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# Ranching in Northeastern New Mexico

Conchita Sintas

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RANCHING IN NORTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO

by

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

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And finally to Mrs. Stella Sintas, your love and memory helped immensely. Without your memory of life in Colfax and Union Counties, I would still be researching this issue. Mrs. Janet Laros provided me with her invaluable assistance and support.

## Ranching in Northeastern New Mexico

Conchita Sintas

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### ABSTRACT

Historians have studied ranching extensively in Texas, Wyoming, and Montana. There are many monographs published on ranches, ranchers, and cowboys. Colfax and Union counties have an extensive number of ranches. These ranches are from as small as ten acres to as large as 590,000 acres.

These ranches in their own right deserve to be studied, especially since they were a part of at least two legitimate land grants: Maxwell Land Grant and Pablo Montoya Land Grant. In addition, some of these ranches exist because of the railroad, which runs through both counties. This thesis examines a few of the many ranches in this area. It also includes a brief history of the Santa Fe Trail Dry Cimarron Cutoff area.

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## Preface

The idea for this thesis started while working on my family genealogy. During the discussions with various family members, I realized that my great-great grandfather Santiago Sandoval, my great grandfather Fidel Martinez, and my grandfather Lewis Martinez, participated in the settling of Union County, New Mexico. Santiago was a well-known *curandero* (healer) and Fidel and Lewis were sheepherders. To find out more about their lives, I tried to research the history of Union County. To my surprise, very few historians have written about it. The extant works are published oral histories. In Colfax County, the published works are about the land grants and not about ranching. Thus began the journey to recreate a part of the history of these counties, particularly in regards to ranching. After all, these ranches are the largest and steadiest part of the local economy in Colfax and Union Counties.

An effort to research ranching in northeastern New Mexico has resulted in unearthing a lot of little-known history of northeastern New Mexico. In addition to the more well-known ranches in northern New Mexico, there are quite a few large operations whose history in the region dates back to the 1870s.

In this thesis, I use the terms *Anglo*, *Native Americans*, and *Hispanics* to identify various ethnic groups living in New Mexico. The reason for this is to lessen the confusion factor and to use terms common to the area. In addition, I use *Anasazi* because it includes all the centers such as Mesa Verde, Mancos Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Hopi Mesas, Aztec Ruins, and Chaco Canyon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 16.

## Introduction

### A Historical Sketch of Northeastern New Mexico 1820-1950

In 1925, Frederick Jackson Turner authored the essay “The Significance of the Section in American History.” He argued that the American West was no longer a frontier. Turner indicated that by the 1850s, America, as a whole, was a nation of regions and that regionalism played a huge part in shaping U.S. politics and society.<sup>1</sup> In the American West, regionalism was the dominant theme for the sheep and cattle ranchers who operated there. The specific region explored in this thesis embraces the Texas Panhandle, the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma, northeastern New Mexico and southeastern Colorado. This section of the High Plains is a part of the Great American Desert defined by Major Stephen H. Long in the early 1820s.<sup>2</sup> This chapter sketches the history of this little-known part of the southern plains and New Mexico from 1820-1950 and will cover Colfax and Union Counties.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Section in American History,” in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier in American History and Other Essays*, with commentary by John Mack Faragher (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 223.

<sup>2</sup> James Edwin, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819 and '20, by Order of the Hon. J. C. Calhoun, Sec'y of War: Under the Command of Major Stephen H. Long: From the Notes of Major Long, Mr. T. Say and Other Gentlemen of the Exploring Party*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, Pa.: H. C. Carey and I. Lea, 1822-23), 558.

Northeastern New Mexico has a unique bio-regional history. This corner of New Mexico was mostly used by the various Apache tribes, the Kiowas, the Utes, and the Comanches until the early 1820s, when the Anglos ventured here to assess markets for eastern products in New Mexico. In 1821 and 1822, William Becknell established the Cimarron Cutoff to the Santa Fe Trail. In the meantime, the Mountain Branch was also being established with a toll road constructed by 1866. New Mexico was divided into seven counties after the U.S. conquest. Over time, these counties were further divided into the current thirty-three.<sup>3</sup> Colfax and Union counties in northeastern New Mexico were pathways of the Santa Fe Trail in the early to mid-1800s, then ranch land in the late 1800s and finally farmland when the Dutch company, the railroads, and the U.S. government attempted to turn the region to agriculture. They nearly succeeded until the Dust Bowl years when the land was eventually returned mostly to ranching.

Following the Civil War, Charles Goodnight, John Chisum, and others Texas cattlemen pioneered the sprawling, open-range cattle ranches in this section.<sup>4</sup> The frontier myth portrays the men who arrived in the territory as bigger than life and single handedly building their ranches without much capital. However, historians Richard Graham, William Pearce, and William T. Hagan demonstrate that eastern and British financiers backed these ranchers with large sums of capital.<sup>5</sup> They sought to feed High

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<sup>3</sup> New Mexico Association of Counties, <http://nmcounties.org/> Accessed January 31, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> J. Evetts Haley, *The XIT Ranch and the Early Days of the Llano Estacado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1929), 39-44.

<sup>5</sup> This is a partial list of works dealing with the rise of large cattle ranches. Richard Graham, "The Investment Boom in British-Texan Cattle Companies, 1880-1885," *The Business History Review* 34:4 (winter 1960): 421-445; William Pearce, *The Matador Land and Cattle Company* (Norman: University of

Plains grass, eastern New Mexico's most abundant natural resource, to cattle that could be marketed as beef in U.S. urban centers at a handsome profit.

Historians have authored many books and articles about cattle ranching country, especially in the Texas Panhandle that also includes the Llano Estacado in New Mexico. Edward Everett Dale offers ample detail about the range cattle industry from 1865-1925. He demonstrates how the ranches became corporations and shows the extent of European involvement in North American ranching.<sup>6</sup> Robert Dykstra details the creation of the cattle towns of Kansas used to transship the cattle driven from Texas to Chicago for processing and sale in the East.<sup>7</sup> William T. Hagan has written a biography about Charles Goodnight and includes the cattlemen who settled the Texas Panhandle. In this book, he also shows that the Panhandle ranchers sometimes fattened their cattle by taking them to ranges in New Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

Historian Marc Simmons and Geographer Richard Nostrand have extensively researched the clash of cultures and the ethnic and racial accommodation in New Mexico history.<sup>9</sup> These monographs relate the general events of ranching in the southwestern

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Oklahoma Press, 1964), 9-10; Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 175-79; and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 208-40.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry: Ranching on the Great Plains from 1865-1925* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1960), 80-83.

<sup>7</sup> Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> William T. Hagan, *Charles Goodnight: Father of the Texas Panhandle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Marc Simmons, *New Mexico: An Interpretive History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 6, 35-8, 55, 107-9, 132-33; Richard L Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland* (Norman: University of

area of the Great American Desert. However, in spite of this historiography, few authors have written specifically about ranching in New Mexico, particularly the northeastern section. There are no monographs published on Folsom, Clayton, and Union Counties, except for local histories. No one has published on ranching in Union County.<sup>10</sup> As for Colfax County ranches, books exist about the Philmont Scout Ranch and the Chase Ranch, and pamphlets about Vermejo Park.<sup>11</sup> No one has authored books on any other ranch in either county. Ranches ranging from ten acres to five hundred ninety thousand acres dot or cover northeastern New Mexico, many with a history just as distinguished as that of Philmont and Vermejo.

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Oklahoma Press, 1992), 24, 55, 106-7, and *El Cerrito, New Mexico: Eight Generations in a Spanish Village* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 129-40.

<sup>10</sup> The books written about Union County are mainly oral histories of some of the families that have lived or are living in Union County today. See Kith, Kin, and Kind Friend, *A History of Union County, 1803-1980: Chronicle of Union County* (Clayton, N.Mex.: Union County Historical Society, 1980); Centennial Book Committee, *Folsom, 1888-1988: Then and Now* (n.p. 1988); Mrs. N. H. (Cora) Click, *Us Nesters in the Land of Enchantment* (Salem, Ore.: Panther Press, 1980); and Morris F. Taylor, *Basil (Bill Metcalf) and His Toll Gate, Now in Union County, New Mexico, Formerly in Colfax County, New Mexico, 1872-1885* (Trinidad, Colo.: Trinidad State Junior College, n.d.), 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Zimmer, *Philmont: A Brief History of a New Mexico Scout Ranch* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Sunstone Press, 2000); Lawrence Murphy, *Philmont: A History of New Mexico's Cimarron Country*, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 206-8; Ruth W. Armstrong, *The Chases of Cimarron: Birth of the Cattle Industry in Cimarron Country, 1867-1900* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Stockman, 1981), 1-171; and Anne C. Haslanger, *A History of Vermejo Park* (n.p., n.d.), 1-9. People usually ask about Ted Turner's ranch, which is Vermejo Park. However, there are no books written about it, except for theses and dissertations about the ecology.

Anglos and Hispanos settled Colfax and Union Counties in the late nineteenth century. The land grants, railroads, and homesteads all combined to shape the turbulent history of these counties. I intend to show how land grantees, homesteaders, and ranchers came to live in these counties and give some background as to how they have interacted and learned to accommodate one another. Some Anglo settlers contended with Spanish and Mexican land grants, especially the Mora, Uña de Gato, Pablo Montoya, and Maxwell. These grants affected the location of some of the ranches. The Hispanic ranchers faced the issues of availability of land that was not part of any grant, and of retention of the land already granted to them by the Spanish and Mexican governments. Once the Anglos appeared on the scene, the United States federal courts had to settle the contests over the land grants, usually to the disadvantage of the Hispanos.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 3-5; G. Emlen Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos: A Legal History of the Pecos Grant, 1800-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 111-42; Maria E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict Over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12, 84-5, 126-31; Morris F. Taylor, "The Uña de Gato Grant in Colfax County," *New Mexico Historical Review* 51: 2 (April 1976): 121-43; and William Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant: A New Mexico Item* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Rydal Press, 1942), 29; Harding County website. [http://www.hardingcounty.org/history/pablo\\_montoya\\_grant.htm](http://www.hardingcounty.org/history/pablo_montoya_grant.htm) (accessed October 1, 2011).

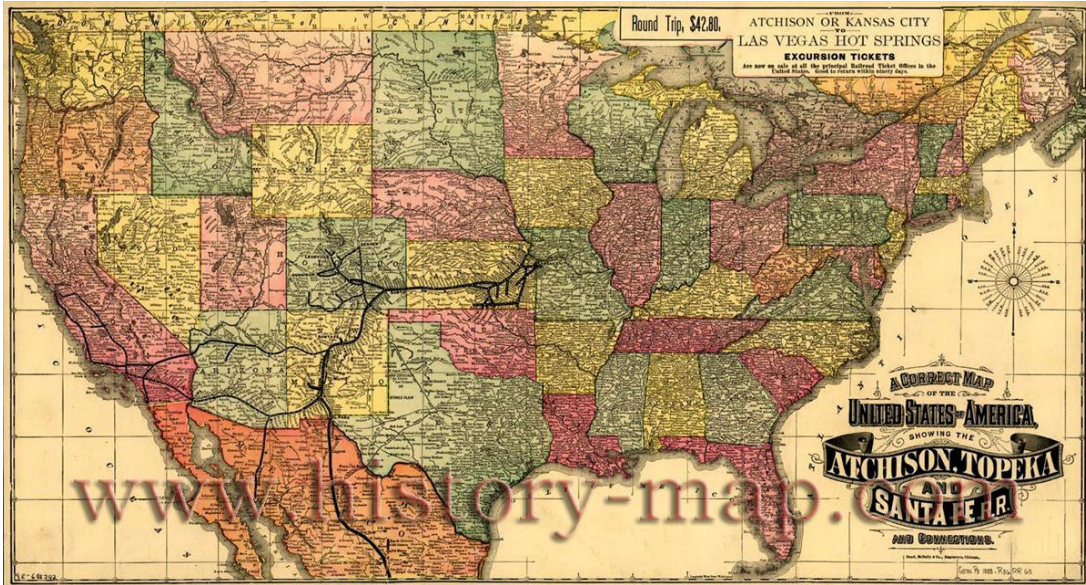


Figure 1. Map of Connections of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad taken in 1888 (Map from [www.history-map.com](http://www.history-map.com))

Railroads supplied a major development to these counties in the late nineteenth century. In fact, they brought settlers into the area for farming and ranching. The railroad used many tactics to lure settlers to create a thriving business and robust markets. Colonel Cyrus K. Holliday built the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad from Kansas to La Junta, Colorado. He completed it by connecting La Junta, Colorado, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1880. In 1885, the Colorado and Southern was built west connecting Clayton, New Mexico to northern Texas and Colorado. Finally, General Granville Dodge built the Denver and Fort Worth to Clayton by March 1888. In addition, the railroads sold off most of the land given to them by the United States government.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sig Mickelson, *The Northern Pacific Railroad and the Selling of the West* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: The Center for Western Studies, 1993), 1-3; Keith L. Bryant Jr., *History of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 43-46; Jim F. Heath, "A Study of the Influence of

Northeastern New Mexico is located in the foothills of the Southern Rocky Mountains. North of Las Vegas along Interstate 25 lies beautiful country, mountains to the west and the Great Plains to the east. Initially, the most marvelous sight is the wide, flat plains spread out for miles in every direction. Eventually travelers notice, in the distance, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, part of the Rocky Mountain chain.<sup>14</sup> If the snow season is normal, a few peaks will be snow covered as late as early August.

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the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad upon the Economy of New Mexico, 1878 to 1900” (master’s thesis, University of New Mexico, 1955), 32-34; Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 246-58, 365-70, and *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 49, 204 .

<sup>14</sup> Jayne C. Aubele, a geologist at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Geologist, stated that geologists view the Sangre de Cristo Mountains as a southern range of the Rocky Mountains. Jayne C. Aubele, email author January 21, 2012.



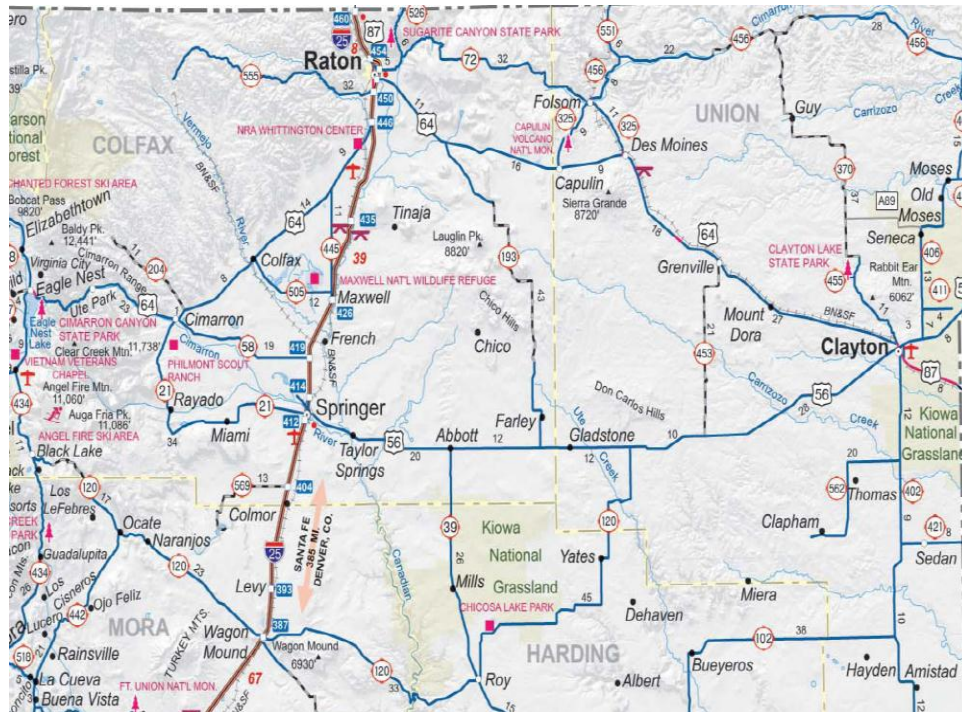


Figure 2. NM DOT Road Map north of Wagon Mound (Photograph courtesy of NM DOT,

<http://geology.com/cities-map/new-mexico.shtml>

From Las Vegas north to Raton, wide-open spaces dominate the landscape. Three miles south of Raton, Highway 64 goes west to Cimarron, eventually arriving in Taos. This drive goes through some of the most breathtaking country in the region. The beautiful Palisades and the Eagle Nest Ski Valley are located between Cimarron and Taos. The Eagle Nest Ski Valley includes Wheeler Peak, which boasts an altitude of thirteen thousand feet above sea level and is the highest peak in New Mexico.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Carson National Forest website,

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson/recreation/wilderness/wheeler\\_peak\\_info.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson/recreation/wilderness/wheeler_peak_info.shtml) (accessed on August 28, 2011).

Interstate 25, the major road linking Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Denver, Colorado, goes through Raton north to Colorado. In Raton, two roads head east either to Clayton (Highway 64) or to Folsom (County Road 72). Either way is a scenic drive. Fourteen miles east of Raton on Highway 64 is the TO Ranch. The ranch is easily found since its buildings are mostly a bright red, the color they have always been painted.

Along the highway to Clayton, many ranches small, medium, and large are visible. The scenery is generally green, but little water is visible. During the winter, it snows a lot in this area, with drifts occasionally closing the roads for up to thirty-six hours.

From Raton, the Folsom road delivers another scenic drive. A few miles out of Raton, large open valleys, usually green, begin to appear. Dividing valleys are outcroppings of twisted, stunted piñon trees. As with the country along the Clayton highway, this area is subject to closure in the winter because of drifting snow. Throughout the area, the view includes the mountains in the distance as well as the closer hills. The valleys themselves are hardly flat, but rolling, grassy landscapes.<sup>16</sup>

Raton and the territory to the east would eventually become a part of Colfax County. In the late 1890s, the territory from Des Moines (about 35 miles east of Raton) east to the state line became a part of Union County. The Comanches, Utes, Kiowas, and Apaches inhabited and used this region until the mid to late 1870s when the U.S. government placed them on reservations. Throughout this country, herds of sheep, cattle, deer, antelope, bison, emus, and llamas now roam or graze.

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<sup>16</sup> These observations are from the author who has traveled extensively throughout the region since childhood.

The first non-Indian occupants of New Mexico, the Spanish Conquistadors, arrived in 1540 when Francisco Vázquez de Coronado brought a large armed force, with many thousands of livestock, to locate Cibola, the lost Seven Cities of Gold. His purpose was not to found a new colony, but to capitalize on the gold they were sure to find. Coronado was recalled to Mexico in disgrace for not finding this gold. In 1598, don Juan de Oñate arrived to create a colony claiming New Mexico for King Philip II of Spain. This colony was to be more permanent. When these Spaniards arrived, they attempted to subjugate the local population. Like the Americans, they claimed a position superior to the locals. The conquistadors and especially the Franciscan Friars made life miserable for the Indians. The Spanish would be in New Mexico until 1680 when the Puebloans temporarily ousted them from the country.<sup>17</sup>

The Spaniards began re-conquering New Mexico in 1692 bringing people who were *mestizos* (Spanish and Indian) and *mulattos* (Spanish and African). Eventually these newcomers mixed with the local Native populations. This racial blending occurred because the Spanish often used Indian children as servants. Richard Nostrand writes, “In

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<sup>17</sup> Marc Simmons, “The Pueblos,” in *New Mexico: An Interpretive History* (1976; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 20-25, 65-71, “Trail Dust: Coronado Expedition was a Failure for his Backers,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 29, 2002, B-1; David J. Weber, *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?* (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999), 3-7; Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds., *The Coronado Expedition: From the Distance of 460 Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 1-10; Rick Hendricks, “Juan de Oñate, Diego de Vargas, and Hispanic Beginnings in New Mexico” in *New Mexican Lives: Profiles and Historical Stories*, Richard W. Etulain, ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 45-57; and Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 57-59.

a racial sense, this nomad Indian strain to a degree differentiates Hispanos from Mexican Americans in the Borderlands.”<sup>18</sup>

Over the centuries, from the first Spanish conquest in 1598 to the arrival of the Americans in 1846, the Hispanos formed a very distinctive society. Due to political problems and vast stretches of open space populated by hostile Indians, the Spanish authorities in Mexico City largely ignored the New Mexicans who, during this time, clung to the Catholic Church, their Spanish customs, and the Spanish language brought by the Conquistadors. The isolation formed customs and a language very different from those of other Hispanos.<sup>19</sup>

The Hispanos and the Natives learned to live with each other, albeit uneasily, throughout the centuries. Little did they seriously suspect things would change drastically during the early nineteenth century with the arrival of the Anglo fur trappers and merchants in the 1820s. These Anglos brought their notions of “racial superiority” over anyone outside their ethnic group. Anglos incorporated their racial attitudes into a phrase, *Manifest Destiny*. This ideology justified U.S. conquest of the North American

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<sup>18</sup> Nostrand, *Hispano Homeland*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 149-51; James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 80-82; and John L. Kessel, *Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History of Colonial New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 332-33.

continent and the subjugation and subordination of all people of color, in the minds of Anglos.<sup>20</sup>

The Anglos referred to all New Mexicans as “Mexicans.” The general agreement among the Anglos was that Mexicans were “indolent, degenerate, undependable, dishonest, impoverished, and addicted to gambling and other vices.” Anglos had little or no respect for the Mexican men. However, they referred to the women as “Spanish” and treated some, particularly upper-class Hispanas, with a great deal of respect. On the other hand, the Hispanos thought the Anglos were “arrogant, rude, insolent, economic materialists, religious heretics, and cultural barbarians.” In fact, the United States bothered with New Mexico only for commercial and military reasons. It believed New Mexicans were incapable of self-government and required someone superior to govern them.<sup>21</sup>

The interesting thing about the Hispanos in New Mexico is that their Spanish American culture has remained largely intact, although just how much is a point of

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<sup>20</sup> Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Chicago, Ill.: Quadrangle Books, 1935), 1-9; and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 189-228; and Gómez, *Manifest Destinies*, 57-59.

<sup>21</sup> Several historians have published works on the problem of race in New Mexico: Simmons, *New Mexico: An Interpretive History*, 132-33 ; Nostrand, *Hispano Homeland*, 106-7; John Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 145-70; Charles Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption : Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54-88; and Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New York: Norton, 1970), 26, 59.

debate. Although they surrendered politically to the Anglos, they did not give up the core of their culture, such as the “*patrón* in politics,” their Catholic heritage, or their “beautiful and somewhat archaic Spanish language.”<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, the Anglo and Hispano cultures shaped each other in the region, with New Mexico, even today, offering an interesting mix of cultures including the diverse Natives American societies.<sup>23</sup>

Racial tensions have been an issue during the last 150 years, although ranch people in New Mexico feel them minimally. Their peers usually accepted African American cowhands as equals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the late 1950s, the number of African American cowhands had dwindled to the point that they no longer appear on census records.<sup>24</sup> There are many reasons for the easing of this tension. The primary one being that ranch life can be very dangerous work where laborers of all races have to depend on and trust each other. The arduous nature of ranching diminishes the influence of race in daily life.

Racial animosity between Anglos and Hispanos flourished in New Mexico after the U.S. conquest and annexation. Stella Sintas related a story about a racial incident that took place when she was in high school during the late 1940s. One day, a young Anglo boy called her and her cousins “dirty Mexicans.” He promptly ran from them, hoping to suffer no harm. However, they asked some male cousins to stop him, and the girls proceeded to beat him. The most interesting thing is that this young man and his family

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<sup>22</sup> Lamar, *Far Southwest*, 200.

<sup>23</sup> Simmons, *New Mexico*, 164.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Cormier, “Times Were Not Easy: A History of New Mexico Ranching and Its Culture, 1900-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1998), xi.

eventually became life-long friends with the Hispanos he had insulted. In addition, he eventually married a Hispana.<sup>25</sup>

In 1846, the Americans won the U.S.-Mexican War and annexed Texas, New Mexico, and California. The causes for the war were varied, but the most probable reason was that James K. Polk, the American president, believed that his duty was to extend the United States from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. He coveted California, which had ports on the Pacific Ocean.<sup>26</sup> Little did President Polk realize or care about the trouble that he was starting between the Anglos and Hispanics.

