sympathized with the plight of the deportees. The masthead of the 13 July *Columbus Courier* proclaimed "Striking Miners are More Welcome Here than Would be 1200 Cochise County, Arizona, Corporation Deputies."¹⁰⁵ Editor Parks ran a column on the front page titled "Reserve Judgment in the Case of the IWWs"; Parks' efforts to convince his readership that the deportees posed no threat suggest that, perhaps, other Columbus residents did not share his perspective on the situation. Yet, when New Mexico Governor Washington E. Lindsay's investigator Fred

¹⁰⁴ Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans*, 1-3, and Chapter 7, quote on p. 3; Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes*, 174-176; and "IWW Wobblies" Binder, Dean Archive.

¹⁰⁵ *Columbus Courier*, 13 July 1917.

Fornoff made his report about the situation with the I.W.W.s on 12 August, he characterized the relations between the town and the deportees as calm. By his account, “No alarm is felt by level headed citizens here. The mayor believes that the question will resolve itself in a little while,” a conclusion shared by Fornoff. Colonel Sickel, the commanding officer at Camp Furlong who oversaw the rations of food, water, and clothing that were supplied to the refugees.¹⁰⁶

A few of the refugees remained in Columbus for as many as three months, although most left by mid-September. During their time in Columbus, relations reached cordial levels; by mid-August the refugees “mingled to a small extent” with the people of the town, as well as with the soldiers at Camp Furlong. When the main body of them left, many crossing the border into Mexico, the *Courier*’s new editor, J. B. Smith quipped that “Their vacation so pleasantly spent in Columbus at the expense of Uncle Sam, has come to an end.” Like a few of the other town leaders, his patience with the group had run somewhat thin. Even those most disposed to help the deportees due to their poor treatment at the hands of Sheriff Wheeler and Phelps-Dodge executives commented that the group’s presence was an imposition to Columbus. Worse, animosities toward Mexicans had not faded much since the Villa raid. As historian Samuel Truett has pointed out, a detail about the Bisbee Deportation that is “generally forgotten is that the largest foreign group that was dumped into the desert that day was from Mexico.”

Although tensions with Mexican laborers clearly ran high in southern Arizona, they had

¹⁰⁶ Question of Deportation of IWWs from Bisbee, Arizona, to Columbus, New Mexico, 1917, Folder 180, Box 9, NMSRCA. In a letter to Governor Washington E. Lindsay of New Mexico dated 12 August 1917, Fred Fornoff also mentioned that two Columbus residents, “Jack London and a Mr. Callen,” traveled to Fort Bliss where they petitioned General Bell to send extra troops to defend Columbus against the refugees. General Bell rebuked them for making the request and sent them back home.

been frantic in Columbus since March 1916.¹⁰⁷ It is no surprise, then, that a special Mexican Consular Agency was established in Columbus in August 1917.

The consul, Antonio Landin, skillfully diffused the racial tensions that were so intense in the wake of the Villa raid and the arrival of the Bisbee deportees. When he arrived in Columbus in August 1917, Landin was a 26-year-old former agent of the Mexican Secret Service that had only recently joined the Consular Service.¹⁰⁸ In Columbus, Landin worked to ensure that the refugees received sufficient rations and fair treatment by local authorities and residents. Fortunately, the attitude of residents like G. E. Parks and future mayor and member of the Townsite Company's board, J. R. Blair, made his job easier to execute. Landin worked with the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores to provide places in northern Mexico where the deportees could resettle. Many of them took the Mexican government up on its offer, although those with families, who numbered between 150 and 250 depending on the count, worked to return home to Bisbee.¹⁰⁹

Much to the credit of the Columbus community, their reception of the Bisbee deportees indicated that most were willing to look beyond racial or national labels, as well as to go beyond the confines of the place myth, in order provide aid and show tolerance toward a group of people in need. Yet, in other ways Consul Landin's tenure in

¹⁰⁷ Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes*, 174; and *Columbus Courier*, 21 September 1917.

¹⁰⁸ Informe de Antonio Landin al Servicio Consular Mexicano, 29 December 1917, Expediente 3-19-40, Expedientes Personales, AHSRE.

¹⁰⁹ For the varying counts, see Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans*, 3; and Report on the Deportees, August 1917, Folder 180, Box 9, Question of Deportation of IWWs From Bisbee, Arizona, to Columbus, New Mexico, 1917, Governor Washington E. Lindsay Papers, NMSRCA.

town proved to be an uphill battle in terms of overcoming rancor toward Mexican people. On 16 September 1917, Mexico's Independence Day, Landin faced great hostility when he raised the Mexican flag over his office. By his own account, when he hoisted the flag he "received protests from both local residents as well as American authorities" who ordered him to take the flag down immediately. He resolutely refused to comply, leaving the flag on display until 6:00 p.m. that evening. No further action was taken and Landin was commended for standing his ground by the General Consul in El Paso. Nearly a year later, on 4 July 1918, Landin once again publicly raised the Mexican flag at the consular office, this time to celebrate American Independence Day. Some locals expressed their unease that the Mexican flag flew in their town, but on that occasion, "Lee A. Riggs and others explained to the curious that it was proper." Mayor J. R. Blair further expounded the issue by publicly sharing a letter that he received from Landin in which the consul explained that his actions had been taken "in accordance with the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce that exists between Mexico and the United States as a matter of courtesy to this Country in its Glorious Day."¹¹⁰

The episode of negative reactions to the flying of Mexico's colors illustrates the depth of the damage done by the Villa raid to locals' willingness to celebrate national holidays with one another. As early as 1888, residents of Deming and Palomas came together in order to celebrate on both 16 September and 4 July.¹¹¹ Festivities included

¹¹⁰ Informe de Antonio Landin al Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, 21 August 1920, Expediente 3-19-40, Expedientes Personales, AHSRE; and *Columbus Courier*, 5 July 1918.