The Native Americans were here long before the Spaniards arrived in the mid-1500s. No one really knows when the first humans arrived in the region; the best guess is about twelve thousand years ago. The Pueblo Nations are descendants of the Chacoan culture and Mogollon peoples who were here since about 2000 to 3000 B.C.<sup>27</sup> The Athabascans came into their own culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when they journeyed to their present location in Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Stella Sintas, interview by Conchita Sintas, notes, Raton, New Mexico, July 8, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Sister Mary Loyola, "The American Occupation of New Mexico, 1821-1852 [Part II]," *New Mexico Historical Review* 14:1 (January 1939): 158; and Frederick Merk and Lois Bannister Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 61-88.

<sup>27</sup> Pueblos: North American Native American Indian Pre-Contact Housing website <http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/houses/pueblo.html>, accessed 5 May 2009; and Joe S. Sando, *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Clear Light Publishers, 1992), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 14-16.

The arrival of the Spaniards in the early 1500s, with their ideas of racial superiority and quest for gold, caused a lot of conflict with the Natives, friction that would continue for the next 350 years. The initial failures of the Spaniards included the inability to find the lost cities of gold and especially their temporary ouster in 1680 by the Pueblo Revolt.<sup>29</sup> The most serious trouble between the local tribes (Comanches, Kiowas, Utes, and Jicarilla Apaches) and the Spanish began in the eighteenth century and continued with the Anglos in the mid nineteenth century. The Natives and the Spaniards fought and eventually learned to live together with an uneasy truce between them. The plains tribes even managed to trade with the Hispanic comancheros (traders to Natives) and taught the ciboleros (buffalo hunters) how to hunt buffalo.

Some southern Plains Indians hunted in the area between Raton and Clayton, which is about ninety miles long from east to west. Some thirty miles of the eastern section of Union and Colfax Counties were a part of the Cimarron Cutoff to the Santa Fe Trail. The Comanches and Jicarillas both claimed it as their land. The tribes that were most worrisome to northeastern New Mexico were the Kiowas, Comanches, and Jicarilla Apaches, with occasional disputes also involving the Utes. The Kiowas were known to roam and sometimes attack and kill travelers on the Santa Fe Trail. The permanent settlers, both American and Hispanic, were able to locate there once the Indians were confined to reservations by the late 1870s. The Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans

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<sup>29</sup> Weber, *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt*, 3-7.



looked at the Natives as being troublesome hunters and beggars and failed to recognize or accept that they were merely defending their own land.<sup>30</sup>

Over the years, there were many clashes among all the peoples living in New Mexico. The Dry Cimarron area was used as a “means of egress to and from the plains for purposes of hunting.” The last real flashes of trouble with the Plains Indians in New Mexico occurred in the summer of 1874. In July, the Comanches were accused of running off one hundred horses from John Chisum’s Pecos River Ranch. No one knows whether this was true, and if so, how the raid turned out.<sup>31</sup> Soon thereafter, the remnants of the free Comanches and Kiowas were confined to a federal reservation.

In 1821, Captain William Becknell was the first American to arrive in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with trade goods from the United States. He established the route that would

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<sup>30</sup> Books on the Kiowas, Utes, Comanches, and Jicarilla include T. R. Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 226; S. C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 25-6, 129, 212-14; *Handbook of North American Indians, 20 vols.*, ed. William Sturtevant, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979); P. David Smith, *Ouray: Chief of the Utes: The Fascinating Story of Colorado’s Most Famous and Controversial Indian Chief* (Ridgway, Colo.: Wayfinder Press, 1990), 34, 38, 99; F. Stanley, *The Jicarilla Apaches of New Mexico: 1540-1967* (Pampa, Tex.: Pampa Print Shop, 1967); Veronica E. Velarde Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History*, rev. ed. (1983; Albuquerque: BowArrow Publishing, 2000), 25; Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 10-16; Morris F. Taylor, “The New Mexico-Colorado Border: The Last Phase, 1870-1876,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 46:4 (October 1971): 317; and Pekka Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 141-238.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, “New Mexico-Colorado Border,” 322, 331.

eventually become the Santa Fe Trail and inaugurated the lucrative Santa Fe Trade. The original trail ran from Franklin, Missouri, through Kansas west to La Junta, Colorado, and south to Santa Fe through the high and rugged Raton Pass, which is approximately seven thousand feet above sea level. After 1822, the American traders established the Cimarron Cutoff on the Santa Fe Trail. This route started west of the future site of Fort Dodge and proceeded through present-day Clayton, which was a welcome “watering place” at the end of this journey. The Comanches claimed this area as part of their hunting grounds, but did not use it very often because of the lack of water and most especially because of fear of attack by Jicarillas and Anglos.<sup>32</sup>

The threat of Indian raids and the land-grant issue had to be settled before the settlers arrived in northeastern New Mexico. Land Grants in New Mexico were awarded from three sources: Spain, Mexico, and the U. S. government. The Spanish and Mexican Land Grants were a continual source of litigation in U.S. courts after the end of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848. During the American Civil War, the U.S. Congress authorized that specific sections of land throughout the States be given to railroads for the express purpose of financing and building transcontinental railroads. Upon the completion of the railroads, the companies, no longer needing the land, sold the remainder to homesteaders and town builders to raise revenue for their development and operation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friend, *A History of Union County*, 7- 8.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=32&page=transcript>, accessed 9/5/2011 Transcript of Pacific Railway Act (1862).

When the Americans acquired New Mexico, Congress agreed to approve those land grants awarded by the King of Spain or the President of Mexico as long as they were proven and uncontested. The controversy over these land grants was caused by the indefinite nature of the boundaries and, sometimes, lack of documentation. To complicate matters, the American property law was different from and did not recognize the Spanish or Mexican property, particularly communal forms. These grants of land were generally given not to an individual but to a community or family.<sup>34</sup>

One of the largest grants was the Maxwell Land Grant initially assigned in 1841 to Guadalupe Miranda and Carlos Beaubien. Within days, Governor Manuel Armijo granted the petition and gave away a lot of the land that was already assigned to the Taos Pueblo people and was also the homeland of the Jicarilla Apaches.<sup>35</sup>

In 1844, Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell married Luz Beaubien, daughter of Carlos Beaubien. Maxwell eventually inherited or bought the land grant from the Beaubien heirs. This transaction was accomplished with difficulty and through much litigation.<sup>36</sup> This would not be the only time the grant was litigated. Maxwell assumed that the grant covered between 32,000 and 97,424 acres, or two Spanish leagues. The grant was in present-day Colfax County and extended eastward to present-day Union County. When Maxwell sold his land to the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company, it was again

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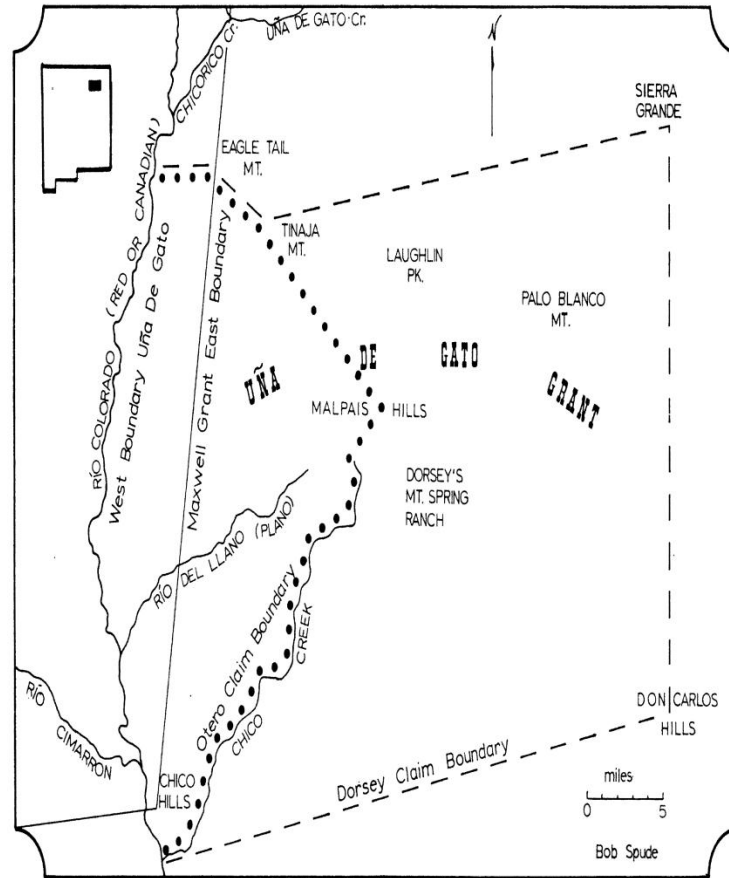
<sup>34</sup> Montoya, *Translating Property*, 5; and Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits*, 11-28.

<sup>35</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 13-15; and Montoya, *Translating Property*, 30-36.

<sup>36</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 27.

litigated due to the uncertainty of the boundaries. The issue was eventually settled by the U. S. Supreme Court on April 18, 1887 and became a grand total of 1,714,764.93 acres.<sup>37</sup>

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Figure 3. Map of Maxwell and Uña de Gato Land Grants (Map from New Mexico Historical Review 51:2)

One day in 1873, William R. Morley, vice president of the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company, was speaking to a Hispano by the name of Gomez y Lopez, who

<sup>37</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 29; Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants*, 39, 111; and David L. Caffey. *Frank Springer and New Mexico: From the Colfax County War to the Emergence of Modern Santa Fe* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 80.

wanted to register some property with the Colfax County clerk. Gomez y Lopez said his claim was to the Uña de Gato Land Grant, which ran from east of Red River along the Uña de Gato Valley and then south to Chico Creek. Morley was most interested in this claim because the land was included in the Maxwell Land Grant.<sup>38</sup>

Following the Civil War, the area of Uña de Gato was used by various people. The first were the sheepherders, who brought their herds to graze during the summer. In fact, don Hilario Gonzales and Francisco Lopez started pasturing thousands of sheep there sometime in the 1870s.<sup>39</sup> The sheepherders pastured their sheep in Union County until the cattlemen pushed them off in the 1880s.<sup>40</sup>

By 1885, the first permanent settlers arrived in the county with the boom in cattle. The Garcia brothers lived in the southern section of the county, where they were engaged in the cattle and sheep business. Still other settlers were James McDonald, James Carter, Thomas Boggs, and Candido Garcia. Still settlers chose to live on the site of the future Folsom, New Mexico. Before 1880, most of the settlers were from the eastern states. After that, they came from Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas (cattle country). These cattlemen brought their well-known hospitality. They never locked gates or doors, and if

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<sup>38</sup> Taylor, "The Uña de Gato Grant in Colfax County," 122.

<sup>39</sup> Susan A. Roberts and Calvin A. Roberts, eds. *A History of New Mexico*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 255; and John O. Baxter, *Las Carneradas: Sheep Trade in New Mexico, 1700-1860* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 93-95.

<sup>40</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friend, *A History of Union County*, 8.

a stranger needed a place to stay or a meal to eat, he was always welcome, even if the homeowner was not around.<sup>41</sup>

Until the 1890s, most landholders were ranching on a small scale.<sup>42</sup> By the 1890s, the Prairie Cattle Company owned the largest ranch with a total of 5,076,480 acres.<sup>43</sup> In the early 1900s, it sold most of its land holdings to neighboring settlers. Other large concerns using this land were the XIT Ranch from Texas, which enclosed 3,050,000 acres with barbed wire,<sup>44</sup> and the 101 Ranch from Oklahoma, which encompassed 110,000 acres.<sup>45</sup> Between 1885 and 1900, the cattle business started declining in the region. This allowed the sheep business, a traditional Hispano enterprise, to reclaim the area.<sup>46</sup>

In 1887, a railroad was built through Union County. The purpose was to provide a means of hauling livestock from Union County to the slaughterhouses in Chicago. The railroad was named the Denver and New Orleans Railroad; later it became the Denver, Texas, and Gulf Railroad; still later, it became the Union Pacific, Denver, and Gulf Railroad. It is now known as the Colorado and Southern Railroad. The town of Des

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<sup>41</sup> Berry Newton Alvis, "History of Union County, New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 22:3 (July 1947): 247-48.

<sup>42</sup> According to the Agriculture Department, small landholders were those with 127 or less acres. Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture: 1890 eleventh census*. (Washington, D.C.: GPO):1.

<sup>43</sup> <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/P/PR002.html> accessed 8/24/2012.

<sup>44</sup> Haley, *XIT Ranch*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ellsworth Collings in collaboration with Alma Miller England, *The 101 Ranch* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, (1937): xiii.

<sup>46</sup> Alvis, "History of Union County, New Mexico," 253.

Moines was established along this line to serve as a shipping point for cattle in the region.<sup>47</sup>

Other people who used this area were the comancheros. Doctor Josiah Gregg was the first Anglo to record the presence of the comancheros, Hispanic New Mexicans who traded with the Comanches and Kiowas from about 1786 until the government confined the southern tribes to the reservation in the 1870s. Gregg stated that they traded trinkets, bread, and *pinole* with the Comanches for horses and mules. The Spanish and Mexican governments considered comancheros harmless; later the Anglos considered them villainous. However, all three nations valued the information the comancheros provided about the movement of the Comanches. Initially they were limited by official Spanish restrictions and by the Comanches. Later, Spanish governor Francisco de la Concha, who arrived in New Mexico in the summer of 1787, encouraged their movements onto the Plains. They continued trading to about 1870. During that time, the government in charge of New Mexico verbally encouraged their trade but sometimes restricted their movements.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Alvis, "History of Union County, New Mexico," 264, 272.

<sup>48</sup> According to Ruben Cobos, *pinole* is cornmeal made from parched corn. Ruben Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 181; Charles Kenner, *The Comanchero Frontier: A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1994), 78-80; Frances Levine, "Economic Perspectives on the Comanchero Trade," in *Farmers, Hunters, and Colonists: Interaction between the Southwest and the Southern Plains*, ed. by Katherine A. Spielmann (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 155-69; Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire, 168-71, 205, 211-12*; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins, 221-22, 269-71, 317-18, 335*; Ross Frank, "Demographic, Social and Economic Change in New Mexico" in *New Views of Borderland History*, ed. by Robert H. Jackson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 41-71; and

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, comanchero status with the government fluctuated. Sometimes, the Mexican government allowed them to trade openly with the Comanches; other times they arrested them for trading.<sup>49</sup> The Americans likewise were ambivalent about the New Mexican trade. In 1849, James Calhoun, superintendent of Indian affairs in New Mexico, tried to stop this practice, but did allow it at first as long as the traders purchased a license for ten dollars. Some Americans held comancheros in low esteem. Lieutenant James W. Abert of the U.S. Army called them a “poor and shabby” group. Captain Lemuel Ford of the First U. S. Dragoons wrote in his diary that “these Spaniards [sic] are the meanest looking race of People I ever saw; don’t appear more civilized than our Indians generally. Dirty filthy looking creatures.”<sup>50</sup> However, Gregg saw them in a different light. He thought they were “picturesque” and well worth describing in his diary.<sup>51</sup>

These comancheros followed a well-beaten trail to the southern plains. At first, they used pack mules to transport their goods. By 1840, they used a traditional caravan of

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Josiah Gregg, *The Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. by Milo Milton Quaife (1844; reprint, Chicago, Ill.: The Lakeside Press, 1926), 54.

<sup>49</sup> Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 79; Governor Calhoun’s correspondence relating to licenses in late 1849 to early 1850, Santa Fe, New Mexico, [The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun While Indian Agent at Santa Fe and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico](#), ed. by Annie Heloise Abel (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1915), 104-6.

<sup>50</sup> Lt. James William Abert, *Expedition to the Southwest: An 1845 Reconnaissance of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma*, intro H. Bailey Carroll (1941; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 71; and Nolie Mumeay, *March of the First Dragoons to the Rocky Mountains in 1835: The Diaries and Maps of Lemuel Ford* (Denver, Colo.: Eames Brothers Press, 1957), 72.

<sup>51</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 49.



*carretas* (carts) similar to those the *ciboleros* (buffalo hunters) used. According to Lieutenant Abert, *carretas* were of a crude construction with “two eccentric wheels, not exactly circular, formed by sawing off the ends of large logs, and rimming them with pieces of timber to increase the diameter. They were perforated in the neighborhood of the centre, to receive an axletree of cotton-wood. A suitable pole, and a little square box of wicker-work, completed the laughable machine.”<sup>52</sup>



Figure 4. Carreta at Casa San Ysidro. (Photograph courtesy of Casa San Ysidro <http://www.cabq.gov/museum/history/casatour.html>)

Despite their archaic transportation, the *comancheros* ranged from the Wichita Mountains (Sierra Jumanos) of Oklahoma to the Davis Mountains in the Southeast. One of their most controversial practices was the ransoming of captives from the Indians. Initially, the *comancheros* did so to obtain Indians for slaves and servants in New

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<sup>52</sup> Lt J. W. Abert, Report on the Upper Arkansas and the Country of the Camanche (sic) Indians, 29 Cong., 1st sess., 1845-1846, S. Ex. Doc. No. 438, ser. no. 477: 32.

Mexico. Among the items traded to the Indians was special bread, dark, dry, crisp, and almost imperishable. Also, the New Mexicans took whiskey, guns, sugar, saddlery, dried pumpkins, onions, tobacco, barley meal, and dry goods. Rarely did they trade manufactured items, such as hardware or cloth. By 1848, however, they were routinely trading, guns, blankets, cloth, powder, and lead.<sup>53</sup>

The comancheros continued to trade with the Comanches even while the U.S. Army was trying to confine them to the reservation after the Civil War. In spite of all the ways the Americans sought to control or end the trade, not until the Army crushed the Kwahadi Comanches in the Red River War of 1874 did this trade finally stop.<sup>54</sup>

From the earliest days, people inhabiting the Great Plains have subsisted on the North American buffalo. The buffalo were hunted, killed, and butchered by the Plains Indians. In the sixteenth century, the conquistadores reintroduced horses, which had disappeared from North America during the previous ice age. To keep these horses from the Indians, the Spanish carefully watched their herds in the region. However, over time, Indian raids led to their loss. In 1680, when the Pueblo Revolt occurred, the Spanish were driven out of New Mexico so fast that they were unable to take their horse herds with them. Thus, these horses became the property of the Pueblo Indians. Since they were a sedentary people, the Pueblos traded these horses with the nomadic Indians, especially the

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<sup>53</sup> Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 85.

<sup>54</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 175; Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, 252- 82; Kenner, *The Comanchero Frontier*; Levine, "Economic Perspectives on the Comanchero Trade", 155-169; and Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 341-44.

Comanches and Apaches.<sup>55</sup> In addition, horses were most likely already in the hands of the Plains tribes such as the Apaches. All of the plains tribes became successful horse ranchers, most especially the Comanches, who used them to establish their southern plains empire.

The Spanish had learned to eat and appreciate the buffalo during their incursion into New Mexico as early as 1540. No one knows just who taught the Spaniards to hunt buffalo since they were hunting buffalo from the beginning. It could have been the Apaches or the Pueblos who taught them.<sup>56</sup> However, the Comanches likely taught the Spaniards to hunt buffalo on horseback while using a lance, sometime in the eighteenth century. Certainly by the early nineteenth century, this was common practice for the Spanish. After 1800, the Anglos knew of these buffalo hunts in which the animals were killed with a lance. The New Mexicans learned to hunt buffalo on the Llano Estacado and were called by the Spanish word for these hunters: *cibolero*.<sup>57</sup>

The Spanish went to the Llano Estacado in eastern New Mexico and western Texas in early winter because the buffalo would have migrated there by then. The *ciboleros* traveled in groups, with some people riding mules and horses, and others driving *carretas*. Once on the *llano*, the Spanish hunting parties killed as many as fifteen buffalo a day. Afterwards, they jerked the meat by cutting it into small strips and drying them in the

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<sup>55</sup> James D. Shinkle, *New Mexico Ciboleros of the Llano Estacado* (Roswell, N.Mex.: Hall-Poorbaugh Press, n.d.), 15. Other sources on the spread of horses are Francis Haines, "The Northward Spread of Horses among the Plains Indians," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 40:3 (July-September 1938): 429-437; and Wallace, *Comanches*, 37-38.

<sup>56</sup> Kessell, *Spain in the Southwest*, 80.

<sup>57</sup> Shinkle, *New Mexico Cibolero*, 17.

sun. Jerked meat was easier to transport and to store for a long time, sometimes many years. This dried buffalo, cooked with chili, became a staple protein source of the Spanish diet.<sup>58</sup>

These ciboleros were very picturesque people. Josiah Gregg was in New Mexico and described one in *Commerce of the Prairies*:

His picturesque costume, and peculiarity of deportment, however, soon showed him to be a Mexican Cibolero or Buffalo-hunter. These hardy devotees of the chase usually wear leathern trousers and jackets, and flat straw hats; while, swung upon the shoulder of each hangs his carcage or quiver of bow and arrows. The long handle of their lance being set in a case, and suspended by the side with a strap from the pommel of the saddle, leaves the point waving high over the head, with a tassel of gay parti-colored stuffs dangling at the tip of the scabbard. Their fusil, if they happen to have one, is suspended in like manner at the other side with a stopper in the muzzle fantastically tasseled.<sup>59</sup>

Their colorful costuming aside, the ciboleros were crucial participants in the borderlands economy.

According to Gregg, the Comanches were expert buffalo hunters. However, the ciboleros, almost as skilled, could kill a buffalo with a bow and arrow, within minutes, start skinning the animal. The Americans preferred dropping the buffalo with their guns, but the Comanches could still slay double the number with the bow and lance.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Shinkle, *New Mexico Cibolero*, 18-19.

<sup>59</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 361; and Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, 27, 31, 48, 151.

As the Indian Wars wound down on the southern plains, cattle ranching in northeastern New Mexico started, sometime after Charles Goodnight established his ranch in the Texas Panhandle region.<sup>61</sup> When the U.S. Army placed the defeated Navajos on the Bosque Redondo Reservation in 1864, several cattlemen drove cattle from Texas into New Mexico to supply the Army. One of the most famous of these drives was accomplished in 1865 by Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, architects of the famous Goodnight-Loving Trail.<sup>62</sup>

During the years of open-range cattle industry in Texas, many ranchers brought their cattle into Union County to graze. After the Comanche threat was eliminated, some cattlemen came into New Mexico to establish huge ranches of their own. One of these men was Stephan W. Dorsey, future Arkansas senator, who created one of the largest ranches in New Mexico. Other cattlemen used the Goodnight-Loving Trail to bring herds into New Mexico. Some of the corporations that founded operations in Union County were the Prairie Land and Cattle Company and the Topeka Land and Cattle Company.<sup>63</sup>

Although Colfax and Union Counties are ranching country today, these lands became farm country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Colfax County in 1890 had a population of 7,974 people and Union County had a population of 1,910.<sup>64</sup> The census of the United States identifies farms and ranches. In 1900 Colfax County had 410

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<sup>61</sup> Hagan, *Goodnight*, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Hagan, *Goodnight*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friends, *History of Union County*, 8; and Jordan-Bychkov, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*, 227-36.

<sup>64</sup> Robert P. Porter, *Compendium of the 11<sup>th</sup> Census: 1890, Part 1, Population*. (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1892).

farms with an average size of 2,986 acres. In 1920 the number peaked at 1,052, but by 1950, the number of farms had decreased to 499, with 80.9% of the county's total acreage devoted to farming. In 1900 Union County had 419 farms with an average acreage of 1,923, in 1920 the number peaked at 2,652 farms, but by 1950 the number was 818 with 100% of the land farmed. The number of farms in each county peaked in 1920, but following the Dust Bowl Years, the number declined. However, the size of the farms indicates that the smaller farms were absorbed into the larger ones.<sup>65</sup> Since the railroad reached northern New Mexico in 1880, farming became one of the leading economic enterprises in northern New Mexico and remained so consistently over time. Just what accounts for this growth?

The Homestead Act of 1862 was enacted to persuade families to move west to settle the country, which allegedly had no residents. Any head of the family could claim a parcel of land of 160 acres. He or she had to pay filing fees and "prove up" on the land, which usually required five years. At the end, there was another filing fee.<sup>66</sup> Claiming a homestead seemed an easy proposition. At first, the ranchers opened the land, as in the Panhandle area. By the late 1880s, thousands of people migrated from Europe and the eastern United States in the hope of finding farming land.

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<sup>65</sup> Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1900 (Washington, D.C.: GPO): 89; Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Agriculture, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931): 310-314; and Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1950, Special Reports, Farms and Farm Characteristics by Economic Subregions 5:10 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952): 40.

<sup>66</sup> *Transcript of Homestead Act (1862)*. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=31> (access date February 26, 2009).

In many areas of the United States the land was good for farming, but that did not hold true for much of the Great Plains country, including New Mexico. During the early part of the twentieth century, farmers moved in large numbers into Colfax and Union Counties. Throughout the first half of the century, these farmers tried many methods to make a living on their land and during the first two or three years, the farmers earned a lot of money from their crops. They arrived in New Mexico during a wet cycle, but later they had to contend with the lack of moisture, and they discovered that frosts, even in July, were not uncommon. Winters in northeastern New Mexico were sometimes dry or brought severe blizzards. The wells they dug could be full of water one year and dry the next.<sup>67</sup> If there was a lack of moisture, the severe summer winds blew away the thin topsoil. The farmers were lured to the Great Plains-the region Major Stephen H. Long labeled the Great American Desert-by the railroads, land companies, and governments. They eventually had to admit to being misled. Unfortunately, this particular climate stage in eastern New Mexico started during the late 1910s and continued into the years of the catastrophic Dust Bowl in the 1930s.<sup>68</sup> Farmers experimented with many things to succeed: they dug wells and tried dry farming or planting crops that supposedly needed little moisture. None of these techniques paid off.

The homesteaders were easily talked into coming to places like the Panhandle area and northeastern New Mexico. The railroads and the Territory of New Mexico published brochures and booklets intended to attract settlers. These booklets enthused about the

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<sup>67</sup> Michael L. Olsen, "The Failure of an Agricultural Community: Johnson Mesa, New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 58:2 (April 1983): 113.

<sup>68</sup> Olsen, "Johnson Mesa," 121; and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed Them Cactus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 171.

land that was available for farming.<sup>69</sup> In fact, they stated that much land available for “farming without irrigation has been found practicable [and] there are great areas of good land yet open to entry.”<sup>70</sup>

Although drought and dust drove out the farmers, cattle ranchers remained in northeastern New Mexico following the Dust Bowl. Today, this area is home to both famous and less well-known cattle ranches. Some ranches are part of the old Spanish and Mexican land grants; others were established more recently. The ranches are small, medium, and large. Over the years, these ranches have had to “go with the flow” of history and change with the needs of the country and the demands of the economy.

Among the most significant ranchers in the region was Frank Springer, who arrived in New Mexico sometime in 1872. He was a newly minted lawyer and wished to open a legal practice. He came at the invitation of his friend William R. Morley, who worked for the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company. Springer became famous for representing this controversial company and for helping to settle the Maxwell Land Grant issue for his employers. In 1873 his brother, Charles Springer, started a cattle ranch, the CS, in Cimarron, New Mexico. Frank later joined him in this venture. The ranch is currently owned by Linda Davis, a well-known ranch operator. She, like many of her contemporaries, works the ranch in the same fashion as did her husband and children.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jan Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise: Advertising the Texas Panhandle and South Plains, 1870-1917* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 13.

<sup>70</sup> New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, *Ho! To the Land of Sunshine! A Guide to New Mexico for the Homeseeker*, 9th rev. ed. (Albuquerque: Bureau of Immigration of New Mexico, 1909), 22.

<sup>71</sup> David Remley, “The Cowman’s ‘Garden of Eden’ -- New Mexico’s Ranches,” *El Palacio* 93:3 (Spring 1988): 14.



Northeastern New Mexico is also home to the Bell Ranch, a part of the Pablo Montoya Grant of 1824. In 1824, Pablo Montoya acquired a land grant which he occupied for about fifteen years. Upon his death, his family abandoned the property due to Indian hostilities. Although it cannot be proven, he likely traded with the Indians in the region.<sup>72</sup> The Bell Ranch, started in 1875 by Wilson Waddingham, has undergone many trials over the decades. There was at least one case of its being in receivership and the ranch has changed hands many times.<sup>73</sup>

There are other large ranches in Colfax and Union Counties. The Vermejo Park/WS Ranch, now owned by media mogul Ted Turner, is probably the most famous ranch in the West. In order to survive, this property has not only changed ownership many times but has become a dude ranch serving tourists. The land was originally a part of the Maxwell Land Grant. In addition to running cattle on this ranch, Turner also keeps a small herd of American Buffalo.<sup>74</sup>

Of course, many ranches have had to diversify in areas other than in dude ranching. Some ranches provide summer rangeland to fatten calves from Texas for market. The Moore Ranch, run by Alice Moore, is famous for its cattle and quarter horses.<sup>75</sup>

From the days of homesteading until the late 1940s, it seemed that Colfax and Union Counties would become farming country. Even after the Dust Bowl many farmers tried to practice agriculture in the northeastern section of the state. By the late 1970s,

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<sup>72</sup> Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 65-66.

<sup>73</sup> Remley, "Garden of Eden," 20, and *Bell Ranch: Cattle Ranching in the Southwest, 1824-1947* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>74</sup> Remley, "Garden of Eden," 15.

<sup>75</sup> Remley, "Garden of Eden," 16.

however, it became apparent that this area would revert to ranching.<sup>76</sup> In fact, this is how the Hereford Park Ranch came into being.

One of the largest ranches in Union County is the Hereford Park Ranch just outside Folsom, New Mexico. In 1879, Joe Doherty immigrated to the United States from Ireland at the age of eighteen.<sup>77</sup> Joe and Annie Doherty started this ranch with their own homestead land. They owned a store and a small sheep ranch. In fact, operating the store led him to the acquisition of a much larger ranch. During the times when the homesteaders had money problems, they used their property for collateral at his store. He would not see anyone go hungry. Many of these small landowners either sold their land to him or defaulted on their loans. Eventually, Joe acquired a ranch that was larger than County Donegal, his ancestral home in Ireland. Today, the Hereford Park Ranch is a much smaller property because he gave each of his six children a share upon his death in 1944.<sup>78</sup>

Many ranches stand on land that once belonged to the Maxwell Land Grant. Many ranches around Springer and Cimarron started as a part of the Grant. In 1968, these ranches accounted for about 75% of the economy of Springer. In 1966, Colfax County reported the gross sale of cattle at \$10 million.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Olsen, "Johnson Mesa," 114.

<sup>77</sup> Centennial Committee, *Folsom, Then and Now*, 171.

<sup>78</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friend, *A History of Union County*, 113. County Donegal is approximately three thousand square miles or about 1.9 million acres. Donegal Library.

<http://www.donegalibrary.ie/aboutdonegal/default.htm>. Accessed October 1, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> "Cattle Country ... Northeastern New Mexico," *New Mexico Progress* 35:1 (Jan-Mar 1968): 10, 17.

The railroad “symbolized progress, prosperity, and the promise of the future.” After the railroad became transcontinental in 1869, it eventually crisscrossed the whole of the United States.<sup>80</sup> In 1880, the railroads arrived in New Mexico when Colonel Cyrus K. Holliday built the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) into New Mexico, via Lamy and bypassing Santa Fe.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Santa Fe was connected with Denver, Colorado. Senator Stephen W. Dorsey pushed General Granville Dodge of New York to extend the Denver and Fort Worth Railroad east of Raton to Clayton. The Denver and Fort Worth Railroad was completed in March 1888. The Colorado and Southern Railroad built a line west to Clayton, which it completed in 1885. To complete the iron road, the AT&SF built a line between Raton and the Colorado and Southern Railroad. The railroads opened up the economy of Colfax and Union Counties by providing markets for beef and sheep, mining, and tourism.<sup>82</sup> In the process, Folsom, Des Moines, and Clayton were established as new towns in northeastern New Mexico. Des Moines, for a time, prospered as a stock shipping point between Denver and Fort Worth.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> James P. Ronda, “America’s Frontier Forever Changed: The West the Railroads Made,” *American Heritage* 58:4 (January 1, 2008): 1.

<sup>81</sup> Heath, “A Study”, 20; White, *Railroaded*, 49; Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962), 55, 93-94; Richard C. Overton, *Gulf to Rockies: The Heritage of the Fort Worth and Denver-Colorado and Southern Railways, 1961-1898* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953), 131-37; Bryant, *History of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway*, 37-58; and Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 292-93.

<sup>82</sup> Heath, “A Study,” 266, 270, 251, and 272-3.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor, “The New Mexico-Colorado Border”: 316.

These railroads had a huge impact on New Mexico. The AT&SF helped build ranching into a large and lucrative industry in Union County. The AT&SF was also responsible for the demise of the cattle trails and would lure homesteaders. Rail lines not only physically brought people in for tourism; they also used creative advertising to bring in homesteaders. Sometimes, the enthusiasm written into the advertising was close to bald-faced lying.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the AT&SF helped move many New Mexicans from Taos and other areas of New Mexico into Colfax and Union Counties. These people laid the tracks for the railroads, and many laborers remained in these counties to ranch and farm.

The financially stressed AT&SF was in receivership from 1895 into 1896. Faced with the stigma of recent bankruptcy, E. P. Ripley, the new president, had to come up with a way to change the image of the railroad as callous and mercenary and, at the same time, make the railroad profitable again. Previously, the AT&SF did not advertise to promote itself. Ripley, using his creative genius, managed to promote the southern plains as an exotic locale of bounty and prosperity.<sup>85</sup> He struggled for many years to convince people in the East that this country, Long's Great American Desert, was a fabulous place to visit and settle.

In 1907, to promote tourism and settlement, the AT&SF hired artists with a flair for painting landscapes. AT&SF used many of their illustrations in an annual calendar. It mailed hundreds of thousands of calendars to schools, businesses, and households. The

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<sup>84</sup> Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise*, 13.

<sup>85</sup> T. C. McLuhan, *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian, 1890-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 16.

“Santa Fe Indian” came into the American consciousness with this calendar. This Indian figure possessed an aura of glamour and intangibility and became an iconic figure associated with New Mexico.<sup>86</sup>

Northeastern New Mexico has been a land of many changes from the 1870s to the present. Over time, this regional community has had its share of conflicts, with many different cultures trying to exploit or settle the land. These cohorts include Native Americans, land grant owners, ranchers, farmers, and railroad corporations. The region began as Native hunting grounds, became a trade road, continued as ranching country, tried to change to farming country, and reverted to ranching country. A testament to the faith and endurance of these people is that there are so many prosperous large ranches in this part of New Mexico.

Many of these large ranches deserve a place in the history books. Only a very few have had books written about them or been explored in great detail. So far, narrative histories catalog only a few ranches in the American West. Some of the ranches in northeastern New Mexico have created a long chapter of history in their own right, which needs to be recorded before being lost forever.

Throughout the years, the ranchers have faced much adversity, fought and starved with many people, and yet they still persevere. Over the past two centuries, ranching has been economically and historically important. Up until the 1990s, it was one of the serious economic factors of the region, after mining and horse racing. Now, these

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<sup>86</sup> McLuhan, *Dream Tracks*, 19. There were many artists used such as Thomas Moran, William R. Leigh, Ernest L. Blumenschein, Fernand Lungren, and E. Erving Couse. Couse was the favorite artist used several times.

ranches, which cover between 80% and 100% of the land, are still major economic generators. Also, the ranches have indeed been impacted by the Santa Fe Trail and the historic legacies of the land grants, especially the Maxwell Land Grant. Finally, in attempting to turn the land into farms, many of the smaller farms have evolved into a few large ranches.

## Native Americans and the Dry Cimarron Cutoff

### Northeastern New Mexico

A Comanche chief was relaxing in his teepee when some friends approached him about going on a hunt.<sup>1</sup> He agreed. After all, their people were always in need of fresh meat. While scouting on the plains of what is now Union County, New Mexico, they discovered an “object” they had never seen before in this territory. What was this object that spelled the end of their way of life? According to Peter Dahl, in the spring of 1822, the Comanches found a wagon track, which puzzled them. Although they had seen such tracks, they had not come across them in this part of New Mexico. This impression in the ground signaled the opening of the conquest of the southwestern plains and deserts by the Anglo Americans.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Comanches patrolled this area more frequently than they had in the past.

The Santa Fe Trail is the stuff of legend and economics. It belongs in the annals of the United States and Mexico. Merchants travelled the road to take advantage of the market for finished goods in Santa Fe and Chihuahua. The U.S. Army used it beginning with the U.S.-Mexican War in 1846. This chapter discusses Anglos, Native Americans, and Hispanics fighting over who would possess the road in the early to mid nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> The name is fictitious; however, the story is not.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Andrew Dahl, “Death on the Santa Fe Trail: Water from the Belly of the Buffalo Saved the Lives of Men Who Broke this Trail,” *Real West* 1:3 (April 1958): 32.



*Map of the Santa Fe Trail. National Park Service.  
 From Myra Ellen Jenkins and Albert H. Schroeder,  
 A Brief History of New Mexico (Albuquerque:  
 University of New Mexico Press, 1974).*

Figure 5.

The trail started in Independence, Missouri, and headed west through present day Kansas and southwest across the central and southern plains to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The journey was almost one thousand miles and took over two months of travel. There were two separate branches: the Mountain Branch and the Cimarron Cutoff. From



Kansas, the Mountain Branch proceeded west through Bent's Fort near La Junta, Colorado and south over the rugged Raton Pass. The Cimarron Cutoff started about five miles west of what became Fort Dodge (current day Dodge City, Kansas) and cut southwest through the Oklahoma and Texas Panhandles into what today is Union County, New Mexico, terminating in Las Vegas and later Fort Union. Some of the more famous stops along the Santa Fe Trail were Franklin, Missouri; the Narrows near the Wakarusa River in Douglas County, Kansas; Council Grove, Kansas; Pawnee Rock; and Fort Larned, Kansas. In New Mexico, some of the notable places are Corrupa Creek, *Las Orejas de Conejo* (Rabbit Ears) Mountain and Creek, and Capulin Mountain (ancient volcano).<sup>3</sup> All of these places were significant land marks to the American and Mexican merchants who plied the Santa Fe trade.

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<sup>3</sup> Two hills lying slightly west of Clayton, New Mexico, are remnants of a crumbled volcanic crater called Las Orejas de Conejo (Rabbit Ears). There are two stories behind the name. In his journal, U.S. surveyor George Champlin Sibley says the mountain was named for its resemblance to rabbit ears. More likely, the crater was named after Comanche chief Rabbit Ears. Earlier in his life, the chief allegedly earned his name from his resemblance to rabbit ears, after having suffered frostbite. Over 250 years ago, he was killed in combat on this crater, hence its name. A few variations on this name and story suggest that he was Cheyenne. Leslie Gaye Slak, "The Hundred-Minute Vacation," *New Mexico Magazine* 54:6 (June 1976): 14; George Champlin Sibley, *The Road to Santa Fe: The Journal and Diaries of George Champlin Sibley and Others Pertaining to the Surveying and Marking of a Road from Missouri Frontier to the Settlements of New Mexico, 1825-1827*, ed. Kate L. Gregg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952), 94; David Dary, *The Santa Fe Trail: Its History, Legends, and Lore* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 74-106; Robert Julyan, *The Place Names of New Mexico*, rev. ed. (1996; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 62-63, 87, 98; and Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2002), 181-92.

At that time, the Raton Pass traversed a dirt and rock path that was used to drive livestock over the mountain or that the mountain men followed on mules and horses. The difficult going over the Raton Pass compelled merchants and later the U.S. Army to favor the Cimarron Cutoff. Lieutenant Abert described the pass as being “extremely rough, leading along a tortuous valley,” which occasionally forced them to use the “rocky bed of the creek itself.” He also said that despite this rough stretch, the view from the pass was full of beauty and imposing grandeur.<sup>4</sup> Captain John Pope, also an army explorer, wrote that the pass had “clear, cold springs,” many mountain spurs that made for difficult travel, and an ascent that was “easy and smooth and a most beautiful view presented from the summit.”<sup>5</sup> Not until Richard L. “Uncle Dick” Wooten built a toll road over the Pass in the Spring of 1866 did it become a well-used road.<sup>6</sup>

The immediate end of the trail was Santa Fe, New Mexico, foreign and exotic to the Anglos, at least in frontier lore. In this “El Dorado,” beautiful señoritas and ancient architecture abounded. Many Native American tribes lived around Santa Fe. The energetic or lucky entrepreneur could and often did make a fortune there. No one knows

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<sup>4</sup> Lt. James William Abert, *Expedition to the Southwest*, 33-54.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Olsen and Harry C. Myers, ed. “John Pope’s Journal of a March into New Mexico, 1851, Part 1,” *Wagon Tracks* 5:4 (August 1991): 19-23; and “John Pope’s Journal of a March into New Mexico, 1851, Part 2,” *Wagon Tracks* 6:1 (November 1991): 15-19.

<sup>6</sup> Bess McKinnan, “The Toll Road over Raton Pass,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 2:1(January 1927): 83, 85; Sibley, *The Road to Santa Fe*, 257; William Becknell, “The Journals of Capt. William Becknell from Boone’s Lick to Santa Fe and from Santa Cruz to Green River,” ed. F. A. Sampson, *Missouri Historical Review* 4:2 (January 1910): 71-81; and Josiah A. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* (New York: Langley, 1844-1845):181-91. Gregg available online through Kansas Collection Books,

<http://www.kancoll.org/books/>.

precisely how much travel ultimately crossed the Cimarron Cutoff. However, in 1822, the Santa Fe trade totaled approximately \$15,000. By 1860, the trade was valued at over \$3.5 million (roughly \$53 million in today's economy).<sup>7</sup> Santa Fe trade merchant Dr. Josiah Gregg indicates that the value of merchandise transported over the road was about \$3 million between 1822 and 1843.<sup>8</sup>

There are about thirty primary documents, including journals and government reports written specifically about the Santa Fe Trail. Wives of U.S. Army officers, accompanied by a military escort to New Mexico, wrote most of the journals. There are a few tidbits about the Trail, but most of the journals are about the conditions and trials of living in the wilderness. Three of these diaries were written by Blandina Segale, Anna Morris (wife of Major Gouverneur Morris), and M. M. Marmaduke.<sup>9</sup> The government reports were written by topographical engineers who surveyed large portions of New Mexico, primarily the Mountain Branch of the Trail.<sup>10</sup> However, three people who wrote journals

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<sup>7</sup> *The Great Prairie Highway*. Santa Fe National Historic Trade website

[www.nps.gov/safe/historyculture/stories.htm](http://www.nps.gov/safe/historyculture/stories.htm) accessed 11/28/2010.

<sup>8</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 332; and Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 89-109.

<sup>9</sup> Blandina Segale, *At the end of the Santa Fe Trail* (1932; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999); Anna Morris, "Diary" in Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1850, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes with introduction by Lillian Schlissel (1983; reprint Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 5-43; and M. M. Marmaduke, "Santa Fe Trail," *Missouri Historical Review* 6:1 (October 1911): 1-10.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of Lt. J. W. Abert of 1848*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1847-1848, Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 23, ser. no. 503: 3-130; and U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of Lt. J. H. Simpson and Capt. R. B. Marcy of 1850*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., 1849-1850, H. ex. doc. 45, ser. no. 577: 1-83.

describing the Cimarron Cutoff were George Champlin Sibley, William Becknell, and Josiah Gregg, Marian Russell wrote a memoir.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 6. Conestoga Wagon (Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

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<sup>11</sup> I found about twenty journals on the Santa Fe Trail. When General Kearney occupied New Mexico in 1846, several of his topographical engineers surveyed the bulk of New Mexico; however, they did not visit the country now comprising Colfax and Union Counties. See Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*; Becknell, *Journals of Capt. William Becknell*; and Marian Russell, *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail* (1954; reprint, with a new afterword by Marc Simmons, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), xii. When she was an old woman, Russell dictated her memoir to her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Hal Russell.



Figure 7. Photo courtesy of [http://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/Research%20Center/researchOTpg4\\_wagon.jpg](http://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/Research%20Center/researchOTpg4_wagon.jpg)



Figure 8. An army train crossing the plains. (Photo courtesy of *Harper's weekly*).

The trail represents not only history, but also the sounds of Conestoga and Studebaker wagons rolling. Until 1824, mule pack trains were the most used transportation because they were cheap. Each mule could carry three hundred pounds. After 1824, wagons drawn by eight to twelve mules replaced pack mules. These wagons were called Prairie Schooners.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Army influenced the kinds of freight wagons used when they

<sup>12</sup> Colonel Henry Inman, *The Old Santa Fe Trail: The Story of a Great Highway* (New York: Macmillan,

started using the Trail.<sup>13</sup> Many famous and infamous people traveled on this Trail. On October 6, 1826, a young apprentice ran away to join a caravan bound for Santa Fe. This young apprentice became the legendary frontiersman, Kit Carson.<sup>14</sup>

Water was the most precious resource on any western trail and sometimes extremely hard to find. Water was at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the trail. However, from Fort Dodge to what is now Clayton, New Mexico, water was scarce. Many a traveler died of thirst. In his journal, James Pattie relates a story of traveling for two days without water. He and his companions tried sucking on bullets and pebbles to stimulate saliva. On one night, they dug shallow pits to lie in to benefit from the moisture the sand would collect in the night. They even drank urine and blood from animals. They ate buzzards and horses just to survive. Finally, they came to a creek and learned what others have learned before them. When seriously dehydrated, you need to drink water slowly or you will be violently ill. Pattie and his company were lucky. There were many bones found in the desert areas where people perished from thirst. These survival tactics

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1897), 43-46, [http: www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org) accessed 2/7/2012; Marc Simmons, *The Old Trail to Santa Fe: Collected Essays* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 16, 20, 26, 30, 64, 112, and *On the Santa Fe Trail* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 15, 34, 67.

<sup>13</sup> An army train crossing the plains. Photo published in 1858.

[http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=697846&imageID=831413&parent\\_id=697820&word=&snum=&s=&notword=&d=&c=&f=&sScope=&sLevel=&sLabel=&total=29&num=0&imgs=12&pNum=&pos=3#\\_seemore](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=697846&imageID=831413&parent_id=697820&word=&snum=&s=&notword=&d=&c=&f=&sScope=&sLevel=&sLabel=&total=29&num=0&imgs=12&pNum=&pos=3#_seemore) accessed 1/22/2012.

<sup>14</sup> Hampton Sides, *Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 10, 11.

were not used on the Santa Fe Trail, but they do indicate the extent to which famished and thirsty people will go to survive.<sup>15</sup>

The prairie traveler frequently had to make wagon repairs. Even though the land through Kansas was flat, travel was still hard, especially in the early years until the trail ruts became a part of the sod. At the end of the prairie came the dreaded Cimarron Desert with its cacti, scorpions, tarantulas, rattlesnakes, and scarce water. The Native Americans also frequented the cutoff. The desert was thirty miles of long, exhausting travel over blowing sand. People watered their stock in Kansas and placed extra water in the wagons. Travelers, not stopping overnight to sleep, rested only intermittently for an hour or two. In the nineteenth century, it usually took at least two days to cross the Cimarron Desert by wagon, horse, or mule. The most amazing thing about this desert country is that the Natives managed to travel in this terrain for at least 150 years, but no surviving stories tell of them dying of thirst. On reaching New Mexico, travelers usually located water in the Cimarron River. If not, a person could dig up the sand and some water would usually rise to the surface.