¹¹¹ The Deming tradition was later adopted in Columbus after its 1907 second founding, which had been supported and constructed by many Deming residents. For examples of the earlier celebrations, see *Deming Headlight*, 22 July, 12 August, and 16 September 1893, 18 September 1896, and 28 September 1901.

parades, orations, bands, baseball competitions, dances, and barbecues. Processions of Demingites made the trip to Palomas and vice versa in order to participate in the festivities. Similar shows of amity between Columbus and Palomas residents had existed prior to the militarization of the border connection, occasioned by the Mexican Revolution. And, although clear progress was shown in the questioning acceptance of the Mexican flag by Columbusites in July 1918, Landin continued to augment the place of the Mexican community in Columbus. By the following year he had organized a Colonia Mexicana, recognized with its own meeting house and officers (with Landin as president). Among other social activities, the Colonia Mexicana renewed the full-fledged celebration of the 16 de Septiembre for the 1919 observance of the national holiday. The activities took place in both Columbus and Palomas, and included parades, speeches, and a bullfight sponsored by the Palomas Land and Cattle Company.¹¹²

Landin's greatest accomplishment in his capacity as consular agent was his work to bring about the revocation of a restrictive, discriminatory housing covenant in July 1919. In their dealings in 1917 and 1918, the real estate firm of Prewitt & Pender created deed contracts that contained the following clause: "No lot contained in this contract shall be sold to Mexicans or colored people within one year from date." Again, Landin found an ally in Mayor J. R. Blair and the other village trustees, Alma Frederickson (a former Díaz colonist), A. J. Evans, William Klein, and Harry O. Tracy. When he brought the housing covenant to the attention of the trustees, they held a special meeting on 31 July specifically to address the issue. They concluded that the statement "does not represent

¹¹² Flyer for 16 September Celebration, 1919, Expediente 3-19-40, Expedientes Personales, AHSRE; and *Columbus Courier*, 12 and 19 September 1919.

the sentiment of the Board of Trustees of the Village, or of the people of Columbus” and they “emphatically condemned” the clause. In their statement, the trustees also declared: “We cordially invite the co-operation of all good people, irrespective of nationality, creed or color.” And they declared that their resolution be printed in the *Courier* and distributed to Consul Landin and the “Commanding Officer of the New Mexico sub-district at Columbus and commanding the Twenty-Fourth Infantry.”¹¹³

The revocation of the housing covenant was also a major victory for Columbus’ African American community, which was closely identified with the 24th Infantry. The 24th Infantry was a unit of African American soldiers that had been originally stationed at Columbus to support the Pershing expedition. In late July 1917, the unit’s Third Battalion was sent to perform guard duty at the construction site of Camp Logan near Houston, Texas. Upon arrival in the Texas city, members of the 24th faced discrimination and hostility from local whites. The members of the 24th had been hesitant to take the assignment due to the area’s deep history of racial tensions and strife. As recalled by battalion commander Colonel William Newman, “I had already had an unfortunate experience when I was in command of two companies of the 24th Infantry at Del Rio, Texas, in April 1916, when a colored soldier was killed by a [Texas] ranger for no other reason than he was a colored man; that it angered Texans to see colored men in the uniform of a soldier.”¹¹⁴ Locals routinely used the word “nigger,” an affront to the members of the 24th who had spent their previous assignments in the Philippines and then

¹¹³ Special Resolution of the Columbus Board of Trustees, 31 July 1919, Expediente 3-19-40, Expedientes Personales, AHSRE; and *Columbus Courier*, 1 August 1919.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in C. Calvin Smith, “The Houston Riot of 1917, Revisited” *The Houston Review*, Vol. 13 (1991): 85-102.

Columbus where they had reportedly faced little to no discrimination. Despite such misgivings, however, the battalion followed the orders they had received.

Rocky, but generally peaceful, relations persisted between members of the unit and white Houston residents until 18 August 1917. That day a pair of soldiers witnessed Houston police officers arrest a teenage African American male for “throwing bricks promiscuously.” When the soldiers protested that the officers had harassed the young man without due cause, the police officers attempted to arrest the soldiers. In response, the soldiers reportedly “showed fight,” an action that prompted the policemen to strike the pair with their pistols before taking them into the police station. On 23 August, police brutality against an African American woman, a Mrs. Travers, in her own home further exacerbated the situation. Around noon, officers forcibly entered her home under the pretext of searching for a fugitive accused of the crime of crap shooting. When they could not find him, they assaulted Mrs. Travers and placed her under arrest. As they dragged her out of her home, where her five children were present, she fought and screamed. Among the members of the crowd that gathered in response to the commotion was Private Edwards of the 24th Infantry. Edwards questioned the officers about their actions and they turned their aggression on him, beating him with their pistols, kicking him to the ground, and then placing him under arrest. Shortly thereafter, Corporal Charles Baltimore tried to gather more information about the incident at the police station. In response to his questions, Officer Lee Sparks, “generally regarded as one of the more vociferous racists

on the police force,” struck Baltimore and shot at him three times. Baltimore narrowly escaped with his life.¹¹⁵

That night, in response, 156 soldiers of the 24th Infantry marched on Houston. Once within the city limits, they met a crowd of police officers and armed citizens intent on preventing what they termed a “mutiny” by the soldiers. Violence erupted between the two groups and when the dust had settled twenty people had lost their lives: four soldiers, four policemen, and twelve civilians. Two days later the entire 24th was returned to Columbus, under an armed guard provided by the 12th Infantry. When the battalion reached its former headquarters, it was on very different terms. Shortly after the soldiers’ arrival, those directly charged with participation in the riot were taken to Fort Bliss to await a court-martial. The others were kept in the stockade at Camp Furlong under heavy guard. The 600-man first battalion of the 64th Infantry was relocated to Columbus in order to guard the prisoners and maintain peace in town. As the case dragged on over the next few months, reports of the trials in the *Courier* were often accompanied by editorial pieces taken from other newspapers. One such article, titled “The Negro In The South” was penned by “a northerner” that warned that despite attempts at assimilation, “both industrially and socially, the negro has never really assimilated with the northern people.” The place of African Americans, and especially the 24th Infantry, in Columbus became a source of contention, even after six of the riot’s instigators were executed in early 1918.

¹¹⁵ Robert V. Haynes, “The Houston Mutiny and Riot of 1917,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (April 1973), 427-428; Haynes, *Night of Violence*, 94-98; Smith, “Houston Riot of 1917,” 93; and Martha Gruening, “Houston: An N.A.A.C.P Investigation,” *The Crisis* (November 1917), 14-15.