Once into New Mexico, the traveler still faced over two hundred miles of rough road to Santa Fe. However, more sources of water stood along the route, and later U.S. troops at Fort Union greeted the travelers at the end of the cutoff. All along the Cimarron

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<sup>15</sup>James Pattie, *Pattie: Personal Narrative*, vol. 1 of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion, 1770-1835*, ed. Tim Fulford and Carol Bolton (London, Eng.: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), 43, 101, 115, 118. This was on a journey to Baja California.

Cutoff, the Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches might cause mayhem and destruction if the Americans either started a fight or refused to pay the toll to cross their land.<sup>16</sup>

In 1829, due to this danger, Anglo merchants requested the U.S. Congress to provide military escorts for merchants going west to Santa Fe. Gen. William H. Ashley agreed that these escorts were necessary, with a few prerequisites. He “estimated 500 troops could control the Indians in the West.” He also said these troops must have arms with interchangeable parts, must live off the land, and the trade “ought to be done effectually.” He believed that the merchants could receive a full measure of protection on the Santa Fe Trail with one hundred troops.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. Army provided this protection for just a few weeks or months. In a letter to Siter, Price, and Company dated May 14, 1829, James and Robert Aull complained that the U.S. Army no longer provided this protection.<sup>18</sup> A bill was passed by Congress on February 26, 1829 to provide “thirty-five thousand dollars” to protect “the people of Arkansas, and of the States bordering upon the Indian settlements towards Mexico and the Rocky Mountains.” On July 10, 1829, Major Bennett Riley penned a letter to the Mexican governor in Santa Fe informing him that the army was on the line and ready to provide protection to the trade people.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dan Murphy, *Santa Fe Trail: Voyage of Discovery; The Story behind the Scenery* (Las Vegas, Nev.: KC Publications, 1994), 43-61. This information is a synthesis of the entire book.

<sup>17</sup> General W. H. Ashley to J. H. Eaton, Secretary of War, March 1829 in U.S. Congress, Senate, *Message from the President of the United States*, 21st Cong., 2nd sess., 1830-1831, Sen. Doc. 39, ser. no. 203: 1-7.

<sup>18</sup> James Aull, “Letters of James and Robert Aull,” *Missouri Historical Society Collections* 5 (1928): 274-75.

<sup>19</sup> Otis E. Young, *The First Military Escort on the Santa Fe Trail 1829: From the Journal and Reports of Major Bennett Riley and Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1952),



The period from late 1846 and into 1847 was the bloodiest period in the history of the Cimarron Cutoff. During this time, the U.S. Army was kept busy defending the merchant and army caravans from attacks, especially by the Comanches and Apaches, who were fighting to protect their land from encroachment or trespass by the Americans.<sup>20</sup> In 1846, President James K. Polk sent Gen. Stephen Watts Kearney into New Mexico to occupy the province before marching on to California. The presence of the army, for a short time, held the various warrior tribes at bay.<sup>21</sup> The army remained in New Mexico until the Civil War broke out in 1861, then returned after the war. Texas historian T. R. Fehrenbach writes: “Officialdom did see, however, that lines of communication had to be maintained across Comanchería to the Pacific. The Kiowas and Comanches after the summer of 1849 had become very troublesome along the Santa Fe Trail.”<sup>22</sup>

The Santa Fe Trail’s history had its share of violence and bloodshed, especially on the Cimarron Cutoff, when the presence of the U.S. Army was not available. The Americans looked at this bloodshed as the acts of violence by people uncivilized and treacherous, instead of a people protecting their land.<sup>23</sup> The violence perpetrated by the Natives on the

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36-37, doc. C.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 428; William Y. Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage: The Santa Fe Trail and the Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 164, 186, 227; and Leo E. Oliva, *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 26-28, 93-94, 109, 192.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas E. Chávez, *New Mexico: Past and Future* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 113.

<sup>22</sup> T. R. Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 226.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Shelby Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847*, ed. Stella M. Drumm (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 40.

Santa Fe Trail was not just a sudden phenomenon. Several centuries of being pushed around and having their lands stolen by the Europeans led Natives to respond with violence.<sup>24</sup> The Southwest would be among the last free lands the Natives (Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches) would be able to live on.

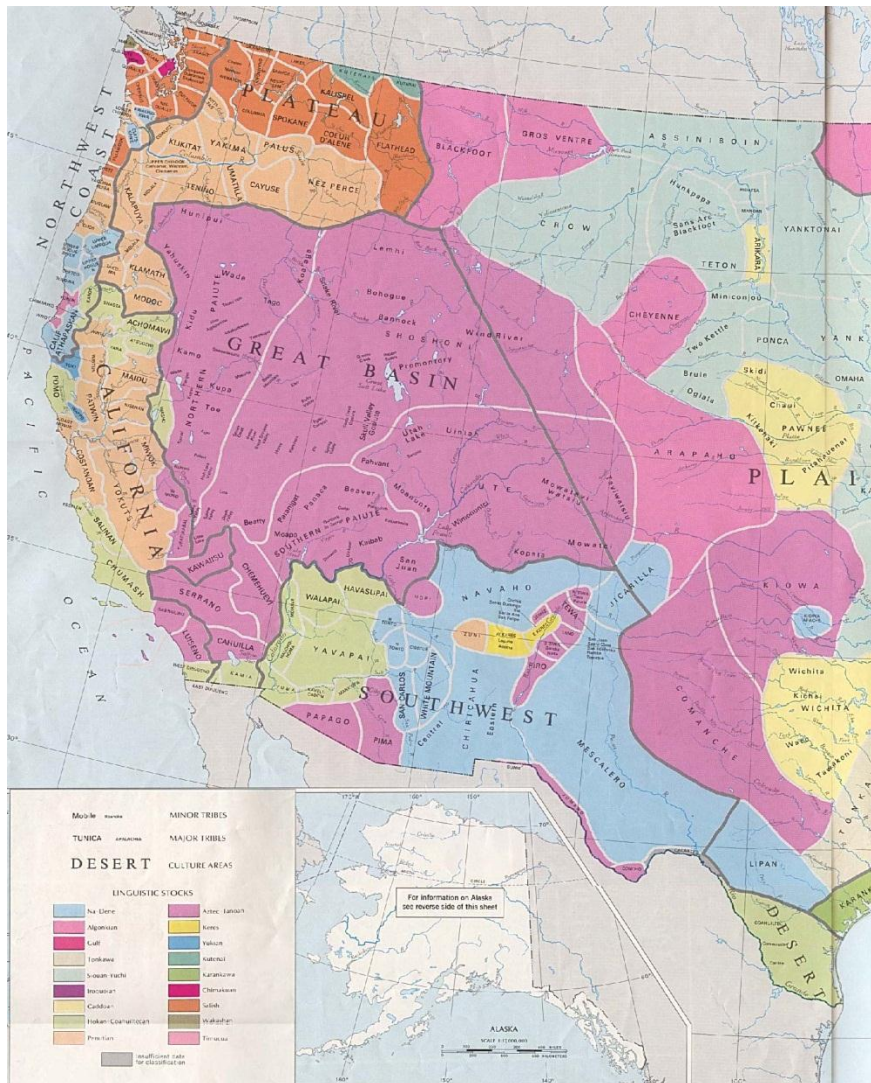


Figure 9. Early Native Americans (Map courtesy of <http://mappery.com/Early-Native-American-Tribes-in-Western-United-States-Historical-Map>)

<sup>24</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 25.

Several Native tribes contested this land in New Mexico long before the arrival of Europeans in North America. The Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches all called the Southwest home. The arrival date of the Apaches and Utes to the Southwest is in question. Scholars place them here as recent as the 1500s; some place them here as far back as almost thirty thousand years ago.<sup>25</sup> Regardless, they arrived well before the Europeans. The issue of property rights loomed large with the coming of the Anglos to the Southwest. They believed in individual property ownership while Natives thought that the land existed for their present needs and the needs of future generations. When the Natives approached wagon trains asking for gifts and food in the nineteenth century, the Anglos thought of them as rude beggars. Historian P. David Smith states that when the Utes shared their food, the Anglos accepted eagerly. If the Utes asked them for food, the Anglos condescended to them.<sup>26</sup>

The Anglos who traversed the Santa Fe Trail were used to paying tolls. They transported goods across nine hundred miles of rugged terrain with several streams difficult to ford. During the spring, these streams were too full to cross for up to a month at a time. Not long after the Santa Fe Trail became popular, enterprising Anglos imposed tolls along the way. There were at least fifteen of them between Independence and Santa Fe. In New Mexico, Richard Lacy (Uncle Dick) Wooten erected one on the Raton Pass in 1866. In 1872, Basil (Bill) Metcalf imposed a toll on a stretch of road just south of Branson, Colorado, which would have caught merchants hauling goods and people who

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<sup>25</sup> Nina G. Jablonski, ed., *The First Americans: The Pleistocene Colonization of the New World* (San Francisco, Calif.: Allen Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>26</sup> P. David Smith, *Ouray: Chief of the Utes; the Fascinating Story of Colorado's Most Famous and Controversial Indian Chief* (Ridgway, Colo.: Wayfinder Press, 1990), 22.

traveled between New Mexico and Colorado. Some of these tolls were for the use of ferries to transport wagons and animals across large streams. In some of these areas, such as Wooten's, the toll paid for work that improved the quality of the roadway.<sup>27</sup>

The reintroduction of the horse into North America changed life for the Native Americans who acquired access to them. The horse roamed the hills, mountains, and valleys of North America from fifty-four million years ago until about ten thousand years ago. No one knows why it disappeared.<sup>28</sup> However, when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the late-sixteenth century, they brought horses with them. Until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Spanish had most of them and tried to keep them out of the hands of Natives. Due to raids and other losses, some tribes acquired these horses. After the revolt, the Natives used horses for trading with other Indian groups. With the acquisition of the horse, the Comanches became the dominant Native power in the region by 1750.<sup>29</sup> The horse extended mobility to Native peoples who had hitherto been unable to travel rapidly, cover great distances, or accumulate much property, for they used dogs and themselves as pack bearers. In addition, the horse drastically improved their economic status and military power.

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<sup>27</sup> McKinnan, "The Toll Road over Raton Pass", 83; Morris F. Taylor, *Basil (Bill Metcalf) and His Toll Gate, Now in Union County, New Mexico, Formerly in Colfax County, New Mexico, 1872-1885* (Trinidad, Colo.: Trinidad State Junior College, n.d.), 1-4.

<sup>28</sup> The Horse in North America. Discover Southeast Arizona website.  
<http://www.discoverseaz.com/History/Horse.html> accessed 11/29/2010.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 39; Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*, 25, 346-47.

The Native Americans fought the Spaniards, Mexicans, Americans, and each other. After all, they had long skirmished over control of territory. Initially, enmity separated the Utes and Comanches, but a brokered alliance settled the fight for a time in the early to mid-eighteenth century. The Apaches (Mescaleros, Faraones, and Jicarillas) also fought the Comanches, who were the victors in these wars. However, the Apaches and Utes retained control of the foothills and mountains of the southern Rockies that they knew so well.<sup>30</sup>

Before looking at some of the many encounters between Native Americans and Americans on the Cimarron Cutoff, a brief history of all these tribes is necessary. The tribes that contested present day eastern New Mexico land were the Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches. This chapter will look at the contests and enmity that divided the various tribes, before focusing on the battles between Natives and outsiders on the Cimarron Cutoff.

## Utes

Scholars place the Utes in the Rocky Mountain region of the present western United States approximately ten thousand years ago. They arrived as a part of the Paiutes of the Utah Desert. Ute origin stories suggest that they were always present. Due to pressures

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<sup>30</sup> Rupert Norval Richardson, *The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement: a Century and a Half of Savage Resistance to the Advancing White Frontier*, ed. Kenneth R. Jacobs, reprint, 1933, with a new introduction by A. C. Greene (1933, Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1996), 20; Katherine M. B. Osburn, *Southern Ute Women: Autonomy and Assimilation on the Reservation, 1887-1934* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 9; Charles S. Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains: The Utes of Colorado* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1982), 3-4, 7; and Frances Leon Quintana, *Ordeal of Change: The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press, 2008), 4-5.

from other tribes, the Utes found a home in the southern and central Rocky Mountains, which they fiercely defended. They went by many names, but the Anglos gave them the most romantic title, “the Blue Sky People.”<sup>31</sup>

The Utes consisted of seven loosely associated bands: Uintah, Yampa, Grand, Tabeguache, Weeminuche, Mouache, and Capote. Of these bands, the Capotes claimed their hunting grounds in northern New Mexico. This area remained their homeland until the arrival of the Americans in the 1840s.<sup>32</sup> The homeland of the Utes stretched from the Snake River in present Wyoming south to present far northern New Mexico and west of Salt Lake City, Utah, to eastern Colorado. After the introduction of horses and weapons in the seventeenth century, they increased the range of their trading and warfare. Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, the Utes lived in small groups of loosely related people. Following the assaults and slave raiding of the Spanish, the Utes reorganized themselves into a more tightly knit nation to resist the Spaniards, Navajos, Apaches, and Pueblos and to defend their homeland.<sup>33</sup>

### **Comanches**

The Comanches, by their own accounts, came from the “Rocky Mountain country north of the headwaters of the Arkansas to the valley of that stream in what is now eastern Colorado and western Kansas about 1700.”<sup>34</sup> No one knows the reason for the move, but it was probably due to the more powerful tribes of the east pushing them out, or they used quarrels with them as an excuse to move. The Spaniards noted their presence in 1706

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<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Ouray: Chief of the Utes*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Ouray: Chief of the Utes*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 29-31.

<sup>34</sup> Wallace, *Comanches*, 8.

and dismissed them as a minor event in the region. At that time, they were few in number and had a name of the Numunus. By midcentury, they were the Comanches. Historian Pekka Hamalainen claims that they “had unhinged the world they almost unnoticeably entered.”<sup>35</sup>

Regardless of the reason to move, the Comanches were one of the first tribes to relocate to the Great Plains. Once they acquired horses, they became the “Lords of the South Plains,” an Anglo expression. Few people could manage horses as they did. Their vast horse herds helped launch them into a “buffalo-based economy.” *Comanchería*, the land of the Comanches, stretched from north of the Arkansas River and south to near the Balcones Escarpment in southern Texas; their east-west borders were from the Pecos River to Cross Timbers of present Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to military conquests, they forged alliances with other Native American and European powers. They brought death and destruction to enemies such as the Apaches and the Spanish. During their early days, they clashed with and survived the intrusion of two other colonial powers: Spanish and French.<sup>37</sup> Later, in the nineteenth century, they would fail against the third imperial power: the United States.

By the mid-1740s, the Comanches met with a serious military defeat starting at the Taos Fair in 1746. New Mexico governor Joaquín Codallos y Rabál’s troops overpowered them at Chama, New Mexico. These disasters culminated in a Comanche-Taovaya-French Alliance. The Taovaya, members of the Wichita Confederation, clung

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<sup>35</sup> Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire*, 10-12.

<sup>37</sup> Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire*, 19.

to the middle Arkansas River region. They had already formed an alliance with the Comanches to resist paying tribute to Spain.

In 1751, the Comanches suffered another defeat at the hands of the Spanish. New Mexico governor Tomás Vélez de Capuchin wasted no time in negotiating a peace settlement that was beneficial to all parties. This alliance put an end to the Comanche-Apache wars on the Llano Estacado and hurt the Comanche-Ute alliance.<sup>38</sup>

With the acquisition of the horse, the Comanches were able to control a vast territory, which extended at least eight hundred miles north to south. They could strike at the enemy from a distance of four hundred miles. Most of the destruction they visited on Anglos and Mexicans travelling the Cimarron Cutoff occurred in the later years in the early to mid nineteenth century.

Initially, the Americans' incursion into this land was driven by a desire to trade finished goods in Santa Fe. When the ranchers and settlers arrived, the Comanches fought back.<sup>39</sup> As Americans headed west in large numbers, with the California Gold Rush in 1849, they forced the eastern tribes such as the Wichitas, Wacos, Tawakonies, Tonkawas, and Lipan Apaches on to Comanche range.<sup>40</sup> Historian Ralph Moody noted that the Comanches felt it necessary only to keep the American travelers from reaching water. If Anglos tried to escape them by going north, they would have to cross the desert before reaching the Arkansas River.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire*, 43-50.

<sup>39</sup> Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, 24-5.

<sup>40</sup> Wallace, *Comanches*, 299.

<sup>41</sup> Ralph Moody, *The Old Trails West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1963), 196.



The arrival date of the Utes and the Comanches in New Mexico remains unclear. However, both peoples remained a large force in the region during the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. For many decades, the Utes and Comanches fought each other. However, raids by the Navajos and the Apaches led these two nations to broker an alliance that was to last almost fifty years.<sup>42</sup>

### **Kiowas**

The Kiowas' earliest homeland was in western Montana near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. Later, they lived in the Black Hills, eventually relocating to southwest Kansas. In 1805, Lewis and Clark saw them living on the Platte River. By the 1850s, they lived “west of the ninety-eighth parallel, covering much of southeastern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico as well as southern Kansas, western Indian Territory, and northwestern Texas.”<sup>43</sup>

Tohausen, a principle chief, led the Kiowas to prosperity. In 1834, they established friendly relations with the Comanches, U.S. government, Creeks, and Osages. The peace with the Osages and Creeks was never broken. Until the Civil War, they targeted their raids against Texas, Mexico, and New Mexico.<sup>44</sup> During the years of the Santa Fe trade, civilian and military travelers encountered the Kiowas on or near the Cimarron Cutoff.

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<sup>42</sup> Moody, *Old Trails West*, 35-36.

<sup>43</sup> Jacki Thompson Rand, *Kiowa Humanity and the Invasion of the State* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>44</sup> Jerrold E. Levy, “Kiowa,” in Southwest, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 10, *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William Sturtevant, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 907; N. Scott Momaday and Al Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,

## Apache Peoples

The Athabascans (Navajos and Apaches) originally came from north western Canada near present-day Alaska. They started moving south well before the fifteenth century. Between 1300 and 1500 they migrated from Canada to the American Southwest. They settled along western Nebraska, eastern Colorado, and western Kansas.<sup>45</sup> However, since the Navajos lay claim to the Chacoans as ancestors, the Apaches may have originated from there.

*Faraon Apaches.* The Faraon were a tribe of the Apache Nation. Jerold E. Levy writes, “According to (Manuel) Orozco y Berra their divisions were Ancavistis, Jacomis, Orejones, Carlanes, and Cuampes, but of these the Carlanes at least belonged to the Jicarillas.”<sup>46</sup> Not much information is available about the Faraones except that the Mescaleros were their relatives. The Faraones ranged from Pecos, New Mexico, to the headwaters of the Canadian River and south to the Sandia Mountains. They especially liked to raid Galisteo, Pecos, La Cañada, and Taos. They were initially a large tribe, but warfare with Spaniards, Comanches, and other enemies eventually whittled them to near extinction. They eventually blended in with the Jicarillas.

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1969), 6-10; and James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (1898; reprint, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979), 165-69.

<sup>45</sup> Veronica E. Velarde Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: BowArrow Publishing, 2000), 440; Keith H. Basso, *The Cibecue Apache* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 1-4; John Upton Terrell, *The Plains Apache* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975), xi-xii; and Morris Edward Opler, *Myths and Tales of the Jicarilla Apache Indians* (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1938), xix and *Myths and Legends of the Lipan Apache Indians* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1940), 1.

<sup>46</sup> Levy, “Kiowa”: 453.

Historian Father Stanley argues that all traders on the southern plains in the nineteenth century needed to be on the lookout for the French, Pawnees, Utes, Comanches, Jicarillas, and Faraones. It is interesting that he stated the Faraones were enemies of the Jicarilla Apaches.<sup>47</sup> Their enemies also included most local tribes including the many pueblo tribes who frequently pursued them to regain property, women, and children taken during raids.<sup>48</sup>

*Jicarilla Apaches.* Their Native lands included High Plains country, plateaus and mesas, intermontane basins, and gorgeous vistas. Their northern border was the southern Rocky Mountains in southern Colorado and reached south into north-central New Mexico. They consisted of two divisions: Olleros (potters) and Llaneros (plains people). The Llanero bands included the Carlana, Cuartelejos, and Palomas. Their area lay east of the Rio Grande through southeastern Colorado and southwestern Nebraska.<sup>49</sup> Historian Veronica Tiller (Jicarilla Apache) states that by the mid-1700s, the Llaneros migrated to Texas (probably the panhandle area) where they would live for many decades. By the 1800s, the Americans had pushed the Lipans to northern New Mexico, where they combined with the Olleros into one group, becoming the Jicarilla Apache Nation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> F. Stanley, *The Jicarilla Apaches of New Mexico, 1540-1967* (Pampa, Tex.: Pampa Print Shop, 1967), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Alfred Barnaby Thomas, ed., *After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727; Documents from the Archives of Spain, Mexico, and New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 24.

<sup>49</sup> Tiller, *Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 12-14.

<sup>50</sup> Veronica Tiller, "Jicarilla Apache," Southwest, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 10, *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William Sturtevant, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 440-41.

These people were originally hunter-gatherers. However, by the late 1600s, they lived in flat-roofed houses or rancherías and maintained fields of vegetables. With the introduction of the horse, they commenced raiding Pueblo and Spanish villages and hunting the buffalo.

In 1841, the Jicarillas lost some of their land with the awarding of the Mexican land grant to Carlos Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda, although they continued to subsist on the resources of that country. When General Stephen W. Kearney arrived in 1846, hostilities with the Jicarillas flared up. The U.S. troops had largely subdued the Jicarillas through brutal warfare by the mid-1850s.<sup>51</sup>

*Lipan Apaches.* According to Historian Jean Louis Berlandier, the Lipans arrived in Texas before the eighteenth century. They had split from the Jicarillas allegedly because of a quarrel. Spanish documents identified them in 1718, when they attacked San Antonio. The Lipan were well entrenched in central and southern Texas for over 150 years. In 1754-55, the Spanish established missions to gather and settle them, but the Lipans burned them to the ground because they “refused to live there.”

Early in the nineteenth century, during a truce, the Lipans sometimes combined forces with the Comanches to raid. By 1822, their alliance with the Comanches had failed. They fled south to Houston and Galveston, where they established homes and planted gardens of corn and vegetables on the Llano River. It is interesting to note that around 1825, Stephen Austin and other Anglo settlers actually courted the Lipans to help the Texans. In 1836, following the declaration of Texas independence from Mexico, the Texans and Lipans were in fact friends; the Texans knew they needed the Lipans’ help

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<sup>51</sup> Tiller, “Jicarilla Apache,” 440-61.

against their enemies, especially the Comanches. In 1843, when it was obvious that Texas would become a part of the United States, the Texans changed their minds about the alliance. In 1855, all the Texas Native Americans refused to go to Indian Territory, where the Texans wanted them. Some of the Lipans eventually joined with the Plains Apaches, with the Tonkawas, and later with Mescaleros. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they were driven westward by the Texans across the Rio Grande. Eventually the Americans forced the Lipans to live on the Mescalero Reservation in southern New Mexico. Some Lipans took refuge over the border in Mexico.<sup>52</sup>

### **Cimarron Cutoff**

In 1821, William Becknell, an Anglo entrepreneur operating along the southern Rockies, learned that New Spain had just separated from Spain and that the New Mexicans, now citizens of the independent Mexico, were eager to trade with the Americans. He had goods he wanted to sell. Mexican soldiers escorted his party to Santa Fe where he and his men immediately sold out their merchandise. He little realized the struggle he introduced over this land.

Mystery fills the truth of Becknell's journey to Santa Fe. Dr. Josiah Gregg author of *Commerce of the Prairies* indicates that Becknell made his first journey in early 1821 with four trusted companions. They made a huge profit and returned to Franklin, Missouri. Gregg then goes on to talk of Becknell's next trip with about thirty men and about five thousand dollars in merchandise; despite the "original purpose of trading with

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<sup>52</sup> Morris Opler, "Lipan Apache," in Plains, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie, vol. 13, part 2, *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William Sturtevant, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 941-52. An interesting sideline is the State of Texas recognized the Lipans as a tribe and gave them lands in Texas in October 2003. See <http://www.lipanapache.org/archives.html>.

Iatan or Comanche Indians,” they accidentally fell in with Mexican rangers. On this trip, Gregg indicates that Becknell barely made it through the desert and his party had to subsist on the blood and ears of his mules.<sup>53</sup> Becknell’s journal indicates that by August they planned to go to Santa Fe to sell their goods and gives no indication of having a harrowing trip.<sup>54</sup>

Becknell’s journal indicates that he went to Santa Fe the first time starting on September 1, 1821 and arrived there in December 1821. He indicates that they met up with a company of Spanish soldiers. The details are a bit vague, with the town names in English. However, the publication of the diary of Captain of the Militia don Pedro Ignacio Gallego in November 1992 clears up the details.<sup>55</sup> New Mexico governor don Facundo Melgares, in the summer of 1821, dispatched Gallego with 148 soldiers to chase a party of Comanche Indians who had raided San Miguel del Vado (half way between Las Vegas and Pecos, near San Jose). In this diary, Gallego states that his unit met Becknell and five Americans at Puertocito de la Lumbre (possibly Cañon de Piedra Lumbre, near Las Vegas). They accompanied the Americans to San Miguel del Vado and left them there.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 21-22.

<sup>54</sup> Becknell, *Journals of Capt. William Becknell*, 66.

<sup>55</sup> Michael L. Olsen and Harry C. Myers, eds., “The Diary of Pedro Ignacio Gallego Wherein 400 Soldiers following the Trail of Comanches met William Becknell on his first trip to Santa Fe,” *Wagon Tracks* 7:1 (November 1992): 1, 15-19. This diary was found in the Mexican Archives of New Mexico recently when it was translated by Michael L. Olsen, Charles Truxillo, Jan Garcia, Lucy Romo, and Richard Salazar.

<sup>56</sup> *The Roads of New Mexico* (Addison, Tex.: MAPSCO, 2007): 48-49; and Olsen “Diary of Pedro Ignacio Gallego,” 1, 15-19.

The difference between Becknell's journal and Gregg's book is a mystery. Some historians have questioned the validity of Becknell's journal. Historian Larry Beachum indicates that someone else cleaned up the entries, but he believes it to be reliable. The only thing Becknell said in his journal about Native Americans was meeting a party of Osages and being saved by a Mr. Chouteau. Chouteau's Island is on the Arkansas River east of Fort Aubrey.<sup>57</sup> Gregg says Becknell's purpose in going west was to trade with the Iatan or Comanche Indians. Most historians acknowledge Gregg's word as fact, and even Marc Simmons believes most of what Gregg said, except for the purpose of the trip, which may be questionable. He thinks Gregg accepted the original advertisement of a trip as completed.<sup>58</sup> Becknell advertised for people to go on an unspecified trip. This was in April 1821. He was unable to take this trip because he was arrested on May 29 and remained in Franklin to fight a lawsuit. He did not start on his trip to Santa Fe until September 1. By this time, he had made it clear his journey was to trade with Santa Fe, not the Comanches.<sup>59</sup>

As to Gregg's comments about Becknell's barely reaching New Mexico, there are two possible explanations. At some point, Gregg could have talked to Becknell about his expedition. Historian Larry Beachum suggests Gregg could have seen Becknell in 1841.<sup>60</sup> The other possibility is more conjecture than fact. Gregg signed a contract in early 1844 with Messrs. D. Appleton and Company to publish his book. They suggested

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<sup>57</sup> Becknell, *Journals of Capt. William Becknell*, 79.

<sup>58</sup> Marc Simmons, "Opening the Santa Fe Trail," *Westport Historical Quarterly* 7:1 (June 1971): 4.

<sup>59</sup> Larry Beachum, *William Becknell: Father of the Santa Fe Trade* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982), 16.

<sup>60</sup> Beachum, *William Becknell*, 37.

he find someone to help with his grammar and writing. He hired Count Louis Ferdinand Tasistro, a romantic who enjoyed imposing his conceptions of people, society, and history on other people's reality. Gregg was a painstaking writer, while Tasistro tended toward flowery, less factual writing. Within three months, Gregg replaced Tasistro with John Bigelow. Perhaps Tasistro was the one who embellished on Becknell's journey across the desert, and Gregg failed to remove this section. Alternatively, maybe Gregg did meet Becknell at some time and Becknell provided the embellishment.<sup>61</sup>

Hiram M. Chittenden, historian, gave Becknell the title "Father of the Santa Fe Trail."<sup>62</sup> Becknell perhaps deserves this title. However, he was not the first person of European ancestry to journey on this trail. That honor goes to Pedro Vial who followed the trail in 1792, returning in 1793. Spanish governor Fernando de la Concha of New Mexico instructed him to "open direct communication with our settlements in Illinois."<sup>63</sup> Vial's travels one way were 1185.6 miles over eight-two days.<sup>64</sup>

After his pioneering journey, Becknell opened the Santa Fe Trail proper in 1822. For fifty years, travel did not decline until the Union Pacific built its railroad. The Cimarron Cutoff was the route most traveled by the freighters and the army because it was much easier to navigate with wagons than the Raton Pass. In her diary, Susan Magoffin described the journey over the pass with her husband, also a merchant, who had to go

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<sup>61</sup> Paul Horgan, *Josiah Gregg and His Vision of the Early West* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), 37.

<sup>62</sup> Simmons, *Old Trail to Santa Fe*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Noel M. Loomis and Abraham P. Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 369.

<sup>64</sup> Loomis, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe*, 380.



through with his wagons. The short seventeen-mile trip from Trinidad, Colorado, to Raton, New Mexico, took almost five days. In order to get the wagons down the pass, the freighters had to unload the merchandise from the wagons and then lower it and the wagons separately with ropes.<sup>65</sup> At the bottom, they had to reload the wagons prior to continuing.

The Cimarron Cutoff remained the primary route into New Mexico for almost twenty-five years.<sup>66</sup> In order to get over the roughest part of the Cutoff, Becknell followed a buffalo track. Many of the early Americans going west understood that both the buffalo and the Natives had blazed the best trails.<sup>67</sup>

During Santa Fe trade glory days, freighters preferred the Cimarron Cutoff because it was shorter, but deadlier and it had two drawbacks: lack of water; and sometimes Native American challenges. Once a traveler took the Cutoff from present-day Dodge City, he might go from one to four days without water, depending on the speed of the caravan. The later traders hauled their own water to overcome this problem.<sup>68</sup> It was easier to resolve the lack of water than contend with the raids by the various tribes.<sup>69</sup> Eventually the Americans understood that the best way to traverse the Cimarron Cutoff was to travel in large well-armed caravans. These large armadas stood a better chance of repelling the

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<sup>65</sup> Magoffin, *Diary*, 79-84.

<sup>66</sup> Marc Simmons, *Along the Santa Fe Trail* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1986), 55.

<sup>67</sup> Moody, *Old Trails West*, 188-89.

<sup>68</sup> Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West: A History of Pioneer Trading Posts and Early Fur Companies* (1902; reprinted, with new introduction by Stallo Vinton. Stanford, Calif.: Academic Reprints, 1954), 527.

<sup>69</sup> Simmons, *Along the Santa Fe*, 55.

Indians as long as the wagons formed a corral; on the open prairie, it was different. If the Indians could stampede the oxen, the traders were in trouble.<sup>70</sup>

## **Encounters**

Many violent encounters between the Natives and the Americans broke out on the Cimarron Cutoff.

In the fall of 1828, someone shot and killed two young men named McNees and Monroe near a creek, which the Americans later named McNees Creek. At the end of the funeral, the Americans shot a passing Native American in retaliation for the murders of these two men. In all reality, neither this Native nor his companions knew the reason for the killing.<sup>71</sup> McNees Creek eventually reverted to Corrupa Creek, its original name.

The famous mountain man Jedediah Smith also died on the Cimarron Cutoff. William H. Ashley and Andrew Henry decided to start a business by procuring furs and hides from the American West to sell back east and in Europe. On February 13, 1822, they placed a newspaper ad looking for hunters. At twenty three years of age, Jedediah Smith answered this ad. After the fur trade began to wane, he started working as a long-distance hauler over the Santa Fe Trail. During his nine years in the West, Smith became a famous frontiersman. He traversed, trapped, hunted, and lived in the Rocky Mountains

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<sup>70</sup> Stanley Vestal, *The Old Santa Fe Trail* (1939; reprint, with new introduction by Marc Simmons, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 177-78.

<sup>71</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairie*, 18.

for nearly a decade. During this time, he fought and lived with many of the Native tribes.<sup>72</sup>

Smith was not looking for death. However, death was a big part of the life he chose. He had fought Indians and watched other men die. On May 27, 1831, Chief Brown Bear decided to lead a hunting party of about twenty men.<sup>73</sup> After all, their families needed fresh meat. Expecting to find animals for slaughter, the Chief or one of his men spotted a lone man in the distance. This particular hunting trip became history.

In January 1830, Smith undertook a venture with William Sublette and David Jackson to take twenty thousand dollars of merchandise to Santa Fe. Smith also wanted to include this excursion in the book he hoped to publish soon. On April 10, 1831, the caravan departed with seventy-four men and twenty-two mule-drawn wagons. Before they left Lexington, Missouri, Smith drew up a will naming Samuel Parkman as his executor.

During this time of year (summer), it was almost certain death to brave the Cimarron Cutoff without bringing plenty of water, as the country “offered almost no water for humans or livestock.” On May 19, while still in Kansas, the party lost several men to a brush with Pawnee warriors. On May 24, they took the Cimarron Cutoff. For three days, Smith and his party could find no water, and by the fourth day, the men and animals were dehydrated and on the verge of collapse. Smith and Thomas Fitzpatrick, another well-

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<sup>72</sup> Barton H. Barbour, *Jedediah Smith: No Ordinary Mountain Man* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 53, 84, 103; and Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 86-89.

<sup>73</sup> The incident is real, this specific name is not. Barbour, *Jedediah Smith*, 258-59, 267-70; and Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, 329-30.

known mountain man, headed south to find water. Fitzpatrick collapsed at a depression and dug a small pit to catch whatever moisture he could. Sometimes water would rise up and be recovered.

No Anglo ever saw Smith alive again. During his search, he stumbled onto a Comanche war party and he died in combat. No one knows whether the Comanches knew whom they killed or even cared who their victim was. However, the drums and the mourning started when this hunting party returned to camp because when Smith was surrounded, he killed Chief Brown Bear before the Comanches killed him.<sup>74</sup>

Another tragic confrontation took place in October 1849. James M. White, a merchant from Independence, Missouri, forfeited his life as well as those of his hired teamsters.<sup>75</sup> A few warriors, hunting for meat or trespassers, approached them to collect a toll for trespassing. The arrogant White considered himself and his party well-armed and “refused to pay a toll to these highway thieves.” The Jicarillas came back with a larger group and a battle ensued at a spot between Rock Creek and Whetstone Bridge. Guns were fired and the women probably screamed and cried. The warriors killed the men. In addition, they kidnapped White’s wife, their baby daughter, and their slave. The Jicarillas had a practice of selling slaves at the various markets to other people. The only thing really known is that Ann managed to carry away a copy of *Kit Carson: The Prince of Gold Hunters*, a dime novel written by Charles Averill.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Barbour, *Jedediah Smith*, 251-259; and Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, 330.

<sup>75</sup> Simmons, *Old Santa Fe Trail*, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Sides, *Blood and Thunder*, 247, 258; U. S. Congress, *Annual Report of Office of Indian Affairs*, 31st Cong., 2nd sess., 1849-1850, S. ex.doc. 1, ser. no. 587: 42; Paul Andrew Hutton, “Kit Carson’s Ride,” *Wild*

Within a few days, Major William Grier led an army detachment, which included Kit Carson as his scout, to find Ann, the slave, and the baby. They managed to locate the Jicarillas who had held Ann. However, momentary inaction on Grier's part let the group get away. During Grier's attack, an unknown Jicarilla woman in charge of Ann killed her with a shot through the heart to prevent her escape. A soldier killed the Native woman. The band lost about twelve people as well. In anger for her death, the soldiers brutally murdered a baby they found attached to a cradleboard. Rumors said the slave had previously been killed and the baby given to the Utes.<sup>77</sup> The U.S. government spent years searching for the baby and the slave. They even put up a fifteen hundred dollar reward for their return.<sup>78</sup>

The Indians were not the only ones to commit depredations on the Cimarron Cutoff. In 1852 and 1853, Gov. William Carr Lane of New Mexico Territory attempted to corral the Jicarillas to lands west of the Rio Grande. Federal officials in New Mexico and the army labeled the Jicarillas as the most troublesome of the Apache groups. The U.S. Army and New Mexico volunteers prosecuted a successful campaign to destroy Jicarilla resistance in the mid-1850s.<sup>79</sup>

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*West* (April 2007): 28-37; and James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 62.

<sup>77</sup> Clinton E. Brooks and Frank D. Reeve, eds., "James A. Bennett: A Dragoon in New Mexico, 1850-1856," *New Mexico Historical Review* 22:1 (January 1947): 74-75.

<sup>78</sup> Calhoun to Lea, November 18, 1850, *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, Abel, 269-70.

<sup>79</sup> Morris F. Taylor, "Campaigns against the Jicarilla Apache, 1854," *New Mexico Historical Review* 44:4 (October 1969): 269-70.

By the time Marian Sloan made her journey over the Cimarron Cutoff in 1852, most of the attacks by the Indians were over for the time being. She wrote that her journey was full of harrowing rattlesnakes, large spiders, and centipedes.<sup>80</sup> She wrote romantic comments about the Natives: “The rhythmical beat of the bright painted tom-toms of ten thousand red warriors blended with earth shaking thunder of a million buffalo, and with the tortured speech of uncounted thousands of lumbering wagon wheels bearing men and women to a new life in a new land.”<sup>81</sup>

In order to protect pioneers and gold seekers heading west through Indian country, the U.S. government erected a series of forts across the West.<sup>82</sup> In December 1848, the adjutant general of the U.S. Army issued orders to erect forts in the Far Southwest, intending to keep the Native Americans who lived there in check, while Anglos conducted land speculation and sold whiskey and arms to Natives in the area. The U.S. Army did try to stop this illegal activity, but it lacked the resources.<sup>83</sup>

The army placed one of its forts near present Watrous, New Mexico, in 1851, and named it Fort Union. Its location was at the junction of the mountain branch and Cimarron Cutoff to the Santa Fe Trail. This fort was in use for several decades until after

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<sup>80</sup> Simmons, *Along the Trail*, 61.

<sup>81</sup> Marion Russell, *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail* (1954; reprint, with a new afterword by Marc Simmons, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), xii.

<sup>82</sup> A. B. Bender, “Military Posts in the Southwest, 1848-1860,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 16: 2 (April 1941): 125.

<sup>83</sup> Bender, “Military Posts,” 127.

the Chiricahua Apaches were sent away as Prisoners of War in 1886. This fort and its troops provided some protection to people using the Cutoff into New Mexico.

On July 1, 1864, there was a skirmish at the confluence of the Arkansas River with the Walnut Creek. An army detachment buried several men who died in the fight between the Americans and the Natives. The army found Robert McGee and several other men alive, but badly wounded and scalped. Three months following this massacre, McGee and the others were still alive.

In the summer of 1864, Brigadier General James H. Carleton stationed 180 troops with sixty days of rations on both branches of the Santa Fe Trail. These troops were put there because Native Americans were in the “throes of a disastrous ... uprising, and Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes were attacking trains between Arkansas and Fort Union.”<sup>84</sup> Colonel Kit Carson and General Carleton took a few hundred men to war, on these tribes along the Canadian River area. Following these attacks, the Santa Fe Trail started to fade into history, since construction of the Union Pacific Railroad began in 1866. These railroads marked the end of the Santa Fe Trail for both commerce and later cattle drives.<sup>85</sup>

On October 21, 1867, the signing of the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty granted specific hunting grounds to the various tribes. No sooner was the ink dry when American

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<sup>84</sup> Robert M. Utley, *Fort Union and the Santa Fe Trail* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Department of the Interior Park Service, 1959), 30-31.

<sup>85</sup> Utley, *Fort Union*, 8; Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (1967; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981, 132-34; and Sides, *Blood and Thunder*, 365-69.

hunters started encroaching on the buffalo herds.<sup>86</sup> The tribes fought back with little success.

In the summer of 1872, both the Cheyennes and Kiowas were still defending their territory. On May 28, 1872, a party of twenty-one San Juan Pueblo Indians and Mexicans, out hunting buffalo, camped on the Cimarron Cutoff near Corrumpa Creek. A large party of Kiowa warriors, estimated to be three hundred in strength, attacked them. The Pueblo party took refuge in a cave and successfully fended off the Kiowas, who retreated with their dead, including two chiefs. The Pueblo party remained in the cave for two days to make sure that the Kiowas were gone. They reached Mora, New Mexico, on May 31. Historian Morris Taylor tried to identify this specific Kiowa war party with no success, for many Kiowas were out that summer.<sup>87</sup>

As late as the summer of 1873, the Jicarilla Apaches, Arapahos, and Cheyennes were still at war with the Anglos over control of modern-day Colfax County. That summer they attacked Cimarron, New Mexico, and settlements along the Vermejo Creek. During these attacks, the Cheyennes came very close to killing Tony Meloche, owner of the TO Ranch.<sup>88</sup>

On July 4, 1874, Comanches and Cheyennes attacked the Cross Ell Ranch headquartered south of Folsom, New Mexico. Five men died. When this report reached

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<sup>86</sup> Wallace, *Comanches*, 299.

<sup>87</sup> Morris F. Taylor. "The New Mexico-Colorado Border: The Last Phase, 1870-1876," *New Mexico Historical Review* 46:4 (October 1971): 317.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *New Mexico-Colorado Border*, 322-29.



Fort Union, the army dispatched two hundred soldiers to the ranch; however, they were too late to catch the warriors.<sup>89</sup>

All of these skirmishes along the Santa Fe Trail turned out to be the death rattle for a nomadic way of life for the Natives now under U.S. control. General Kearny was the first army commander in New Mexico. He pursued Gov. Manuel Armijo and his troops in 1846, at the opening of the U.S.-Mexican War. After that, the U.S. army built Forts Atkinson and Larned on the Arkansas River to protect the main trail down to the Cimarron Cutoff. Near Bent's New Fort, they built Fort Wise to protect the mountain branch. Troops at the posts and others on the plains and in the mountains received some of their first lessons in fighting from Native Americans in the region during the 1850s.<sup>90</sup>

After the Civil War ended in 1864, the U.S. regular army came west again. On July 28, 1866, President Andrew Johnson signed the "Act to increase and fix the Military Peace Establishment of the United States." The cavalry included ten regiments and the infantry forty-five regiments. The act funded one thousand scouts. There were also to be two cavalry and four infantry regiments of African American soldiers and Anglo officers.<sup>91</sup> On September 5, 1867, Major General Philip H. Sheridan assumed command of the Department of the Missouri at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. One of his subordinates was Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer. Historian Paul Hutton called Sheridan "the

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<sup>89</sup> Leonard Sumpter, "Indian Massacre" in Mrs. N. H. (Cora) Click, *Us Nesters in the Land of Enchantment*, 1-2.

<sup>90</sup> Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848-1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), xxvi, 5, 19.

<sup>91</sup> Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: the United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 11.

nation's chief Indian fighter from 1867 until he assumed overall command of the Army in 1883."<sup>92</sup>

In 1866, with its experience before the U.S. Civil War, during the war, and after the war, the U.S. Army was ready to put an end to the "Indian problem." For twenty more years, the Indian Wars continued until the settlement of all tribes to reservations or prison. This confinement was a gradual process. By 1878, some of the nations were already on reservations. There were small groups of various nations who were still trying to maintain their lifestyle.

Nathan Meeker became the Indian agent at White River in Colorado in 1878. He arrived with the attitude that he was going to be the father figure for the wayward Ute nation. He also understood what the Utes did not, that the prospectors and farmers wanted their land. He knew the Natives would need to become self-sufficient. He thought he could help them. He set out to create a self-sustaining reservation for his "wayward children" who needed "firm guidance" to become civilized. He refused to listen to any of their complaints. Meeker eventually had a serious argument with Chief Johnson, which blew up into The Battle at Mill Creek, ending in Chief Johnson's death. Governor Frederick W. Pitkin of Colorado, used his political muscle to have the Utes removed from Colorado because they were "uncontrollable renegades." In all reality, he used the power of his office to open the land for access to the minerals. Finally, in 1880, the White River, Uncompahgre, and southern Utes signed a peace treaty ceding their

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<sup>92</sup> Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (1985; reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 1, 31, 345.

lands, not knowing they were destined for removal to Utah.<sup>93</sup> Consequently the Utes disappeared from the country of the Cutoff.

The Natives did not have a chance to retain their nomadic life-styles. They were too busy fighting Americans, Spanish, Mexicans, and each other. Shortly after the end of the Civil War, most Native tribes were already on reservations, but quite a few bands were still fighting.<sup>94</sup> During the summer of 1864, the Kiowas and Comanches, along with other tribes, suffered a series of devastating attacks by the Army. After Colonel Carson was defeated, he reported: "I flatter myself that I have taught these Indians a severe lesson, and hereafter they will be more cautious about how they engage a force of civilized troops." This comment was due to his forces having killed sixty-five Native Americans, wounded one hundred fifty others, and destroyed many homes and much food.<sup>95</sup>

The Army attempted a peace treaty in 1867. By this time, the tribes were not willing to listen to false words. Finally, the Natives could not refuse. The Kiowas, Comanches, Kiowa-Apaches, Cheyennes, and Arapahos were present at the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek.<sup>96</sup> The main interpreter only knew Comanche. Mrs. Margaret Adams interpreted for the Arapaho. The real reason for this treaty was to remove the tribes to build the railroad and to open their country for farming and ranching.

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Decker, *The Utes Must Go! American Expansion and the Removal of a People* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 2004), 145-81.

<sup>94</sup> Mildred P. Mayhall, *The Kiowas*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971), 223.

<sup>95</sup> Mayhall, *Kiowas*, 231-232.

<sup>96</sup> Mayhall, *Kiowas*, 239-241.

In 1846, the United States forced a treaty on the Jicarillas, which would ensure that they starved. The agreement placed them near Abiquiú, but they could not come within fifty miles of settlements. The land produced nothing for sustenance and was no good for farming. On February 24, 1853, the government ordered the Jicarillas moved to “suitable agricultural locations and to establish communities with self-governing bodies to maintain peace and order.”<sup>97</sup>

After the battle of Red River in February 1854, forty-five lodges wished to move to Mora. In 1855, the tribe and the army signed the Jicarilla Apache Treaty. However, Congress did not ratify it. Ratification was necessary to establish a reservation. The government “frowned on any suggestions for establishing separate reservations throughout New Mexico for the different tribes.” In 1864, New Mexico wanted to put all the territory’s tribes at Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River. This effort became a tragic fiasco. In November 1865, the Mescaleros left Bosque Redondo under cover of night. By 1868, the government was already attempting to locate the Jicarillas elsewhere and the Navajos “were allowed to return to their homeland.” By 1872, “the classic trilogy of Indian dispossession – the encroachment of white settlers, dwindling wildlife, and the uncaring government – left the Jicarillas with no alternative but dependency on the ration system.”<sup>98</sup>

On December 10, 1873, an agreement established a reservation for the Jicarillas in northern New Mexico. However, there were many problems because Anglos desired the

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<sup>97</sup> Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 39-41

<sup>98</sup> Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 45, 61, 75; and Sides, *Blood and Thunder*, 382-83.

land.<sup>99</sup> Finally, on August 20, 1883, the Jicarillas went to the Mescalero Reservation until their leaders enabled them to return north, thus ending the final settlement of Indian tribes and their removal from the country of the Santa Fe Trail.