But the 24th Infantry, as well as African American civilians, remained in Columbus. In June 1919, the unit was detached to service in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez area to defend the border against renewed military conflict between villistas and carrancistas. In El Paso, members of the 24th were able to ease back into a routine of participating in sports contests with other soldiers and civilians. And, the unit played a major role in repelling an attack on Juárez led by Pancho Villa and his close ally General Felipe Angeles late in the month. The headline in the *Courier* read, “24th Infantrymen Getting Even With Villa Again.” The soldiers’ role in defeating the villain of Columbus at that point seemed to redeem them, at least in terms of the way they were portrayed in the newspaper.¹¹⁶ The rejection of the discriminatory housing covenant that July was another step toward the elimination of racist discrimination in town.

Some Columbus and Deming residents, however, as well as an investigator for the Bureau of Protective Social Measures, a New Mexico government agency, decried the general atmosphere of tolerance in the Lower Mimbres Valley. In a report to Governor Merritt C. Mechem, who was considering whether or not to demand the removal of the 24th Infantry from New Mexico, Investigator Boone claimed, “Columbus is one large negro dive. There is positively no doubt but that it is wide open and being maintained so by the controlling city official, Mayor J. R. Blair and his associates. Blair received election by promising the lowest element a wide open town and it is fully agreed everywhere that he has lived up to his campaign promises.” Additionally, Boone connected African Americans and the 24th Infantry with drug and alcohol abuse, at that point prohibited by the 19th Amendment, as well as prostitution. He asserted that “About

¹¹⁶ *Columbus Courier*, 20 and 27 June and 4 July 1919.

300 women, a few of whom are Mexican, the rest negro, were said to be available for prostitution in Columbus.” Prostitution had been allowed and carefully regulated by military officials under Pershing’s command beginning in the summer of 1916.

Considered a necessary evil due to the high number of young, single servicemen, the prostitution industry in town was also segregated. Blair’s consecutive terms as Columbus mayor in the late-19-teens and early 1920s suggest that most local residents didn’t view his actions in the same way as Boone. And, despite his recommendations, Governor Mechem ultimately concluded that the War Department had ultimate authority to station units in the locations that it saw fit.¹¹⁷

Despite Pancho Villa’s complex and often friendly relations with people in the Lower Mimbres Valley through 1915, the Columbus raid of March 1916 sealed the region’s legacy as a landscape of violence. Mormon colonists, Ascensionenses, and residents of Columbus and Deming found their communities altered by Villa’s revolutionary actions. In Columbus, the Villa raid redirected the local place myth. As boosters incorporated Camp Furlong and the military presence into the images of the town that they broadcast to potential settlers and investors, local leaders, like Consul

¹¹⁷ Memorandum on Conditions in Columbus, N.M., Report of Director of Bureau of Protective Social Measures, October 1920, Folder 194, Box 6, Investigation 24th Infantry, Columbus N.M., 1922, Governor Merritt C. Mechem Papers, NMSRCA; Report on Prostitution in Columbus, New Mexico, 1 February 1917, Box 431, World War I Organization Records, Punitive Expeditions to Mexico, Base Intelligence Officer Columbus, N. Mex., RG 395: Records of U.S. Army Overseas Operations and Commands, 1898-1942, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. [hereafter NARA]; and James W. Hurst, “Columbus, New Mexico’s Soiled Doves,” <http://www.southernnewmexico.com/Articles/Southwest/Luna/Columbus/ColumbusNewMexicossoiled.html>, accessed 2 April 2013.

Landin and Mayor Blair came together to address the needs of the local populace, Mexican, white, and African American alike.

Ultimately, the place myth did not take hold in the minds of most Americans (or even many locals) due to the events that linked Columbus to Mexico, violently and otherwise. More positively, the Villa raid created an economic resurgence in the town as well. As increasing numbers of soldiers arrived to support the Punitive Expedition in late March 1916, local merchants and entrepreneurs discovered that their businesses were booming. In June 1917, the *Courier* reported that local businessmen had been accused of raising prices when National Guardsmen arrived, and editor Parks wrote that “it is a matter of fact that prices were out of reason.”¹¹⁸ As early as 1917, then, it was clear that the fortunes of Columbus had become intertwined with Pancho Villa’s raid. Once the permanent presence of military forces ended in 1923 with the War Department’s decision to abandon Camp Furlong, the town began a rapid demographic decline.¹¹⁹ At about the same time, the Mexican government closed the Columbus Consular Agency as well.¹²⁰ 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. As Columbus slid into decline, Palomas grew in notoriety, first for its reputation as a den of vice during the Prohibition Era (a similar pattern was followed by many other border towns), later for its connection to the land reform efforts of the Mexican Government. Both towns remained connected to one

¹¹⁸ *Columbus Courier* 22 June 1917.

¹¹⁹ Abandonment of Camp Furlong by War Department, 29 June 1923-7 September 1926, Box 12, Office of the Director of Service, Supply, and Procurement (G-4), 1921-48, Card Index, RG 165: War Department and Special Staffs, NARA.

¹²⁰ Clausura del Consulado Mexicano en Columbus, 14 October 1921, Expediente 37-12-79, AHSRE.

another socially and economically, and both have since been defined by the legacy of Pancho Villa.

Epilogue:

Pancho Villa and the Legacy of Violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley

“In 1920 the Village bonded themselves in the sum of \$85,000.00 for the purpose of building a water system. At that time the village had a good outlook and feeling of prosperity owing to the presence of many United States troopers. But, soon after the vacation of the town by the federal troops which had been garrisoned there, the village began to lose ground and continued to do so until now the desolation is almost complete and those who remain are, for the most part, anything but prosperous.” –**Special Report on Columbus, New Mexico, State Comptroller, 1925**

“The ends proposed by this colony [to be established at Palomas and Rio de Fusiles] are to gather numerous Mexican families and supply them with future wellbeing, giving them lands and tools and implements to cultivate them. In this way, one of the principal revolutionary ideals will be fulfilled.” –**La Patria (El Paso, Tex.), 15 August 1921**