In the end, the Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches' defense of the Cimarron Cutoff, as with other areas, was a failure. As hard as they tried to stop the Americans, theirs was an impossible task. The Natives won some battles, but lost the war. The Comanches and Kiowas went to reservations in the Panhandle of Indian Territory, while the Utes were sent to Utah. The Faraones willingly combined with the Jicarilla, while the Lipan went to the Mescalero reservation.

When all is said and done, the Cimarron Cutoff to the Santa Fe Trail was highly significant ground to diverse people: Spanish, Mexicans, Americans, Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, and Utes. The Natives tried to stop or at least to charge Euro-Americans for coming on the land. This never succeeded because the settlers willingly paid fees only to other Americans. Anyone else asking for money was seen as a beggar. For the better part of forty years, many battles were fought over this land. Most of those battles are unknown due to lack of documentation. Although the Natives actually laid claim to this land, they eventually lost it and went to several reservations. The Anglos acquired the land, won, and lost fortunes in Santa Fe. They paid a high price for the land. They bought it with much sweat and blood.

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<sup>99</sup> Tiller "Jicarillas" vol. 10:451.

## Homesteading

Ralph Waldo Emerson, twenty years prior to completion of the transcontinental railroad, predicted it would change the West. He was right; it transformed the West, as well as the rest of the world. It “symbolized progress, prosperity, and the promise of the future.” At first, the railroad was transcontinental. Eventually iron rails crisscrossed the whole of the American lands.<sup>1</sup> Not only would the railroad help restructure small-town America, but it brought many commodities, products, wares, and people out to them. Treasures and catalogs opened up a new way of life for America, and residents would go to the depot to see who and what arrived or departed, or merely to gawk at the commotion.<sup>2</sup> The railroad also opened up readily accessible markets for the products coming out of the West such as lumber, hides, farm produce, and meats of all kinds.

Colfax and Union counties in New Mexico share the railroad experience. Union County literally came into existence to serve the railroad, while the railroad came to New Mexico to serve Colfax. Colfax was home to several coal mines. Unlike Union County, Colfax did not see many homesteaders. Instead, it was home to the largest land grant in New Mexico with its own unique history. This chapter will trace the early history of both counties and the attempt to homestead the counties.

The U.S. government promised land to a large number of Europeans who wished to migrate out west. The railroad, especially the Northern Pacific Railroad, put its

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<sup>1</sup> James P. Ronda, “America’s Frontier Forever Changed: The West the Railroads Made,” *American Heritage* 58:4 (January 01, 2008): 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ronda, “America’s Frontier,” 2.

promotional machinery into high gear to seek homesteaders. People were looking for cheap land to homestead and were willing to endure its hardships.<sup>3</sup> These homesteaders did not know what to expect in the West, but were willing to face the unknown.

The railroad arrived in New Mexico following the Civil War. Colonel Cyrus K. Holliday dreamed of building the railroad along the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>4</sup> In the 1860s, he started building this railroad and by the early 1880s, he had succeeded in his dream. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) was the only railroad in New Mexico, at that time. It connected Santa Fe with Denver, Colorado. Senator Stephen W. Dorsey utilized his acquaintanceship with General Granville Dodge of New York (construction manager of the Denver and Fort Worth Railroad) to extend the railroad east of Raton. In order to do this, Union County established the town of Clayton to provide a viable water source for the railroad. Residents named the town for Senator Dorsey's son Clayton. This line gave Clayton a built-in business with northern New Mexico. The Denver and Fort Worth Railroad was completed in March 1888.<sup>5</sup>

This was not the only town that came into being directly because of the railroad. The Colorado and Southern Railroad built a line west from Clayton, which it completed in 1885. To complete the iron road, the AT&SF built a line between Raton and the Colorado and Southern Railroad. At this junction, the railroad created Des Moines, with

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<sup>3</sup> Sig Mickelson, *The Northern Pacific Railroad and the Selling of the West* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: The Center for Western Studies, 1993), 73.

<sup>4</sup> Jim F. Heath, "A Study of the Influence of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad upon the Economy of New Mexico, 1878 to 1900" (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1955), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Berry Newton Alvis, "History of Union County, New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 22:3 (July 1947): 264, 266, 267, 270.

Folsom as a feeder to the railroad.<sup>6</sup> After the town sites were erected, the corporations needed homesteaders who would create economical markets.

By 1840, the U.S. newspapers and government had promoted the Great Plains as “The Great American Desert” and wrapped it in frontier myth. The myth envisioned a desert inhabited by desperate white men and savage Native Americans. In order to counteract this myth and to encourage people to move into the Great American Desert, the federal government started to advertise it as anything but a desert. The plains needed people to farm the land. In 1888, Jan Blodgett published *Land of Bright Promise* that the railroads, newspapers, and real estate agents published numerous myth-creating tracts and articles to lure the farmers into the Texas Panhandle. Editors published travel journals to cash in on the myth of the “Old West” and others to prove that the West was tame. The purpose of this media blitz was to create a market for railroad services such as movement of passengers and especially supplies to and from the East. Blodgett states that after 1840, explorer John C. Frémont and Senator Thomas Hart Benton had called this area “a great meadow or pastoral domain.” The great western booster William Gilpin claimed it was a “great meadows or pastoral domain,” and a “garden in the grasslands.” Historian Henry Nash Smith writes that boosters such as Linus P. Brockett wrote pamphlets that were glowing about the land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, but failed to indicate a large portion of the land was desert. Brockett said the land was “destined to be the garden of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 251, 272, 273.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise: Advertising the Texas Panhandle and South Plains, 1870-1917* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 1, 4, 7; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 174-83.



According to historian Daniel Boorstin, the various editors were “enthusiastically close” to “bearing false witness, not against their neighbors but in behalf of them.” While not lying, the editors wrote what they believed the future of these areas would be. These editors put a positive spin on everything, such as claiming the heat of summer helped raise crops and cut down on insect life.<sup>8</sup>

The editor of the *New Mexico Herald* in Las Vegas ran an extensive article answering numerous questions for future homesteaders to New Mexico. This article ran on the first page of the newspaper and covered four columns on the right side, indicating that it was extremely important to the town and region. Of the four columns, two and a half columns told of all the rich minerals in New Mexico mines. However, no mention was made that these mines were already in the hands of someone else and the only thing homesteaders could expect to get were low paying jobs. As for agriculture, these editors extolled the virtues of the “rich sandy loam” and “rich bottom lands” and of land that did not need fertilizer, but that land was available only along the Rio Grande. In addition, the editor stated “not more than one-tenth of the valleys of the Rio Grande or Pecos ... [was] occupied or cultivated. The same ... said of a hundred other valleys and terraces along the large streams, and especially so of the higher plateaus.” The land was described as arable and capable of producing healthy crops of all kinds. After all, the “valleys are noted for their rich soil, luxuriant vegetables, and temperate climate.” These combined elements offered great inducements “such as lead to prosperity and wealth, and furnish happy homes to those who may have the enterprise to embrace the opportunity.” It seems

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<sup>8</sup> Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise*, 13.

the article failed to mention the lack of water and that even though the land was unoccupied, someone already owned it.<sup>9</sup>

By the time the railroad was built in northern New Mexico, the advertising engines were proficient. People had become discouraged with the false advertisement about the promise of the West. Therefore, by 1896, the AT&SF started down a new direction in advertising, changing the image especially of New Mexico, in order to convince people to homestead here.

Years earlier, people in the East had adamantly called for the removal of the Native tribes to a reservation. Now people were using these same Native Americans to shore up the dire financial situation in the United States created by the financial crises of 1893 and 1896. Before, easterners said New Mexico was a “desperate land” populated by the dregs of society-Native Americans, Mexicans, and outlaws. Now the advertising geniuses attempted to change this image. They began pushing the American Indian heritage of the West and the natural and cultural distinction of the Southwest. The railroad also attracted tourists to admire and gawk at the wonderful sights the West offered.<sup>10</sup> The advertisers reversed the image from the “badlands of New Mexico” to the “Land of Enchantment.” They turned it into the land of “the exotic and simple life of an earthly paradise.” Now, the Native Americans were not bloodthirsty savages, but picturesque and glamorous figures, an attractive part of Santa Fe and New Mexico. The railroad ignored the

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<sup>9</sup> “New Mexico,” *New Mexico Herald* (Las Vegas), July 30, 1879, sec. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ronda,” *America’s Frontier Changed Forever*,” 3.

desperate life of Native Americans incarcerated on the reservations, but promoted the exoticism of their lives.<sup>11</sup>

Even the Bureau of Immigration of New Mexico (the Bureau) joined the advertising campaign. It published a pamphlet entitled *Ho! To the Land of Sunshine: A Guide to New Mexico for the Homeseeker*. It explained that even though the primary water sources were in private hands, the area in the north was amenable to dry farming.<sup>12</sup> In a document written for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, the editor, A. E. Koehler extolled the virtues of selecting appropriate drought resistant crops. He said that Johnson, Bartlett, and Barela Mesas were ideal for dry farming. He further stated that dry farming had not failed since 1885.<sup>13</sup> He was right, since the area had been experiencing a wet cycle for nearly thirty years.

The Bureau worked in conjunction with the railroads to sell New Mexico as viable farm land. Some phrases they used were “the thriving modern cities,” “homes for all

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<sup>11</sup> T. C. McLuhan, *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian, 1890-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 16.

<sup>12</sup> New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, *Ho! To the Land of Sunshine: A Guide to New Mexico for the Homeseeker*, 9th rev. ed. (Albuquerque: Bureau of Immigration of New Mexico, 1909), 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> According to the Webster’s *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2003, dry farming is “a mode of farming practiced in regions of slight or insufficient rainfall that relies mainly on tillage methods rendering the soil more receptive to moisture and on the selection of suitable crops.” A. E. Koehler, ed., *Official Souvenir of the State of New Mexico at Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915* (Albuquerque: Commissioner of Publicity, 1915), 4-54; *The Official Guidebook of the Panama California Exposition San Diego, 1915* (no editor, n.p, n.d.): 3-17; Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (1931; reprint Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 366-74.

who come,” and “millions in her mines.”<sup>14</sup> They failed to mention that the modern cities were just pie in the sky, for even Albuquerque was small in comparison to eastern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.<sup>15</sup> Homesteads were available, but people had to build their own houses.

By the 1860s, farmers, agricultural experts, and politicians viewed the old desert myth as passé. They became more optimistic over the use of the land. With different methods of farming and irrigation, the people could transform the land into useful, wealth-generating farms, especially since editors, travelers, and businessmen stated they could accomplish this. The scientists of the U.S. Geological Survey tried to temper this enthusiasm with some reality by informing people of the frequent lack or shortage of water on the plains. Unfortunately, “restless pioneers were in no mood to be denied a part of what they considered their national heritage.” Not all pioneers wanted to farm. Some of them came west to speculate, buy cheap land, and sell this land at a substantial profit.<sup>16</sup>

Eventually, all involved parties realized that the land in New Mexico could become viable farms with reliance on extensive irrigation. This kind of project required large capital sums, which only corporations or the government could provide. The lands given away by the government under the Homestead Act between 1898 and 1917 were

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<sup>14</sup> New Mexico Bureau of Immigration, *Ho!* 1.

<sup>15</sup> The population of the city of Albuquerque in 1900 was 6,238. Albuquerque Population Statistics Report number 3 (Albuquerque Industrial Development Services, January 1963): 4. The population in 2010 was 535,239. <http://www.cabq.gov/econdev/whyabqquickfacts.html> accessed March 2, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *The Farmer's Frontier, 1865-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 10-19.

marginal farm lands best used for livestock ranges. These lands required extensive labor to farm successfully. This did not matter to people as long as they could make a decent living off the land.<sup>17</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, northern New Mexico was an intriguing combination of beautiful country and disparate cultures. There were Hispanos, several Native American tribes, and a mixture of Anglo cultures. The combination made this area different from other locales in the United States. In addition, the history was a combination of modern and ancient governments that have learned how to work with each other. Spain's feudal land system was still present in the form of land grants. In addition, large portions of the land belong to the U. S. government.<sup>18</sup>

On January 25, 1869, the New Mexico territorial legislature established Colfax County, which it named for Republican vice president-elect Schuyler Colfax. This new county included most of the Maxwell Land Grant and stretched to the present day Texas and Oklahoma state lines. In 1893, Colfax County was divided to form Union County to the east. Initially, the county seat was Elizabethtown. The county seat has changed twice. Due to lack of water, Elizabethtown failed as the seat. Instead, the county seat was moved to Maxwell, which today bears the name Springer. The Old Court House was built in 1892 and remained in use until 1936. That year, Raton became the county seat.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the county is home to very large ranches, some in excess of 250,000 acres.

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<sup>17</sup> Fite, *Farmer's Frontier*, 190-91, 215-17.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas E. Chavéz, *New Mexico: Past and Future* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 3-5.

<sup>19</sup> Colfax County website [www.co.colfax.nm.us/history.htm](http://www.co.colfax.nm.us/history.htm). Accessed October 3, 2011.

Some of the more prominent ranches are Philmont Scout Ranch (137,500 acres), Vermejo Ranch (590,000 acres), and the T.O. Ranch (225,000 acres).<sup>20</sup>

Colfax County is where the famed Maxwell Land Grant existed. This grant played a prominent role in the history of the region. King Ferdinand II of Spain established a board in Mexico known as the Supreme Council of the Indies. Since the King theoretically sat on this board, anything authorized by it was authorized by the king. The Viceroy of New Spain (ex officio president) assumed that, as the king's voice, he possessed the power to grant lands to people. Due to long distances of communication, there were difficulties with these land grants. The same holds true during the twenty-five years of rule by the Republic of Mexico. Mexico occasionally "amended, abrogated, and repealed laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to land grants." This procedure sometimes caused problems with the grants. Both Spain and Mexico could revoke land grants at will for political or legal reasons.<sup>21</sup>

On February 26, 1848, following the Mexican-American War, the Mexican and American governments signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. The citizens of this

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<sup>20</sup> A good gauge for judging acreage is Albuquerque Metro, which includes Rio Rancho. It is 121,000 acres or 188.8 square miles. This information comes from the Albuquerque website, [www.cabq.gov](http://www.cabq.gov). Accessed October 3, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> William A. Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant: A New Mexico Item* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: The Rydal Press, 1942), 3-4. Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 3-8 and *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants and the Law* (Yuma, Ariz.: Sunflower University Press, 1989); Maria E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1-5; and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=26&page=transcript> Accessed March 6, 2012.

new territory had a choice of whether to remain Mexican citizens or become American citizens. Either way, they had the right to keep their property, which included land grants. This alone would create major legal problems, which have raged since the creation of the Surveyor General of New Mexico in 1854. The legal issues included: who owned the property, the dimensions of the grants, and the inclusion of mineral and water rights. The real issue with ownership was complicated by how Mexico, Spain, or the United States viewed the grant. Spanish and Mexican grants were issued as community property with one person's name on it, while the Americans did not recognize community property. The grant dimensions were initially set by nebulous boundaries such as river courses, trees, or noticeable land marks, all of which can and did change.<sup>22</sup>

This is the source for the difficulty of the Maxwell Land Grant. On January 8, 1841, Governor Manuel Armijo in Santa Fe received a petition from Guadalupe Miranda and Carlos Beaubien for a grant of land in northern New Mexico. They claimed to be practitioners of "principles of a purer morality" who would guide the idle and criminal people of the area. They asked for the land grant to grow sugar beets. The petition was granted, but no one could foresee that this grant would one day include most of present-day Colfax County, a part of Taos County, and southern Colorado. Father Antonio José Martinez, curate of Taos, opposed this action, since he felt the land should belong to the people of Taos and serve as their grazing land.<sup>23</sup> When the Americans took possession, they confirmed the Miranda-Beaubien Grant.

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<sup>22</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 5-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15.

The story gets worse with the arrival of Lucien B. Maxwell, the son of Charles H. Maxwell and Marie Odile Menard. Maxwell arrived in New Mexico in 1841. Three years later, he married Luz Beaubien, daughter of Charles Hipolite Trotier de Beaubien and Paulita Jaquez Lavat. Upon marriage, Maxwell entered into the affairs of the grant. Piece by piece, he acquired portions of the grant until he owned the whole property.<sup>24</sup>

By distorting the meaning of the words, the Grant-which began as somewhere between 32,000 and 97,424 acres (twenty-two Spanish leagues)-ended up legally as 1,714,764.93 acres. William Keleher writes, “The grant held within its boundaries chains of mountains, rivers, creeks, wide valleys, thousands upon thousands of acres of fine grazing land, important mineral deposits, and great areas of standing timber.” According to historian Malcolm Ebright, grants to two people were limited to ninety thousand acres under Mexican law. Also, Ebright stated that a hearing should have been conducted by the U.S. surveyor general to determine the dimensions of the grant. Since this did not happen, neither the surveyor general nor Congress knew how much land was claimed in the grant.<sup>25</sup>

After gold and coal were found on the grant, big business pushed Maxwell to sell. He received \$650,000 for his share. He transferred title to the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company, financed with the British sterling and Dutch sterling. The legal battles of the new company from 1873 onward were immense and complicated. People all over the grant fought them. They were sure to lose because the Santa Fe Ring was involved in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 25, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 29; Ebright, *Land Grants and Law Suits*, 29, 37.



this issue. In 1887, the U. S. Supreme Court found for the company.<sup>26</sup> Frank W. Springer was the lawyer who successfully argued the case; in later years, he would become co-owner of the CS Ranch with his brother Charles Springer.

Several times the grant was surveyed. It is interesting that the final survey was undertaken by John T. Elkins, brother of Stephen B. Elkins, lawyer and member of the Santa Fe Ring. Samuel Axtell, Thomas Catron, Stephen Dorsey, and Henry Atkinson (Santa Fe Ring members) were the individuals who used their power to legalize this grant. In the end, Maxwell died broke. The Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company collapsed and reorganized in Holland as the Maxwell Land Grant Company, which bought the property for two million dollars at a foreclosure sale on March 1, 1880. The company would eventually lose its investment because it was unsuccessful in convincing many people to immigrate to New Mexico. The second company sold it to John B. Dawson, Waite Phillips, and Norton Clapp, who also eventually sold the land.<sup>27</sup>

In October 1922, Oklahoma oilman Waite Phillips bought greater than 300,000 acres of the old Grant and named it Philmont (for Phillips Mountain). He had immense herds of Hereford cattle and Corriedale sheep. He built a Spanish Mediterranean home he named Villa Philmonte. In 1938 and 1941, he deeded a total of 127,395 acres, his farm and ranch operations, and Villa Philmonte to the Boy Scouts of America. It was renamed

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<sup>26</sup> Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 35, 109.

<sup>27</sup> Rubén Sálaz Marques, *The Santa Fe Ring: Land Grant History in American New Mexico* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Cosmic House, 2008), 1-2; Keleher, *Maxwell Land Grant*, 112, 116; and The Maxwell Land Grant. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/nm-maxwell7.html>. Accessed September 29, 2011.

the Philmont Scout Ranch. He gave them a twenty-three story tower in Tulsa to pay the taxes in perpetuity.<sup>28</sup>

For a time, Colfax County also included the Pablo Montoya Land Grant. Don Pablo Montoya received a patent from Mexico for a grant of 655,468 acres, on November 20, 1823. By about 1870, Wilson Waddingham ended up with control of the grant. He named his ranch “The Bell.” This grant remained a part of the county until after 1890, when it became a part of San Miguel County. Later it became a part of Harding County.<sup>29</sup>

Colfax County has a number of areas of interest. Among them is the gorgeous Palisades Canyon, south of Cimarron. This canyon is picturesque no matter what time of the year it is viewed. Colfax County has its share of coal mines, including Colfax, Dawson, Kaiser, Elizabethtown, Blossburg, and Sugarite, which have all closed down. The Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail runs through Raton all the way from Bent’s Fort in La Junta, Colorado, to Santa Fe. Of course, in the early days it was very difficult to descend and ascend the Raton Pass. Once down the pass, the rest of the trail was relatively easy. Eventually, towns grew up approximately every twenty miles between Raton and Las Vegas (Maxwell, Cimarron, Watrous, and Wagon Mound). Twenty miles

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<sup>28</sup> Philmont Scout Ranch website, <http://philmontscoutranch.org/about/history.aspx>. Accessed October 1, 2011; Lawrence R. Murphy, *Philmont: A History of New Mexico’s Cimarron Country*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1972; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 206-27.

<sup>29</sup> Harding County website. [http://www.hardingcounty.org/history/pablo\\_montoya\\_grant.htm](http://www.hardingcounty.org/history/pablo_montoya_grant.htm). Accessed October 1, 2011; David Remley, *Bell Ranch: Cattle Ranching in the Southwest, 1824-1947* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 3-10.

was the average distance a wagon could travel in a day. Each of these towns sits on a water source.

Colfax and Union Counties are dotted with mesas. One is Johnson Mesa (named for Lige Johnson), which begins less than ten miles east of Raton. It rises two thousand feet above Raton and is approximately seven by fourteen miles. Johnson Mesa (the Mesa) stretches for miles and is full of green fields. Initially, cattlemen from Texas used it for feeding cattle bound for Montana or Kansas. After Johnson established a ranch, Marion Bell led some fellow railroad construction workers to the Mesa to begin farming. Some miners from Blossburg took up ranching to supplement their income. In addition, some of the farmers worked in the mines to pay the fees for their farms. Because of them and the advertising of the Bureau, the railroad, and the government, families settled just about every 160 acre plot on Johnson Mesa. Eventually, farms dotted the mesa. By the 1950s, the Mesa had returned to the cattle ranches.<sup>30</sup> Eventually the ethnic makeup of the Mesa was English, Irish, Scottish, French, and German.<sup>31</sup> Most of these people were poor, without the means of acquiring equipment to improve their farms or houses, because the mines paid their workers poorly.

Using the Homestead Act and the Stock Raising Homestead Act, the residents of the Mesa increased until about 1901, when people finally called it quits. It took another thirty years and the Dust Bowl Years to clear the population from the Mesa, down to about five families. The people tried to outlast the weather and occasional lack of

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<sup>30</sup> James E. and Barbara H. Sherman, *Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 117.

<sup>31</sup> Mariana Floyd Buhr, *Johnson Mesa* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Publishers Press, 1997), 50-52.

moisture; however, they found it was much harder to outlast and outfight the Dutch Company battling in court over the Maxwell Land Grant. Fortunately, the courts severed the Mesa from the Grant.<sup>32</sup>

There were many ways to establish a residence on Johnson Mesa: Homestead Act, Stock Raising Homestead Act, or purchase from others. In order to claim land under the Homestead Act, a person had to be the head of a family and at least twenty-one, and never to have carried arms against the U. S. government. This person could file a preemption claim of one quarter section (160 acres). The claimant had to pay a filing fee of \$1.25 per acre, prove up, and pay another filing fee within five years.<sup>33</sup>

At one time, modern-day Union County was viewed as some sort of highway to get from Kansas and points west to Santa Fe. In 1848, when New Mexico became a territory, it was a part of Taos County. As has already been mentioned, it became a part of Colfax County in 1869. Following the Civil War, two things of great interest happened in the area. The U. S. Army corralled the Native American tribes and placed them on reservations, thereby allowing stockmen to use the area for purposes of fattening stock.

The sheep men came first, then the cattlemen, and lastly the farmers. Due to the entry of the cattlemen, the railroads arrived in and left their imprint. On February 23, 1893,

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<sup>32</sup> F. Stanley, *The Johnson Mesa, New Mexico Story* (Pep, Tex.: n.p, 1965), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Homestead Act <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=31&page=transcript> Accessed March 6, 2012; Stock Raising Act [http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/mineral\\_resources/Mining\\_Claims/homestead.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/mineral_resources/Mining_Claims/homestead.html) Accessed March 6, 2012; and Homestead Act of 1862 <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=012/llsl012.db&recNum=423> accessed March 18, 2012.

after three attempts, Union County was born.<sup>34</sup> There had to be some rejoicing over this. The editor of the Colfax County Stockman stated, “It’s said that a majority of the people of Union County were already tired of the white elephant they had on hand. They found that new counties come high.”<sup>35</sup> The county managed to survive and prosper.

Union County has its share of interesting sites. First off there is Capulin Mountain, an extinct volcano. No one knows when it last erupted; however, lava was strewn for miles around. It was named for chokecherries, which grow in abundance in the area. Capulin is Spanish for chokecherry.<sup>36</sup> Other sites previously reported on are the Rabbit Ears Mountains and the Santa Fe Trail.

One of the most serious problems on the Mesa is the severe winter weather. The grass in the spring and summer is green because of the plentiful moisture and sunshine. To add to the miseries of the residents, the roads were mere dirt tracks. On August 29, 1908, there was a heavy rainstorm with lots of hail. This storm devastated the crops; in fact, it was so heavy it uprooted the potato crop. The bridges were washed out by the rain. To make matters worse, the farmers had very little insurance.<sup>37</sup>

Union County, with its mostly open fields and valleys, is ideal for stock ranching. The number and size of ranches have changed over time. As with Johnson Mesa, there was a time when the homesteaders came in and settled on their 160 acres (later changed

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<sup>34</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friends, *Union County and Its People* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing Co., 1980), 8-12.

<sup>35</sup> *Colfax County Stockman* (Springer, N.Mex.) July 8, 1893.

<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Harry Thompson and William H. Halley, ABMD in collaboration with Simon Herzstein, *Clayton, the Friendly Town in Union County, New Mexico* (Denver, Colo.: Monitor Publishing, 1962), 83.

<sup>37</sup> Buhr, *Johnson Mesa*, 71.

to 320). In Union County, homesteading was easier than in Colfax County because farmers did not have the land grant issue to deal with. It included only the Pablo Montoya Land Grant, which eventually became the Bell Ranch in San Miguel County. The only grants settlers had to deal with were those owned by the railroads. By 1889, the large cattlemen did have to contend with the small stock raisers and homesteaders.<sup>38</sup>

Union County had its share of large land owners and cattle ranches. By 1881, the Prairie Cattle Company, a Scottish corporation, controlled the best watering places, but finally sold its holdings to settlers in 1901, 1902, and 1903. The southern portion of the county was run by the Illinois Livestock Company. Senator Dorsey sold his land to the Palo Blanco Cattle Company in 1894. As long as prices were high and grass was free, ranchers flourished. By the time the Prairie Cattle Company sold out, it was no longer a profitable business.<sup>39</sup> By 1885, the sheep business was taking over from the cattle.

In addition to the legal battles and other issues, homesteaders and ranchers had to contend with nature. Drought, rainstorms, blizzards, floods, and insects plague the area. The Dust Bowl was the culminating disaster. Each one of these natural and man-caused disasters has placed a huge financial and costly burden on the farmers and ranchers, including the loss of many people and animals.

Several blizzards in Colfax and Union counties have been recorded over the decades. Most snowstorms cause minor problems, but they can easily be overcome. Shepherds and cowboys, out in the field must be on the lookout for the possibility of their animals roaming. Blizzards present huge problems. They can last for days and bring several feet

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<sup>38</sup> *Folsom Idea* (Folsom, N.Mex.), February 16, 1889.

<sup>39</sup> Alvis, "History of Union County:" 248 255, 256.

of snow, not to mention deep snowdrifts. Such was the blizzard of November 1889. It raged for over eight days. In some places, the snow was a mere two inches; however, in several places it was over seven feet. At the time, there were seven herds from four hundred to two thousand cows being held in the area.<sup>40</sup> During this particular snowstorm, five men froze to death, flocks of sheep were completely wiped out, and the range for thirty miles from Clayton was covered with dead carcasses. It was estimated that twenty thousand sheep perished.<sup>41</sup> In addition, two passenger trains were stranded for a week. The people survived by eating the dead livestock.<sup>42</sup>

José Gómez lived in the Clayton and Des Moines area. He recalled the blizzard of 1932. The entire area was actually snow bound from September to May. He related a story of his dad helping his shepherd to go out and recover some sheep completely covered over with snow. The shepherd and Gómez were saved, as well as some of the sheep. Unfortunately, the postmaster froze to death on his rounds.<sup>43</sup>

It may seem strange to be caught in a blizzard, but back then sometimes there was no warning, especially if it occurred in March or April. These are the worst blizzards, since

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<sup>40</sup> “A Great Snow Storm. Raging for Eight Days – Drifts Seven Feet High,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Md.), November 9, 1889.

<sup>41</sup> “A Great Snow Storm”; “Storm of 1889.”

<http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=23326> accessed March 6, 2012; and Albert W. Thompson, *The Story of Early Clayton, New Mexico* (Clayton, N.Mex.: The Clayton News, n.d.), 33-36.

<sup>42</sup> “Trains Snow-Bound, an Extraordinary Snow Storm in New Mexico,” *Boston Daily Journal* (Boston, Mass.) November 8, 1889.

<sup>43</sup> José Gómez (rancher and store owner), interview by William Bronson Lujan, November 9 and 15, 1999, transcript, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

this is when calves and lambs are born. These tiny animals do not stand a chance in such weather. Such was the hard winter of 1947-48. The cows and ewes were in terrible condition and the ranchers suffered heavy losses.<sup>44</sup> Blizzards and thunderstorms are as devastating as were the Dust Bowl Years. Fortunately, for Colfax County, they did not suffer during the Dust Bowl; however, Union County did. What caused the dust storms?

Congress passed The Timber Culture Act of 1873 to encourage settlers to plant trees and grow forests, which would encourage rainfall.<sup>45</sup> By the 1890s, this idea was abandoned, but people still held the idea they could change the land and use it in ways nature never intended. Between boosters, railroads, settlement during wet cycles, and pure hope, people thought they saw the American Desert bloom. The first years yielded big profits because of the markets and good soil. As other people turned to farming, they glutted the markets. This in turn brought lower prices and the need to plow up more land to pay huge debts. Farmers opened up more acreage. When the markets collapsed, the land was left barren. Farmers could not afford soil conservation methods. Thus, by 1930, when a severe drought began on the eastern side of the plains and came west, there was no grass to hold the soil in place.<sup>46</sup> Not only were these farming practices responsible for the dust that blew, they were also responsible for the huge swarms of grasshoppers. Moisture destroys the grasshoppers before they hatch. By plowing up the

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<sup>44</sup> Untitled, *Chronicle-News* (Trinidad, Colo.), April 5, 1948.

<sup>45</sup> Timber Culture Act of 1873, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=amrv1&fileName=v1003//amrv1v1003.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/AMALL:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(amrv1+v1003\)\)&linkText=0](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=amrv1&fileName=v1003//amrv1v1003.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/AMALL:@field(NUMBER+@band(amrv1+v1003))&linkText=0) accessed March 18, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> “What is Drought?” National Drought Mitigation Center, website.

<http://www.drought.unl.edu/DroughtBasics/WhatisDrought.aspx>. Accessed October 1, 2011.



land, it releases the eggs. There were many areas completely overwhelmed by them. Anything green was eaten. One such storm was stopped in Union County on July 13, 1937.<sup>47</sup>

The Dust Bowl Years<sup>48</sup> were actually a series of events (1930-31, 1934, 1936, and 1939-40) so close together the land could not recover. More and more of the grass, which kept the dirt in place, was being plowed up by the homesteaders. In addition, people came from the East, they did not care for the land; they came only to make money and get out. In 1921, one suitcase farmer broke thirty-two thousand acres; four years later he plowed twice as much. Eventually, the Works Progress Administration was effective in using measures to help the land recuperate.<sup>49</sup>

Journalist Timothy Egan describes a dust storm as something almost out of hell. There was nothing to hold the dirt in place. When windstorms started, the loose dirt was kicked up causing huge walls of sand, ten thousand feet high or more. As the storm came through an area, the sand penetrated everywhere. In the morning, shovels were needed to clean up, even in the house. Mr. Osteen, a settler, stated “There’d be days you couldn’t see your hand in front a’ your face.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Dawn to Dust Fight Against Grasshoppers in Union County Believed to Have Curbed Pest,” *Raton (N.Mex.) Range*, July 13, 1937.

<sup>48</sup> This name was coined by Robert Geiger, an Associated Press Reporter, who used it to describe what was happening. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-drought/>.

<sup>49</sup> A suitcase farmer was one who came to the plains, lived from a suitcase, planted winter wheat, and returned in the summer for the payoff. Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2009), 50.

<sup>50</sup> Egan, *Worst Hard Time*, 5.



Figure 10. Dust storm in Clayton, New Mexico (<http://mochickadee.blogspot.com/2011/07/dust-bowl-days.html> )

Mrs. Wanda Leighton Gard grew up on a ranch in the Clayton area during the Dust Bowl era. She recalls a storm in 1935 when her father came home from town in time to warn his family that a storm was arriving. They were lucky that everyone made it inside before the storm hit. She described the dust as “really fine, and it seemed to come in through all the cracks in the house.” She was frightened that the end of the world had arrived.<sup>51</sup>

It was not just the snow or the dust that was a huge threat; rain was also a danger. On August 27, 1908, Folsom experienced a very pleasant rain. No one knew of the disaster to come. After sunset, a strong southeast wind brought in thunderclouds, continuous lightening, and a torrential down pour. This started in the mountains and made its way to Folsom. All of this rain brought a terrible flood to the small village. Mrs. Sallie J. Rooke, the telephone operator, called as many people as she could to inform them of

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<sup>51</sup> Wanda Leighton Gard, interview by Donna J. Wojcik, December 19, 1927, abstract, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

impending danger. She managed to save many lives, but in doing so, she lost her own life. Seventeen people lost their lives.<sup>52</sup>

Both of these counties share fascinating histories. Both shared the Santa Fe Trail and the railroads. The latter made a much bigger difference in the history of the area than the trail. Union County actually came into existence to serve the railroad. Once the towns were built, the railroads worked to bring in homesteaders. Homesteaders came because the government, railroads, and newspapers convinced them the land was a great economic deal. Upon arrival, the homesteaders and ranchers found out that the plains country was not as ideal as was advertised. Eventually it proved not to be amenable to dry farming either.

The history of the Maxwell Land Grant had just about everyone in the two counties fighting against each other. It seems that Lucien Maxwell and the Santa Fe Ring aided and abetted the swindling of a lot of people. In this deal, most people lost, except maybe the government. The loans on the grant defaulted, causing the swindlers to lose as well. Because so many homesteaders defaulted and quit, and several people bought up the land and started or added to their own ranches, which are currently in the region. As noted, some homesteaders sold out while others are still there.

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<sup>52</sup> Centennial Book Committee, *Folsom, 1888-1988: Then and Now* (n.p., 1988): 31-33.

## Cattle Ranching

Following the end of the Civil War, the days of the great cattle drives and herds began in Texas and spread elsewhere in the American West. The returning Texans used the open-range to build vast herds of cattle.<sup>1</sup> The High Plains were wide open with vast grasslands where, in the eyes of the Anglos, most Texas cattle went up the Goodnight-Loving Trail or the Chisholm Trail to market. In spite of the grasslands in Texas, these cattlemen who built up herds there eventually discovered that the grass in northeastern New Mexico was an excellent grazing resource for their cattle. Ambitious men moved in to build ranches that are still in existence today.

Northeastern New Mexico is home to many ranches that are historically significant. The ranches in Colfax County were a part of the Maxwell Land Grant. The ranches in Union County were a direct result of the coming of the railroads. The economic importance of these ranches to the counties is significant. When people travel through this part of New Mexico, they automatically think of it as ranch country, not farm country. The purpose of this chapter is to document the history of some of these ranches and the contribution of the women on these ranches.

By the mid-1880s, disillusionment with the open range had set in. Farmers were moving west and plowing up the grasslands. The beef prices started to slide because of a glut of cattle on the market.<sup>2</sup> The farmers in Kansas pushed through a law to keep the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry: Ranching on the Great Plains from 1865-1925* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Graham, "The Investment Boom in British-Texan Cattle Companies, 1880-1885," *The Business Historical Review* 34:4 (Winter 1960): 427.

tick-infested cattle out of Kansas.<sup>3</sup> One development in the ranchers' favor was the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the building of other lines.<sup>4</sup> Rail transport helped transport the cattle to markets in the East. The other item in their favor was the placement of Native Americans on federal reservations and the opening of their homelands to ranching.<sup>5</sup> The railroad was a boon for the ranchers, especially in New Mexico.

Northeastern New Mexico was one of the last places in the West to attract ranchers after the Civil War. For one thing, before the railroad there was no safe way to get the cattle and sheep to markets in the east. The Santa Fe Trail was still an unstable and dangerous place, and the railroads had not penetrated New Mexico by 1875. The railroads were necessary to take the stock from Las Vegas, New Mexico, to the markets in St. Louis (835 miles away) or to San Francisco (980 miles away). This corner of New Mexico developed many ranches that have extensive historical backgrounds. Since 1880, they have also injected large sums of money into the local economy. There are too many of these ranches to include in this monograph, so only a few will be discussed.

Because of the high profits that could be made on cattle in the 1870s and early 1880s, eastern and British investors poured money into the American West, expecting huge returns. Initially investors saw large profits, but the brief era ended when the high returns and a glut of cattle caused a fall in beef prices. When the severe winter weather on the

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<sup>3</sup> Dale, *Range Cattle Industry*, 92.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Griswold Castillo, "Mariano Vallejo and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Cultural Conflicts and Compromises in the Late-Nineteenth Century West," in *Western Lives: A Biographical History of the American West*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 193.

<sup>5</sup> Dale, *Range Cattle Industry*, 25.

High Plains, from 1885 to 1887, destroyed the herds, the financiers began to withdraw their money. Later, the blizzard of 1889 made matters worse. The financiers took their money but left behind improvements in the cattle breeds, wire fences, windmills, irrigation canals, and water wells.<sup>6</sup> Mines operating in Colfax County contributed greatly to the economy, but cattle also made a significant impact on the local economy.<sup>7</sup> Still, the coal mines remained the top economic contributor until 1987, when Kaiser Coal Company filed for bankruptcy.

As the cattle ranching industry grew in the late nineteenth century, the cattlemen found it necessary to form associations to protect their interests. These started in Texas at a time when ranches ran only cattle and no other types of stock. The most important reason was to protect the cattle from rustlers; on the plains the law was either weak or non-existent. The other reason for the associations was to help provide a political and social life for the ranching community.<sup>8</sup> In 1883, Manly Chase, O. A. Hadley, and others established the Northern New Mexico Stock Growers Association.<sup>9</sup> This was a general stock association, but it was not limited to cattle raising because the Chases and Springers ranched cattle, horses, and sheep. This association helped slow the rate of cattle rustling in the region.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Graham, "The Investment Boom," 421, 445.

<sup>7</sup> "Cattle Country. Northeastern New Mexico," *New Mexico Progress* 35:1 (January-March 1968): 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattlemen* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 116, 124.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth W. Armstrong, *The Chases of Cimarron: Birth of the Cattle Industry in Cimarron Country, 1867-1900* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Stockman Association, 1981), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 102.

Ranching has not been just another capitalist industry; it has also been a family business. The young generation expects to and wants to run the ranch when it grows up; at least that is the way it should work. People do not turn eighteen years of age and then decide to work on a ranch. It does happen, but it is rare indeed. Take the Darien Brown family. He is the patriarch of a family in the fifth and sixth generations on the Brown Ranch near Folsom in Union County.<sup>11</sup> In 1882, John Thomas Brown started the Brown Ranch in Long Canyon. In time, this ranch grew to 10,500 acres. This small operation is sufficient to raise two hundred cows. Ranching at a small scale will not provide a decent income for a family, so outside sources of income are necessary.<sup>12</sup>

One thing that helps ranching in this area is billionaires buying up property. John Malone, cable-television pioneer, has been purchasing old family ranches in order to preserve the open space as an environmental initiative. However, this practice does displace ranch families who must start a new life elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> This is not a recent phenomenon. Wealthy people and companies have invested in Union County since the 1880s. The Scottish Prairie Cattle Company, established in 1880 and 1881, owned three divisions: the JJ Ranch on the Picketwire in Colorado, the LIT in the Texas Panhandle, and the Cross L purchased from the Hall Brothers in Union County.<sup>14</sup> This company is just one of many that built the ranches in Colfax and Union Counties.

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<sup>11</sup> Tim Keller, "Home on the Range," *New Mexico Magazine* (May 2011): 25-29.

<sup>12</sup> Keller, "Home on the Range," 25-29.

<sup>13</sup> Keller, "Home on the Range," 29.

<sup>14</sup> John H. (Jack) Culley, *Cattle, Horses, and Men of the Western Range* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1940), 199.

Western myth expresses that the ranches were managed by a man with the aid of many young men to help them. The women were rarely mentioned, except to give the impression of “taking care of the house.” Regardless of who owned the ranches, both men and women ran them. Ranching life, difficult any time, was especially hard after the Civil War when people were setting up their ranches. In the beginning, neither stores nor money were available to buy daily necessities. In order to get them, the people either raised them, journeyed hundreds of miles for them, or did without them. People made items, such as soap from lard and shampoo from yucca plants, and they also produced rugs, shoes, yarn, and clothes.<sup>15</sup> On these ranches, men and women were busy from sunup to well after sundown. Women had to make practically everything the family ate at the table and used in the house. Women were constantly sewing heavy quilts. In the old days, they used pieces of rags and clothes that were not fit for anything else. Each of these quilts could contain about a million stitches.<sup>16</sup>

The West has spawned many myths, such as that of the rugged Anglo man who could do anything or the white woman who as the “Gentle Tamer” civilized the rugged frontier male. The myth of the Anglo woman showed her as a fearful, if somewhat self-reliant, woman in need of protection. Women came west for many reasons, as did their men. These frontier women were able to take care of themselves and were as rugged as the men.<sup>17</sup> The men did not automatically know how to farm and gender lines did not

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<sup>15</sup> *Hispanic Pioneers in Colorado and New Mexico*, limited edition (Denver: Colorado Society of Hispanic Genealogy, December 2006), 251.

<sup>16</sup> Ed Sunny Conley, *New Mexico Farms and Ranches: Folks and Fixins* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Starline Printing, 2001), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Sandra L. Myers, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University



immediately create a division of labor. Many of the men helped prepare meals while women helped take care of things outside the house. The women were not fearful and in need of protection. They were self-reliant and able to perform their tasks and many of the tasks of the men.<sup>18</sup>

The pioneers could not go to the store and buy soap. Women saved all the household grease. Usually once or twice a year, they used it to make lye soap. The recipe was the following: “pour water and lime through fireplace ashes carefully preserved for this purpose. Then the lye was combined with the leftover household grease and carefully preserved in a barrel or can. The two ingredients were boiled together and had to be constantly stirred until the soap ‘came’ and could be dipped into the soap barrel.” It took experience to judge just when the soap ‘came.’<sup>19</sup>

A wife’s weekly routine consisted of washing, which was a two-day chore: one for washing and drying, the other for ironing. In the winter, the clothes froze on the line, so she had to hang them indoors until they thawed and finished drying. She had to prepare three meals daily and look after the children. Most of the time meals were just for the family, except during roundups when she had to make meals for all the extra hands. She baked for one entire day for the coming week. Depending on the custom, either men or women milked the cows daily. The cream was set aside for churning at least once or twice a week.<sup>20</sup>

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of New Mexico Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Myers, *Westering Women*, 124.

<sup>19</sup> Myers, *Westering Women*, 152.

<sup>20</sup> JRES, “The English Ranchwoman,” *Longman’s Magazine* 28:167 (September 1896): 491.

In the 1920s, county extension agents started teaching women how to preserve food for their families. Women had preserved certain food before this time, but the agents showed them how to can produce with pressure cookers and glass containers, so that vegetables and fruits would be available year round. In order to do this, small communities shared the cost of the equipment and the work.<sup>21</sup> Some of the items these women preserved were tomatoes, green beans, carrots, and cucumbers. Women harvested these items during the day, and at night they would preserve them or wash and prepare them for market. Next morning, the work started all over again.<sup>22</sup>

Women in rural areas spent a great deal of their time working outdoors. They planted, hoed, weeded, and harvested their extensive gardens or helped their husbands, especially during harvest or calving season. They contributed financially to the home by selling their produce, eggs, and milk products.<sup>23</sup> Linda Davis of the CS Ranch stated that many times, this income kept the ranches from going under.<sup>24</sup> In addition, at harvest time, the women did get together to help make *ristras* (strings) of chili.<sup>25</sup> Merchants then bought these *ristras*. In one year, a merchant would buy about sixty thousand *ristras* of

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<sup>21</sup> Joan M. Jensen, "I've Worked, I'm Not Afraid of Work: Farm Women in New Mexico, 1920-1940," *New Mexico Historical Review* 61:1 (January 1986): 28, and "New Mexico Farm Women, 1900-1940" in *Labor in New Mexico: Unions, Strikes, and Social History since 1881*, ed. Robert Kern (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 61-81.

<sup>22</sup> Jensen, "I've Worked," 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Davis (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 8, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> In *ristras*, chili pods are tied together with string then hung up on the side of the house to preserve the chili for the winter.

chili from the farmers.<sup>26</sup> Women did not mind working with other housewives as this was one way to visit with each other and still do the work.

The women's principal work, at least in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was conducted in the house. However, they did have to help with the cattle. Depending on the season, they helped to sort out and brand calves in the corrals and whatever else needed doing.<sup>27</sup> Davis provided some valuable information about the women in her life who accomplished things outside the home. Her mother, Julia Sundt, was the first public health nurse in New Mexico. Julia obtained her master's degree in Public Health from the University of California at Berkley in the late 1920s. Her assignment was to give health examinations and inoculations to all the school children in the entire state of New Mexico.<sup>28</sup>

Davis also discussed her Grandmother Linda Elizabeth Knell Mitchell, who was a legendary horse woman. Her Grandfather T. E. Mitchell raised horses on his ranch. He encouraged all the women on his ranch to learn to ride a horse. When he found a pair of horses that worked in tandem to pull a wagon, he turned them over to his wife. Mrs. Mitchell rode sidesaddle and always wore a skirt. She was an expert at breaking broncos. Mr. Mitchell could sell a team for ten dollars. Some horses were skittish around women's skirts. If he could say they were broken for women, he could get fifteen dollars a pair.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jensen, "I've Worked," 35.

<sup>27</sup> J. C. Mutchler, "Ranching in the Magdalena, New Mexico Area: The Last Cowboys (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1992), 20.

<sup>28</sup> Davis Interview with Sintas.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Horses which worked in tandem were better for pulling wagons or buggies. These horses were

The word *cowboy* itself conjures up the image of a daring young man who can or is willing to do anything “from the hurricane deck” of a horse. The myth of the cowboy places him in his early twenties riding a half-broken bronc. While some of this is true, Hollywood has mythologized the life of a cowboy. Theme parks and railroads also helped add to this myth.<sup>30</sup> The word “cowboy” has an uncertain etymology. Some historians claim that it goes back to Revolutionary War days when Tories used cowbells to lure patriots.<sup>31</sup> Still others claim it was due to the high percentage of ex-slaves who worked cattle. Still others say it is simply an English translation of *vaquero* from the Spanish days. Ruben Cobos translates this term as cowboy or cowgirl.<sup>32</sup> The real translation is simply cowman. Most likely, people referred to them as cowboys in English because in the Old West, the average age was between twelve and twenty-five.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the term has gone from meaning a wild ruffian to a more respectable image, meaning any male who tends cows regardless of age.<sup>34</sup>

Cattlemen have never paid cowboys what they are worth. In the beginning of the era, they received thirty dollars a month, plus room and board. Even in the 1880s, that was not a lot of money, especially given the hazards and long days they faced. The herd

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known as a matched pair.