At eleven o'clock on a March morning in 1928, Agustín Chapoy led a group of twenty-five men against the military garrison in Palomas. Chapoy was identified by authorities of the Mexican government's Migration Delegation, headquartered at Ciudad Juárez, as a lieutenant in the Mexican army and the interim commander of the military installation at Palomas. As in other attempts on the local customs house, Chapoy's armed struggle was quickly repulsed. Different than earlier insurgencies, he was reportedly gunned down by his own men as he rushed the office of the Captain of the Guard. Agents connected to the Mexican government agency for Political and Social Investigations (IPS, Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales) probed Chapoy's motives, but ultimately found very little information to shed light on the events of his attack and death (Indeed, the reports did not pinpoint the exact day of the raid). Chapoy did issue a mimeographed call-to-arms and other proclamations, although military authorities reportedly confiscated all copies of the

documents before IPS agents were able to gain access to them. The head of the Migration Delegation reported, however, that he had seen one of the manifestoes prior to its confiscation. Chapoy reportedly called on “brothers of Latin America” to take up arms in order to prevent the dissolution of a united Latin America. Government agents made few comments on the significance of such ideas, but they did draw the conclusion that Chapoy must have had printing connections on the U.S. side of the border; there was no mimeograph equipment for hundreds of miles in Chihuahua.¹

In the shadowy case of Agustín Chapoy, Palomas once again became the target of a small group of political insurgents. But, as suggested by his spectacular failure, by the mid-1920s the dialectic of violence in the Lower Mimbres Valley had been transformed yet again. Although cycles of violence were still very present, local attention in and around the town of Palomas was concentrated on the promise of land reform—a promise extended by the Mexican state as it attempted to reconstitute itself under the presidency of Alvaro Obregón, and which culminated during the Lázaro Cardenas years. As early as 1921, residents of the corridor between Palomas and La Ascensión began to work through newly created governmental and legal channels to assert their claims to ejido lands. The (re)allocation of land to local people seemed to indicate the undoing the privatization of land and resources embodied by the Huller concession, transferred to the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, S.A., by the post-revolutionary period.² Land reform held the potential of undermining one of

¹ Report to the Secretario del Estado y del Despacho de Gobernación, from Uriel García (Ciudad Juárez), 14 March 1928, Expediente Agustín Chapoy, Caja 232, Fondo Administración Federal S. XX/Secretario de Gobernación S. XX/ Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (Gallaría 2), Archivo General de la Nación, México, D.F. [hereafter Fondo IPS, AGN].

² I use the term (re)allocation to point out the deep divides in the scholarly literature regarding the overall significance and legacy of Mexican land reform. As numerous authors have illustrated, Mexico’s state-led agrarian reform was remarkable in Latin America and many other parts of the world in terms of both its

the pillars of structural violence against which so many raids and rebellions had been waged between 1892 and 1920. Yet, such reform was offered through the state itself, another of the pillars of structural violence.

As this dissertation has illustrated, the history of the Lower Mimbres Valley highlights the role of distinct acts and different types of violence in the construction of place. Through an examination of capitalist development and insurgencies in the region between 1888 and 1920, this study has placed a landscape of violence within its historical context. The violence of land surveys, town plats, railroad and cattle concessions, attacks, raids, proclamations, and other insurgencies not only devastated New Mexico-Chihuahua border landscapes, such violence also created communities that shared transnational ties and antagonisms. In addition to local concerns, nation states used regional violence to shore up their respective claims and interests.

In order for the area to become a place defined by modernity and order (in the form of surveys, borderlines, and townships), Apache space was unmade. The region's dialectic of violence was then perpetuated by the coincidence of the Apache wars and the creation of land and resource legislation in the 1880s. A series of laws during the Porfiriato, including 1883 legislation regarding colonization and *terrenos baldíos*, established a means for the

scope and duration. Sustained efforts to grant land to the peasantry ended in the early 1990s during the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Although the Mexican government defined ejidos as the restoration of an indigenous tradition of land tenure, anthropologists Daniel Nugent and Ana María Alonso argue that such a claim was the creation of a *selective tradition* designed to grant legitimacy to the state. They adeptly and concisely describe the fault lines in the historiography, and they make the argument that both rural campesinos as well as state actors negotiated the rules of the Mexican land reform program from the 1920s through the 1980s. See, Nugent and Alonso, "Multiple Selective Traditions in Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggle: Popular Culture and State formation in the *Ejido* of Namiquipa, Chihuahua," in Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 209-214. See also, Eric P. Perramond, "The Rise, Fall, and Reconfiguration of the Mexican *Ejido*," *The Geographical Review* 98, no. 3 (July 2008), 356-358.

continuation of cycles of violence well after the death of Victorio and the surrender of Geronimo. Repatriate communities of La Ascensión and Palomas were granted the right to establish themselves in the *patria natal*, purposefully near the border in an effort to bolster the Mexican nation's claims to its territory and avoid further encroachments by the Colossus of the North. Repatriates also played the role of defending northwestern Chihuahua from the *indios bárbaros* that had long viewed the New Mexico-Chihuahua border region as their homeland. It was through legislation and *deslindes* (surveys) that the land and resources of the Chihuahua side of the Lower Mimbres Valley were placed in the hands of private individuals and corporations. Despite the fact that the same legislation established repatriate and other colonies, surveying crews challenged their rights to land and resources.

Concessions granted in Mexico City transferred land, water, and other resource rights to the hands of figures such as Huller and his associates and reestablished violence, in the new guise of legal dispossessions, capitalist development, insurgencies, and struggles over the flow of information, as the major force in the Lower Mimbres Valley. Even after the valley shifted from a frontier to a border between nation-states, then, cycles of violence at once constructed and destroyed the economic, social, and political relations between the region's communities.

This study has shown that such acts of violence were not only destructive but constructive as well. Key to this insight is a broad conceptualization of violence that places actions that are considered both legal and illicit within its rubric. Such events as the platting of towns are not typically studied in tandem with bellicose actions like attacks on government customs houses. Although events such as the Apache Wars and the dispossessions inherent in the settlement of the region's towns occupy separate ends of a

continuum of violence, both are defined by their real or potential violence. By considering the legal redrawing of space that resulted in dispossession or loss of access to resources in juxtaposition with armed insurgencies, this dissertation illustrates that both can be defined as acts of violence. The violence of land and resource dispossession tied to the creation of the Columbus place myth and the Palomas Land and Cattle Company's control of nearly two million acres of land adjacent to the border sparked resistance in the form of the insurgencies that plagued Palomas in 1893, 1896, and 1908, and that devastated Columbus in 1916. This dialectic of violence (re)shaped local communities and forged local, regional, and even international relationships between the people of the New Mexico-Chihuahua borderland. In the case of the Díaz colonists, for example, such relationships allowed many of them to begin new lives in Columbus, Deming, and Hachita following their 1912 exodus from Chihuahua. The violence of 1912 created a rift between the colonists and many Ascensionenses, however, with whom they had previously held friendly relations.

All along the border between the United States and Mexico the Mexican Revolution initially intensified violence and then promised to end its dialectic through a program of land reform. Yet, Porfirian resource concessions were not easily undone. Read as a geographic text, the Lower Mimbres Valley's status between the 1920s and 1960s is quite illuminating in this respect. The ejidos of Las Palomas, Vado de Fusiles, and Colonia Díaz directly challenged the old Huller claims, then in the hands of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company.³ Litigation and contests over land and resources played out at the level of international diplomacy and local social and labor relations through the 1940s. Land reform

³ Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después de la Revolución* (Chihuahua: Instituto Chihuahuense de la Cultura, 2011), Chapter 3; and Noe Palomares Peña, *Propietarios Norteamericanos y Reforma Agraria en Chihuahua, 1917-1942* (Cd. Juárez, Chih.: Universidad Autónoma de Cd. Juárez, 1991), Chapter 2.

measures, codified in Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917, embodied the revolution's promise to reorder land ownership and resource access in northwestern Chihuahua and throughout the nation. The Municipio de La Ascensión has not been a place typically connected to the revolutionary land reform movement in scholarly literature, yet its several ejidos were sites of contestation between state and local expropriation efforts and legal attempts to maintain the existing private land concessions.

The creation of ejidos in the municipio of La Ascensión required the expropriation of lands belonging to former Mormon residents of Colonia Díaz, as well as portions of the gargantuan tract in the possession of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Ascensionenses and other locals moved into the burned-out town of Colonia Díaz shortly after the Mormon Exodus from northern Mexico in 1912. Many of the erstwhile colonists made quick trips from Hachita or Columbus to recover goods that they had left behind, but few challenged the locals' occupation of their former homes and lands. In the name of the Díaz Colonization Company, however, Andrew C. Peterson attempted to maintain legal claim to a large section of the colony's terrain through his associate in La Ascensión, Francisco Fernández. The colony's abandonment and the level of destruction wrought on the town's structures, including homes, school, and church, made Fernández's task nearly impossible. On 12 October 1917, chihuahuenses living in the old colony, many of them former revolutionaries, made their first petition that the Carranza government normalize their claims to the lands they occupied. Their petitions did not result in the creation of an ejido, however, until 5 December 1935.⁴

⁴ Ramírez Tafoya, *Ascensión Antes y Después*, 114, 148-151; and *Ejidos Dotaciones, Colonia Díaz*, legajo 1, expediente 1664, serie: Cuerpo Consultivo Agrario, Archivo General Agrario, México, D.F. [hereafter AGA].

A brief definition of the term *ejido* is in order. At the most basic, ejidos are “communal resource-holding” institutions.⁵ Alvaro Obregón’s postrevolutionary government took the first concrete steps toward the creation of such institutions in an effort to provide land and resources to those who had risked their lives during the revolution in order to bring about economic and social change. Revolutionary leaders, such as Francisco Madero and Venustiano Carranza, failed to take seriously the reality that the central goal of many of the rank-and-file was agrarian reform. Obregón, on the other hand, recognized the necessity of land reform if political and social stability in Mexico was to be reconstituted. The ejido was at the heart of the state-led agrarian reform project. As anthropologists Daniel Nugent and Ana María Alonso have shown, however, Mexico’s agrarian reform wasn’t simply a top-down initiative. Members of rural communities throughout the nation began to assert their usufruct rights to land, water, and other resources without express legal permission to do so and then worked to have their claims normalized. Such was certainly the case in Colonia Díaz.⁶

The term ejido itself dated back to the colonial-era; at that time, it had been used to describe lands held communally by indigenous people. During the postrevolutionary era, then, the word conjured the idea that an older form of land tenure was being restored throughout the nation. Wherever possible, public lands were targeted for transfer to agrarian communities as ejidos. Yet, available public lands were insufficient to fill the demands of potential ejidatarios (beneficiaries of the communal resource grant) in many of the

⁵ Perramond, “Rise, Fall, and Reconfiguration,” 356.

⁶ Linda B. Hall, “Alvaro Obregón and the Politics of Mexican Land Reform, 1920-1924” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (May 1980), 214; Nugent and Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions,” 209-210, 212-213; and Armando Bartra, *Los Herederos de Zapata: Movimientos Campesinos Posrevolucionarios en México, 1920-1980* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1985).

communities that most clamored for agrarian reform. Most of the land in the municipio de La Ascensión, for example, was controlled by private interests leading up to and following the violent phase of the revolution. In such cases the national government drew on the power of Article 27 to expropriate privately held property and resources in order to convert them into ejido grants.⁷

Part of the Comisión Nacional Agraria's (CNA) decision to reject the initial 1917 petition for the Colonia Díaz ejido hinged on the fact that the town had been established as a colony. Such reasoning was used to support the assessment that Colonia Díaz had never been a communal land holding. That a group of 538 Mexican inhabitants, including 144 *agricultores* and 107 heads of family, occupied the former Mormon colony, however, meant that the case wasn't simply dismissed. Those who had made Díaz their home reissued their petition on 19 July 1922, asking that they be granted legal rights to the land on which they had resided since 1912. In doing so, they asked for a *dotación* (grant) rather than a *restitución* (restitution)—an important distinction in the politics of postrevolutionary land reform in Mexico. Asking for a *dotación* illustrated the potential ejidatarios' recognition that they had never possessed the land as a communal holding prior to 1912.⁸

As the petitions for the Colonia Díaz ejido worked their way through the agrarian bureaucracy at the municipal, state, and then national levels, the town of Palomas became a site of demographic growth. In 1919, it received an official designation as “La Puerta” (the port, or a full-fledged customs post instead of a small-scale checkpoint). In response, the

⁷ Perramond, “Rise, Fall, and Reconfiguration,” 356; and Christopher Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 75-76.

⁸ Ejidos Dotaciones, Colonia Díaz, legajo 1, expediente 1664, serie: Cuerpo Consultivo Agrario, AGA.

center of the town itself was relocated four miles northward to the international boundary line. Local entrepreneurs, such as the Munguía brothers, saw great potential for the town to become a “tourist emporium.” Like various other border towns that gained reputations as “dens of vice” during the Prohibition era in the United States, the Munguías held bull fights, established bars, and promoted the local hot springs to draw visitors from north of the border. The building that today houses the customs house was originally a casino—the centerpiece of the brothers’ vision for Palomas. Although tourism did not completely dry up when Camp Furlong was transferred to the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1923, it did take a hit.⁹

Palomas’ brief boom as a tourist site was only one of the stories of its development following the Mexican Revolution, however. As reported in El Paso’s *La Patria* on 15 August 1921, Palomas was also the site of an ejido petition and it promised to become an important agrarian community along the border. Additionally, locals had petitioned for the creation of an ejido at Vado de Fusiles, a site a few miles to the south of Palomas. Both proposed ejidos were on lands controlled by the Palomas Land and Cattle Company; Vado de Fusiles also was to encompass lands held by Sam Ravel of Columbus. Reportedly, efforts to secure ejido lands were also bolstered by a group of Mexican residents of Columbus who

⁹ Ramón Ramírez Tafoya, “La Puerta, El Nuevo Palomas, Hoy Palomas de Francisco Villa,” Blog Post, January 2012, <http://archivoshistoricoschihuahua.wordpress.com/>, accessed 23 April 2013. Ramírez Tafoya’s contribution to this blog, housed by the Instituto Chihuahuense de la Cultura (ICHICULT), included various posts that were to be included in a book on the history of Palomas. “Lease of Furlong INS Facilities,” 8 March 1923, file 55112, box 4383, Record Group 85: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Records Center and Archives, College Park, Maryland [hereafter NARA]. For the era of vice along the border, see Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), Chapter 6; and Daniel D. Arreola and James R. Curtis, *The Mexican Border Cities: Landscape Anatomy and Place Personality* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 20-21.

“had the happy idea” of forming a colonization company to allow them to settle in the Palomas area as farmers.¹⁰

On 27 January 1923 the Obregón government issued an order for the expropriation of the lands of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, as well as the property of the Díaz Colonization Company. The order was a response to the ejido petitions filed by inhabitants of Palomas, Colonia Díaz, and Vado de Fusiles, as well as a reflection of the administration’s willingness to act on Article 27. The order was published in the *Diario Oficial* of the same date and agents at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City immediately took notice. In fact, they used the Palomas case as supporting evidence for their assertion that American private property obtained during the Porfiriato was directly targeted by Article 27. From the viewpoint of the Obregón administration, the one million hectares (2.47 million acres) constituted “a monopoly of lands” and was thus eligible for expropriation under the terms of the Constitution of 1917. Further adding to the contention over the expropriation was a legal dispute between the heirs of Luis Huller and Edwin J. Marshall over the ownership of the Palomas tract. Marshall effectively controlled the Palomas Company from his southern California headquarters, but members of the Huller estate sued him for taking possession of the lands unlawfully. Due to the disputed nature of the Palomas tract’s ownership, the administration pressed forward with the expropriation without identifying any party to receive compensation for the lands that were to revert to the state.¹¹

¹⁰ *La Patria* (El Paso, Tex.), 15 August, 5 September, and 8 September 1921; and Estate of Sam Ravel and Brothers, Box 86, Record Group 76: International Claims Commissions, NARA.

¹¹ Expropiación Rancho Las Palomas, serie 1923, exp. 080102, inv. 27, leg. 1/13, “Agregado Militar de Estados Unidos,” Fondo de Embajada de los Estados Unidos en México, Fideicomiso Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca [hereafter Calles Archive]; John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 178-180; and Letter

Such issues created a state of conflict at the level of international diplomacy as well as locally between agents of the Palomas Company and potential ejidatarios. Through the General Claims Commission of the United States and Mexico, an entity with the express purpose of settling Americans' claims for personal injury and loss of property during the Mexican Revolution, Marshall and his partners attempted to prevent the land expropriation. Litigation continued through 1950, although the ejidos were established by the mid-1930s (Palomas and Vado de Fusiles received their dotaciones in 1926; Colonia Díaz in 1935), although a series of negotiations with the company greatly diminished the size of their original claims. In numerous petitions to the governor of Chihuahua, Genaro Fourzán and H. S. Stephenson, company agents headquartered in Columbus, made the case that due to the scarcity of water and pasturage the Company could not part with the lands sought by the ejidatarios at Vado de Fusiles. Although their petition had been for two separate dotaciones, the Palomas Land and Cattle Company was able to reduce the actual ejido grant to one.¹²

At the local level, company foremen sought to intimidate employees that supported the land reform movement. Between 1935 and 1941, Palomas residents entered grievances against company administrators for firing them without due cause. On 16 May 1935 Isidro Domínguez wrote a letter to President Lázaro Cárdenas in which he accused company agents of firing him and several other employees because they had supported the ejido petition. Domínguez argued that he had given years of service to the company, and he asked the president to intervene on his behalf because the loss of employment promised to ruin his

from James R. Garfield and Nelson O. Rhodes to Henry W. Anderson, Agente de la Comisión de Reclamaciones Mixtas, Washington, D.C., 1 August 1925, Correspondence and Pleading, Box 349a, Entry 125a, Record Group 76: International Claims Commissions, NARA.

¹² Palomares Peña, *Propietarios Norteamericanos*, 54-55.

family economically.¹³ In May 1940, as the election for the next president of Mexico was underway, Manuel Grado reported that he had been fired from his job and his life threatened by Marshal Stephenson, Jr., assistant manager of the Palomas cattle enterprise and son of one of the company's managing partners. According to Grado, he incited Stephenson's ire because he supported Manuel Avila Camacho for president. Due to the threat on his life, he fled Palomas and relocated in Nuevo Casas Grandes.¹⁴ The previous month, Roberto Yáñez, rural primary school teacher in Palomas, levied even more serious accusations against Stephenson. By Yáñez's account, Stephenson had bullied virtually all of the residents of Palomas, disparaged the Mexican government, and threatened to shoot anyone that crossed his property without authorization. Locals also believed that Stephenson was responsible for the disappearance of 40 residents of Nuevo Casas Grandes, and that he had murdered a man named Pedro Madrid.¹⁵

Although the extant records do not provide clues about the outcome of these complaints, they underscore the difficulties inherent in Mexico's land reform project. The managers of the Palomas Company sought to maintain their monopoly on grazing land and resources along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border through both legal and extralegal violences. Ejidos were intended to place economic resources in the hands of Mexican communities to support their growth and decrease the dominance of large landholders. In

¹³ Letter from Isidro Domínguez to President Lázaro Cárdenas, 16 May 1935, Expediente 8, Caja 91, 2.012.8(6)-4, Fondo Dirección General del Gobierno, Siglo XX, AGN.

¹⁴ Letter from José Rivera to the Secretario de Gobernación, 8 July 1940, Expediente 8, Caja 190, Manuel Grado. Trabajador, queja contra la compañía Palomas Terrenos y Ganados, Fondo Departamento Anónimo del Trabajo (Galería 6), AGN.

¹⁵ Quejas contra Marshall Stephenson, Jr., subgerente de la Compañía Palomas de Ganados y Terrenos, 16 April 1940, Caja 331, Extranjeros Inconvenientes—Denuncias, Fondo IPS, AGN.

northwestern Chihuahua, the implication was that land reform would reverse the cycles of violence that had created the human and social landscapes of the Lower Mimbres Valley. Once again, however, attempts to redraw land tenure as well as social and economic power resulted in more violence. As in the days of the Apache wars when the Mexican state relied on peasant colonists to defend the north against nomadic peoples, the state once again sided legally with the agrarian inhabitants of northwestern Chihuahua during the postrevolutionary period.

The reality of the Lower Mimbres Valley's geographic isolation meant that local populations on the Chihuahua side of the border remained connected to Columbus and Deming. As suggested in the epigraph, Palomas became a site of expansion tied to the revolutionary promise of land reform at about the same time that Columbus received its "kiss of death."¹⁶ As the U.S. Army contemplated the abandonment of Camp Furlong, many Mexican settlers crossed into Chihuahua to take part in agrarian reform. Still, the ejidatarios of Vado de Fusiles, Colonia Díaz, and Palomas looked to Columbus for manufactured goods, implements, seeds, and other supplies. It was the nearest source for such goods.¹⁷

The international boundary was also bridged by the legacy of Pancho Villa's 1916 Raid. It was the event that left the most profound imprint on the human and social landscapes of the Lower Mimbres Valley. During his epoch of revolutionary prowess, Villa had been a vocal proponent of land reform. Indeed, he confiscated many Chihuahua haciendas during his tenure as governor of Chihuahua in 1913 with the intent of granting their lands and resources

¹⁶ Richard R. Dean, "Letters to Relatives," unpublished manuscript, Dean Articles Folder, Personal Archive of Richard Dean, President of the Columbus Historical Society, Columbus, New Mexico [hereafter Dean Archive].

¹⁷ Palomares Peña, 51-53.

to his supporters. Prior to his break with the Constitutionalist movement, he and Obregón had pressed Carranza to initiate a program of land redistribution. Agrarian reform was quite simply “the most compelling of revolutionary goals,” a fact that was not lost on Obregón.¹⁸

Villa’s legacy in the Lower Mimbres Valley, however, is not directly connected to the reform efforts of the 1920s-1940s. Instead, his memory is an issue of deep contention in the communities of Columbus and Palomas. In both places, monuments and markers haling back to Villa’s revolutionary tenure mark the landscape. But the significance of such markers varies widely. Pancho Villa State Park most vividly illustrates the revolutionary’s contested legacy in the Lower Mimbres Valley. The park stands on the former site of Camp Furlong—Columbus’ economic engine during its brief boom between 1917 and 1923. The Camp had also been the symbol of American resistance to Villa’s attack; it stood as the town’s protector. In the late 1950s politicians at the local and regional levels reimagined it as a place that could once again spur economic growth on the nearly empty border. At the park’s dedication, dignitaries from both New Mexico and Chihuahua heralded the site’s potential to promote tourism, trade, and healing between the two states. Despite such promise, however, the park was controversial in the immediate area because it carried Villa’s name.

Due to the way that Villa’s raid devastated Columbus’ built and human landscapes, efforts to make sense of the violence began almost immediately. By early June 1916 the *Columbus Courier* reported on discussions in town of creating a monument to the raid victims. In one of his more frank and direct reports, Editor G. E. Parks noted that visible signs of the raid still marked the town. These included windows with “clean cut holes the

¹⁸ Hall, “Alvaro Obregón,” 213-214.

size of a lead pencil” and the rotting bodies of villistas and their horses “in the mesquite along the border.” Most devastating, perhaps, was that the “ruins of the Commercial Hotel and other stores destroyed during the raid have almost all been cleared away, and the cheap shanties of boomer business stand in the unlovely nakedness amid the charred ruins.” Although Parks didn’t know it at the time, that “unlovely nakedness” was to forever after define Columbus’ old business district; the lots remain vacant, but marked by historical plaques, to this day. Early talk of memorializing the event focused less on the evidence of devastation than on creating a space that would allow the community to heal and that would recognize that the victims’ sacrifice was of national importance. To that end, some Columbusites proposed a park at the south end of town near the international line. The park was to be a “beautifier and comfort to the town.” In order for the park to provide comfort and healing, “plenty of water” was promised for the site in order to create a lush and green landscape in the midst of the desert.¹⁹

The park proposal was sidelined, however, in favor of annual memorial services to honor those killed during the raid. On most years since 1917 a small commemoration has been held in Columbus on 9 March, even after the local population dwindled. By 1940, as the land reform struggle hit a climax in Palomas, Columbus’ population was a mere 265 people; in 1950 the number slipped to 251. The 1960 census reported a small rebound to 307 people.²⁰ In 1959, a proposal for a memorial park in Columbus was reintroduced, this time not at the local level but in the New Mexico state legislature in Santa Fe. The bill that created

¹⁹ *Columbus Courier*, 2 June 1916; and Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, revised ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 5-6.

²⁰ Collection XII: 1913 and 1919 Columbus Census, Personal Archive of Richard Dean, President of the Columbus Historical Society, Columbus, New Mexico [hereafter Dean Archive].

the park passed into law on 6 March of that year, and it outlined that the park's purpose was the "preservation of the memory of the unique historical occasion of the last hostile action by foreign troops within the continental United States."²¹ Among the park's supporters was New Mexico state senator from Luna County, Ike Smalley. Others in and around Columbus, however, were indignant at the proposal to name the state park after Villa.

Despite such misgivings, Pancho Villa State Park was dedicated on 18 November 1961 amid much fanfare. Senator Smalley presided as the event's master of ceremonies. Dignitaries and attendees included Chihuahua Governor Teofilo Borronda, New Mexico Governor Edwin Mechem, Columbus Mayor Jesús Carreon, Hipólito Villa (one of the revolutionary's sons), and a brigade of reporters. In his dedicatory address, Mechem emphasized that the park's purpose was to promote "peaceful co-existence between Mexico and the United States." Syndicated columnist Drew Person noted that the park inspired "infinite effect for good relations between Mexico and the U.S." He also reported "favorable comments from people deep in Mexico" during a trip he had made just prior to the dedication ceremony. From the perspective of the park's creators and promoters, Pancho Villa's name was recast as a symbol of international peace and solidarity. Even they were quick to emphasize, however, that "the park actually commemorates the heroism of American residents of the little border town, the victim of the raid."²²

²¹ Betty Woods, "Trip of the Month: Pancho Villa State Park," *New Mexico Magazine* 40, no. 3 (March 1962), 36; and "Park Name Misunderstood," Pancho Villa Vertical File, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Santa Fe, NM [hereafter Chávez Library].

²² *The Southwesterner* (Columbus, N. Mex.), 4 November and 5 December 1961; D. Harper Simms, "Pancho Villa Gets a Monument," Pancho Villa Vertical File, Chávez Library.

Many raid survivors and other Columbus residents were unable to make that cognitive leap. In a letter to the editor of the *Deming Graphic*, Columbusite Patsy Truscott noted that “one of the smartest advertising gimmicks of the decade was pulled by Columbus when it used Pancho Villa as a publicity peg.” She reasoned that the town should attempt to profit from Villa’s notoriety because he was the only reason that anyone outside of the immediate region knew of the town at all. Although most others seemed to understand the connection between Villa’s name and notoriety, they were outraged by the prolific use of the general’s memory in town. When the park was dedicated, Columbus was also home to the Pancho Villa Motel, Pancho Villa Cantina, and Pancho Villa Café. As local rancher Carl Graham put it, “It’s hard to figure . . . Somebody comes in and wrecks the place. So what do they do—name everything in town in his honor.” Raid survivor Arthur Ravel, threatened with execution by a group of villistas when they were unable to locate his brother Sam, declared “I resent it very much. To name a state park after someone like that thoroughly disgusts me.” Even Mayor Carreon was conflicted; he was also survivor of the raid (he was 11 years old in March 1916). Although he attended the dedication, he was troubled by the barrage of negative letters he received from former Columbus residents, soldiers and civilians alike. They blamed him for naming the park and local businesses after Villa, but he responded, “The state didn’t ask anybody here in town what they thought of the name when they established Pancho Villa State Park.”²³

The decade of the 1960s saw an awakening of sorts relative to Pancho Villa in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and beyond. Chicano/a activists looked to Villa and Emiliano Zapata as symbols for their civil rights movement and in Mexico’s national Cámara de

²³ “State Park Name Misunderstood,” Pancho Villa Vertical File, Chávez Library.

Deputados Villa was ordained to a place among the official pantheon of revolutionary heroes in the capital city. In the fall of 1965, Villa reportedly appeared in a vision to former Mormon colonist James E. Whetten. In March 1966 Whetten was vicariously baptized for the deceased revolutionary general as a result.²⁴ Despite the promise that the wider interest in Villa might boost the fortunes of Columbus, such was not the case. Across the international boundary in Palomas, the ejido was finally free of litigation and harassment from the Palomas Land and Cattle Company. Ejidatarios, however, remained with little to show for their cultivation efforts.²⁵

The small towns of Columbus and Palomas have continued to limp along as isolated rural outposts along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. The examination of their history illustrates tight connections between the two settlements, despite their division by the international boundary. The spatializations that currently define the Lower Mimbres Valley speak of the region's long history of multiple violences. Just to the east of Pancho Villa State Park, across Highway 11 (the Deming-Palomas road, constructed on the old grade that was to be the Deming, Sierra Madre and Pacific Railroad) stands the old El Paso & Southwestern Rail Depot. The structure has been restored, and it houses a museum of the area's history. Richard R. Dean, current president of the Columbus Historical Society and grandson of James T. Dean, one of the civilians killed during the raid, curates the museum and works to preserve a history of Columbus that honors the memory of the raid victims and that deemphasizes Villa's celebrity. Three miles to the south lies the international port of entry

²⁴ Brandon Morgan, "From Brutal Ally to Humble Believer: Mormon Colonists' Image of Pancho Villa," *New Mexico Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (spring 2010), 125-126.

²⁵ Ramírez Tafoya, "La Puerta, El Nuevo Palomas, Hoy Palomas de Francisco Villa."

and gateway to Palomas. In 1992 the town adopted the official name of Puerto Palomas de Francisco Villa (although most locals still refer to the place as simply “Palomas”). A statue of Villa stands at the center of the town plaza.²⁶

Despite the border fence and the differing interpretations of Villa’s significance to the towns, 9 March 2013 marked a commemoration of the raid that sought to bridge such divides. That morning the Cabalgada Binacional Villista made a peaceful procession northward from the border fence to mark the 97th anniversary of the raid. Memorial speeches at the Depot Museum and at Pancho Villa State Park honored those who were killed. Festivities brought Palomas and Columbus residents together in both towns during the afternoon. Although the Cabalgada from Palomas has similarly marked the occasion since the 1990s, the memorial services at the Depot Museum have not always taken place as part of one larger commemoration; they have often occurred separately and simultaneously.²⁷ Although healing has proved elusive, such markers and commemorations stand as reminders of the ways in which Villa has come to symbolize the historical dialectic of violence that forged the communities of the Lower Mimbres Valley beginning in 1888.

²⁶ Ibid.; and Richard R. Dean, conversation with the author, 28 December 2010.

²⁷ S. Derrickson Moore, “Raid Retrospective—Events Mark Pancho Villa’s Invasion,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 8 March 2013, http://www.lcsun-news.com/las_cruces-sunlife/ci_22744206/raid-retrospective-mdash-events-mark-pancho-villas-invasion, accessed 26 April 2013.

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