<sup>30</sup> *Enduring Cowboys: Life in the New Mexico Saddle*, ed. by Arnold Vigil (Albuquerque: New Mexico Magazine, 1999), 63.

<sup>31</sup> Time-Life Books, *The Old West: Cowboys* (Alexandria, Va.: Time Life Books, 1973), 20.

<sup>32</sup> Ruben Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 235.

<sup>33</sup> Time Life, *Old West*, 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> Time Life, *Old West*, 20.

owner usually earned thousands of dollars from selling a herd. The most interesting fact is that the cowboys did not mind the low pay. Except for a few cowboys in the Texas Panhandle in 1883 who unsuccessfully went on strike, labor unions could not entice the cowboys to join them. The primary reason these men liked their job was due to the independent nature of the work.<sup>35</sup>

The old-time cowboy led a hard, comfortless life. He slept on the ground with a pair of blankets, if he was lucky, and without a pillow (unless it was his saddle) and under the stars without a tent. He hardly had cooking utensils, maybe a coffee pot (or just a can) and a skillet. The food he ate was simple, usually beef, biscuits, and beans. He rarely had dairy products even though surrounded by cattle. His vegetables came from onions, while his fluids (not counting coffee and water) and fruits came from canned peaches.<sup>36</sup>

An average day was from breakfast, just as the sun came up, to sunset. During roundups, it was longer, since the cowboy had to guard the herd from thieves and possible stampedes. His annual work cycle was also packed. From April – August, the cowboys rounded up the cattle for branding. September – October was occupied by smaller round ups and herd collections for sale. November – December was much like

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<sup>35</sup> B. Bryon Price, “Working the Range,” *El Palacio* 93:3 (Spring 1988): 28.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph G. McCoy, “Anger and Bad Whiskey Urge Him onto Deeds of Blood and Death – 1874,” in *Cowboy Life: Reconstructing an American Myth*, ed. William W. Savage Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 28-29.

mid-summer. From January – March, cowboys performed little work since no one watched the cattle, except to ensure they were safe during freezing weather.<sup>37</sup>

One of the tools used by the cowboys was a rope referred to as *la riata*, lariat, rope, and lasso. The *vaqueros* (Mexican cowboys) used a sixty-foot-long braided rawhide rope, while the Anglos used a rope between thirty and forty feet.<sup>38</sup> The cowboy's horse was not a pet or a simple tool. It was his partner and a family member.<sup>39</sup> Contrary to popular opinion, he did not abuse his horse. He took better care of it than he did of himself.

Since early in the twentieth century, cow handlers have been white men. Often they have been women. Van Irvine in Buffalo, Wyoming, said most of his short term, seasonal workers are cowgirls.<sup>40</sup> This is different from the nineteenth century when as many as one-quarter of the old-time cowboys were African American. They made up approximately forty percent of the trail hands. Many Anglos did not go on the trail drives because of the backbreaking and dangerous labor, but the African Americans were used

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Baron von Richthofen, "Among Cowboys Are to Be Found the Sons of the Best Families: 1885," in *Cowboy Life: Reconstructing an American Myth*, ed. by William W. Savage Jr. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 44-46.

<sup>38</sup> Max Evans, *Making a Hand: Growing Up Cowboy in New Mexico* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>39</sup> Evans, *Making a Hand*, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Bart McDowell, *The American Cowboy in Life and Legend* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1972), 29.

to it. They were either ex-slaves or had been born just after the Civil War.<sup>41</sup> One of the African American cowboys in Union County became famous in the profession.

In the Folsom, New Mexico, graveyard is a huge headstone over the grave of George McJunkin. Folsom is proud of him because of his expertise as a cowboy and for his finding of the bones of the Folsom Man. McJunkin was born into slavery in West Texas. Following the Civil War, he was an ox driver, a buffalo hunter, and later a cowboy. The year 1868 found him hunting a job in Comanche, Texas. Soon after that, he went to work for Gid Roberds who had a ranch in New Mexico. In 1891, he became foreman for William H. Jack, in Folsom, New Mexico. In between these times, he worked as a cowboy in northeastern New Mexico for Ben Smith (Pitchfork Ranch) and finally on the Crowfoot Ranch. Rancher Thomas E. Owen said, “George was an expert bronc rider, one of the best ropers in the country, and a cow hand.” George did face a lot of prejudice and racism in his life. However, those who knew him easily reached past that attitude and accepted him for who he was. Ivan Shoemaker tells of the time Gay Mellon, who was traveling with McJunkin, convinced a hotel manager in Clayton to change his racial policy. The manager refused to serve McJunkin because he was African American; Mellon pulled his six-shooter and persuaded the manager to rescind it. McJunkin lived the rest of his life in Union County where he died on January 21, 1922.<sup>42</sup>

Over time, cattlemen have changed the breed of cattle they have on their ranges. At first, the longhorn ruled the ranges. These tough cattle could and often did protect

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<sup>41</sup> Bruce G. Todd, *Bones Hooks: Pioneer Negro Cowboy* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing, 2005), 39.

<sup>42</sup> Centennial Book Committee, *Folsom 1888-1988: Then and Now* (n.p., 1988), 27-28; Franklin Folsom, *The Life and Legend of George McJunkin: Black Cowboy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1973), 12, 44, 59, 95, 140.

themselves from most wild animals. The longhorns could graze on open ranges and march on the long cattle drives.<sup>43</sup> With the coming of the railroad, the ranchers brought in Durhams and Herefords because they were a better beef cow. By the 1880s, Herefords were the dominant strain.<sup>44</sup> According to Alice Moore, her family raised Herefords. Before her mother passed away in 1999, they changed to Black Angus because that was what the market demanded. In addition to market reasons, she switched because they are less difficult than most other cattle. At sales time, Angus cows sell for premium prices. The market prefers this beef because it is marbled.<sup>45</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, there were many ranches started in the Colfax and Union county area. Many of these ranches are still in existence today. Some of these ranches are still family owned. Most of these ranches are on parts of the old Maxwell Land Grant.

### **Cross L Ranch**

In 1868, Nathan, Jim, and William Hall helped drive a herd of cattle up the Goodnight-Loving Trail to Colorado. They fell in love with a grassy valley in the Dry Cimarron country, in present day Union County. Between 1871 and 1881, they acquired squatters' rights to miles of the Dry Cimarron Valley, where they "constructed dams and irrigation ditches and planted alfalfa." In short, they built the Cross L Ranch. The ranch was typical of the many operations in the area. The owners built a large, fine adobe

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<sup>43</sup> J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (New York: Bramhall House, 1941).

<sup>44</sup> Mutchler, "Ranching in Magdalena," 20.

<sup>45</sup> Alice Moore (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 13, 2009. In other interviews, ranchers said there was no difference in cattle without the hide and horns. The feed makes the difference in taste.



house, along with vast herds of cattle. When the days of the barbed wire fences arrived, Jim sold out to his brothers to start another ranch.<sup>46</sup>

One incident that distinguishes the Cross L is a story concerning Jim Hall and Chief Aguila of the Utes. In 1876, the Utes attacked the ranch, killing two steers. Instead of raiding the Utes, Jim chose to talk with the chief. The chief convinced Jim that the land belonged to the Utes. Jim, in turn, purchased the land from them for three hundred pounds of flour, five hundred pounds of sugar, five beeves, and six horses, one of which was a fine stallion. After that, the Utes never bothered the Cross L.<sup>47</sup>

In 1881, the Halls sold the Cross L to the Prairie Land and Cattle Company. This company was a syndicate headquartered in Edinburgh, Scotland. The organization decided to make money on cattle in the American West. It earned a profit the first couple of years. However, the syndicate ran into problems with lavish expenses, overpaid managers, and the blizzard of January 1886. This catastrophe took a huge toll of the firm's cattle (several thousand). They eventually began making a profit again in 1900, when the Grangers and dry farmers started turning up the previously unbroken prairie. But as early as 1890, the syndicate started selling off its land. By 1916, it had sold all its holdings in New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado.<sup>48</sup>

### **TO Ranch**

Another of the historical ranches is the TO Ranch. Antime Joseph "Tony" Meloche was born September 21, 1837, in Lachine near Montreal, Canada. He left home at the

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<sup>46</sup> Centennial Committee, *Folsom 1888-1988*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

age of eight and worked in stores in Mississippi and Kansas. In 1857, he joined Colonel Philip St. George Cooke's Second United States Dragoons on the way to the Mormon War. Meloche became assistant wagon master for the U.S. Army in 1861. During the next four years, he traveled as a full wagon master between Albuquerque, Forts Craig, Fillmore, Stanton, and Wingate, and other points.<sup>49</sup> He continued in various teamster jobs until 1867, when he settled on 2,250 acres of land in eastern Colfax County. In 1874, Alexander D. Thompson of Duluth, Minnesota, bought into the ranch as a partner for ten thousand dollars. Sometime after 1904, he bought Meloche's interest plus the use of the "TO" brand. (Meloche used the name Tony, so the brand he chose was the first two letters of his name.) In the fall of 1904, Thompson built his house, which still stands today.<sup>50</sup> The buildings are easily seen from the highway; they are red with some white. Wesley Brown, a former ranch hand, states that the dirt used in the buildings was also red. He said the red dye is easy to mix up. On December 10, 1920, Adam G. Thompson (Alexander's son) incorporated the ranch under the laws of the State of Minnesota. Adam had three sons: Alexander, Dale, and Tommy. In 1950, Adam built a hangar on the property for use by the Thompsons. When Adam died in 1962, the ranch was sold to Jack Renfro.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Charles F. Coan, *A History of New Mexico*, vol. 2 (Chicago, Ill.: American Historical Society, 1925), 695-6.

<sup>50</sup> *History of New Mexico: Its Resources and People*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles, Calif.: Pacific States Publishing, 1907), 672-674.

<sup>51</sup> Wesley Brown (rancher) interview by Conchita Sintas, July 15, 2009.

## Moore Ranch

Alice Moore dreamt of being a veterinarian, but she did not fulfill her dream. Instead, she chose to run the family ranch after her father's death. Her great grandparents had established this 640-acre ranch in 1872, although she does not know much about them. They came west seeking a better life. The ranch is located just south of Raton on land that was part of the Maxwell Land Grant. Therefore, it is highly probable they bought the land from the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company.<sup>52</sup>

Over the years, they purchased additional land, ultimately creating a twenty-seven-thousand-acre ranch, which includes fourteen acres of seeded pasture and seventy-six acres of hay. Her parents raised Hereford cattle. Alice lived in Raton with her grandmother to attend school. After graduation, she intended to go to veterinarian school. However, fate intervened. When she was seventeen, her father passed away. Her mother, Mary, and Aunt Frances needed her help. She never regretted this change.<sup>53</sup>

Her mother and aunt did the inside work, which kept them busy. Not only did they have to make all the meals from scratch, but they also did a lot of canning, especially at the end of the summer. They canned beef, pork, chicken, and eggs as well as their own vegetables.<sup>54</sup> Alice says her aunt and mother had to lift huge crocks, fill them, and then

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<sup>52</sup> Moore interview.

<sup>53</sup> Moore interview.

<sup>54</sup> At the time, there was more severe winter weather than experienced in the Raton area. Snow was piled in drifts, which made it difficult to get into Raton. As a child, the author helped to do canning. It was a whole day process to can meat. In addition, routine work such as meal preparations had to be done.

take them down to the basement. In the fall, they killed fifteen hogs to make meat, lard, soap, and head cheese. Her grandmother used cans with steel lids for canning.<sup>55</sup>

Usually, the men and Alice did the outside work. However, she relates a most interesting story about her mother and aunt. One winter her father and uncle were ill in bed. She could not remember what the illness was, but ranchers do not go to bed for an illness unless it is severe. Every year, her dad received a Burlington train car full of feed. They had seventy-two hours to unload thirty-five tons of feed. Since her father and uncle were prostrate, her mother and aunt unloaded this car by themselves. The train would not wait on the men to recover.<sup>56</sup>

Moore said life was very hard during the 1930s and 1940s. One of her tasks as a kid was to pick coal off the ground after the trains went through. She also stated that most people struggled to make a living. While she was in school, she was a member of a sports team. She said each team had box-and-pie suppers to raise money for expenses for trips and equipment.<sup>57</sup>

Moore has managed the ranch for the past fifty-seven years. During that time, she has made many improvements and changes. In addition to raising cattle, the Moore Ranch specializes in quarter horses. Her horses are well known and sold throughout the United States. Because of the environmental regulations and the drought, she has had to reduce the number of cattle and horses she runs on her ranch.<sup>58</sup> She has gone into partnership with New Mexico State University and Dow Chemical to find better ways of

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<sup>55</sup> Moore interview.

<sup>56</sup> Moore interview.

<sup>57</sup> Moore interview.

<sup>58</sup> Moore interview.

range management. They have successfully found a way to control the prickly pear cactus on over one thousand acres. She also practices the Savory Grazing method, which is a way of utilizing the land to sustain the grass.<sup>59</sup>

Ranches do not make a lot of money. When asked why she continues in the business, Moore says: "I've seen good times and bad times in ranching. It's all I know. I wouldn't know how to do anything else." When asked what her opinion was of the future of ranching, she states she sees no future: "Young ranch kids do not want to stay and work for starvation wages."<sup>60</sup>

### **Chase Ranch**

In 1867, Manly and Theresa Chase left Central City, Colorado, encouraged by Lucien Maxwell to take up homesteading in New Mexico. They packed all their worldly goods plus food onto their wagon and rode into their future. The first place they stopped in New Mexico was Dick Wooten's ranch, just inside the territorial line.<sup>61</sup> Wooten encouraged them to stay, but they headed farther south. They moved onto land between the Ponil and Vermejo rivers that they bought from Maxwell.<sup>62</sup>

In 1869, Manly bought another piece of land from Maxwell which is the current ranch on the Ponil. In 1871, he dug the first of several irrigation ditches on the Ponil. Chase built his home, which was to become the Oak Ranch. A year later, Chase and John

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<sup>59</sup> Jennifer Zehnder, "Ranchlands Women of the West: Alice Moore," *Western Horseman* (November 2008): 26.

<sup>60</sup> Zehnder, "Ranchlands Women of the West," 26.

<sup>61</sup> Ruth W. Armstrong, *The Chases of Cimarron: Birth of the Cattle Industry in Cimarron Country, 1867-1900* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Stockman, 1981), 1-3; Coan, *A History of New Mexico*, 695-6.

<sup>62</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 9.

Dawson formed a partnership, the Chase and Dawson Cattle Company.<sup>63</sup> Chase purchased land between Saltpeter Canyon and the Vermejo for another ranch. At this point, the Chases and Charles Springer formed a warm and enduring friendship.<sup>64</sup> According to Gretchen Sammis, this house is on the National Historic Building Registry.<sup>65</sup> Since the Chases had outgrown their small house by 1879, Theresa added a second story to the house, which yielded four more rooms. Later that same year, they added five more rooms: a new kitchen, two large bedrooms, an office, and a dining room.<sup>66</sup>

The advent of the railroad was a big boon to the area. Most importantly, rail travel allowed the ranchers to ship their stock to the markets in Kansas instead of driving long distances to market. The railroad had a profound impact on other things as well. People could now purchase finished goods from eastern markets that were too difficult to transport before the coming of the railroads. In 1880, the first telephone lines and gas lighting appeared.<sup>67</sup>

In 1881, Manly garnered a five thousand dollar share in the Red River Cattle Company. The company was 150,000 acres south of the Cimarron River on the Nolan Grant. The elected officials were Manly as president, S. M. Folsom as vice president, Frank Springer as secretary, and H. M. Porter as treasurer. These same men founded the

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<sup>63</sup> David L. Caffey, *Frank Springer and New Mexico: From the Colfax County War to the Emergence of Modern Santa Fe* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 115-119.

<sup>64</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 17-18, 23, 30, 31.

<sup>65</sup> Gretchen Sammis and Ruby Gobble (ranchers), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 8, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 60.

<sup>67</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 61, 65.

Cimarron Cattle Company on five hundred thousand acres north of Fort Sumner. This company and the Red River Cattle Company used the same financial backers. In 1881, the cattlemen in the American West felt unstoppable. They thought the ranching profits would keep coming in forever. In addition, Manly began planning to stock the Monte Revuelto Cattle Company with cattle. In 1882, Manly and Frank Sherwin looked east to negotiate yet another loan through his extended family, the source of all his funding so far. This contract described him as general manager of the Maxwell Cattle Company.<sup>68</sup>

Charles Springer became the secretary for the Red River, Monte Revuelto, and Cimarron Cattle Companies. This title meant he was working as an assistant to Manly. During this time, he started courting Lottie Chase, Manly's daughter. In 1884, Charles asked Lottie to become his wife. Because Manly did not take their engagement seriously, he would not discuss their marriage. Sometime during the year, the two married without Manly's permission. Later that same year, Charles bought out the Porter and Clothier Mercantile and changed the name to Springer Mercantile and Banking Company.<sup>69</sup>

By 1887, Manly started having problems with his many ranches and cattle companies. His source of financial backing was getting shaky. He surrendered his activities as stockholder and president of his two companies and returned to ranching. Charles was building herds on the CS Ranch, as well as on the Chase Ranch. His mercantile and banking businesses were thriving; he still had stock in the large cattle companies; and now he joined the timber and railroad businesses. In 1892, Lottie Springer gave birth to a

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<sup>68</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 69, 70, 76.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 85, 88, 94, 101-2.

baby girl who lived only a few days. This was to be Charles' only child. Lottie never recovered from this loss and died mid-summer of 1893.<sup>70</sup>

Manly was having serious financial difficulty. The Dutch Company owed him several thousand dollars, and he was having financial difficulty with his extended family. His cousin, Charles Dane, embezzled \$150,000 and sent two banks in Grant County into default. Manly would not be able to overcome this difficulty. By late 1894, Manly lost most of his land and money. Manly and Theresa retained several thousand acres of land, which was the Oak Ranch. They tried to sell it, but the reversals in the cattle business by this time frightened away buyers.<sup>71</sup>

In 1899, Charles began courting Mary Chase, Manly's other daughter. They married on Thanksgiving Day. No children issued from this marriage. In 1910, Manly Chase made a will leaving the ranch in trust with Mason, Stanley, and Mary as trustees. Upon their death, the estate went to the remaining children and their heirs. Stanley Chase retained the original house. One of his daughters, Margaret, had children – Gretchen and Joan - who inherited the property. Gretchen eventually bought out Joan's interest. Gretchen Sammis now owns and operates the ranch.<sup>72</sup>

While Gretchen's grandparents were alive, they ran a dairy and her grandmother peddled the milk. During World War II, gas rationing did not affect the business. Ranchers also did not experience rationing problems with milk and beef.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 120, 129, 139-141; Caffey. *Frank Springer*, 116.

<sup>71</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 141, 147-8.

<sup>72</sup> Armstrong, *Chases of Cimarron*, 161, 164.

<sup>73</sup> Sammis and Gobble interview.



## CS Ranch

On June 17, 1848, Francis Springer and Nancy Colman Springer became the parents of Frank Springer in Wapello, Iowa. Frank was to become a politician just as his father and maternal grandfather before him. Frank earned his bachelor of philosophy degree in 1867 from the State University of Iowa. His first love was science; however, his desire for wealth and a comfortable living drove him to become a lawyer. He always continued with his scientific research as a hobby. In later life, he published a three-volume monograph on the Crinoidea Camerata.<sup>74</sup>

Frank's most memorable accomplishments were in another area: law. His legal debut was in August 6, 1869, in a case that he won. His friend William R. Morley went west to New Mexico to manage the affairs of the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company. In November 1872, Morley became the vice president of the company. He inherited a "morass of financial and legal problems." He promptly convinced Frank to join him. In February 1873, Frank became the lawyer for the company.<sup>75</sup> This position was to give him the wealth he sought. In addition, it was the basis for his fame. A part of his pay from the Company was in acreage that he later used to start the CS Cattle Company.<sup>76</sup> In 1879, Charles Springer moved to Cimarron. The two brothers started the ranch that is still successfully operating today.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Caffey, *Frank Springer*, 4-5, 162. According to the McGraw-Hill Concise Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, a crinoidea camerata is an extinct subclass of stalked crinoidea.

<sup>75</sup> Caffey, *Frank Springer*, 10, 15, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest* (New York: Norton, 1970), 149.

<sup>77</sup> Caffey, *Frank Springer*, 56.

In 1906, Charles set in motion a project to dam the head of Cimarron Canyon. This dam, which was located at Eagle Roost Rock, would provide Moreno Valley with a reliable source of irrigation. In time, one thousand shares of stock went to the CS Cattle Company in exchange for the twenty-eight thousand acres of land. A protracted legal battle over the dam forced several families to sell their property in favor of the dam. The oldest and youngest of Frank's sons, Edward and Wallace, were lieutenants in World War I. This left his other son, Hank, to manage the ranch. He became the general manager of the company. Charles managed the Company until Hank took over. Charles died in 1932. After Hank died, Edward took over as general manager. Charles had no heirs. None of Frank's sons had heirs. His daughter Ada's son, James Leslie "Les" Davis, took over as manager.<sup>78</sup>

Ada married and moved with her husband, Warren B. Davis, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She never forgot her roots on the CS Ranch. She came to Cimarron for vacations, bringing her son Les with her. Les came to the ranch when he finished his premedical degree at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, he joined the army. He was in General Patton's Third Armored Division in Europe. Les "was awarded a Bronze Star, three Purple Hearts, and a Presidential Unit Citation and completed his service as a Captain and Battery Commander." After the war, he returned to the CS Ranch. It was soon after this that he met Linda Mitchell.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 171, 172, 191, 210.

<sup>79</sup> Chuck Stocks, "Les Davis," *New Mexico Stockman Magazine* (June 2001): 1-2.

Linda's grandparents came west to establish a ranch. Her father, Albert Knell Mitchell's grandfather, came west because he had tuberculosis. He started a ranch in Tequesquite, New Mexico. This gave Linda the knowledge and work experience in ranch life to live on and later run the CS Ranch.<sup>80</sup>

Linda said the "CS has always had Hereford cattle." When her children came back from college, they decided to bring some Angus influence. Herefords initially were preferred because they could adapt to the country better and were able to use their horns against coyotes and other predators.<sup>81</sup>

Linda's mother died when she was very young. Soon she moved to the Bell Ranch where her father worked. Her grandmother raised her. She learned how to read at an early age. The cowboys on the Bell Ranch taught her how to ride as soon as she could sit on a horse. When asked about the life of women on the ranch, Linda said the cowboys respected the women and expected them to help on the ranch. They cooked for the cowboys, unless the cowboys took a chuck wagon with them. They also drove the teams. Her stepmother, Ima, taught Linda how to cook and iron. At first, she was educated via a correspondence course. Later she went to school in Albuquerque and eventually obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University.<sup>82</sup>

While mining and farming cultures have been important to the region, it is the ranching culture that has been etched most deeply. Most people view the area as distinctly ranching country. There are still a few farms in the area, but it is the ranches

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<sup>80</sup> Linda Davis, interview by Jane O'Cain, May 14, 1996, transcript, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, New Mexico. This town was later renamed Albert.

<sup>81</sup> Davis interview with O'Cain.

<sup>82</sup> Davis Interview with Sintas.

that stand out. Each one of these ranches and others in Colfax and Union Counties has its own fascinating history. With the end of the Civil War and the movement of Native Americans to reservations, cattle men with their vast herds found northeastern New Mexico's open valleys and plentiful grass an invitation to ranch. These ranchers had to fight the government, the homesteaders, and especially the Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company. The coming of the railroad offered the ranchers a wider, more easily accessible market for their stock. In addition, the eastern mercantilists found new markets for their merchandise.<sup>83</sup>

Settlers such as Manly Chase and Charles Springer established these ranches in partnership with the women in their lives. The labor of women such as Moore and Davis made survival of these ranch people a reality. These early settlers learned that it takes more than one or two people to establish a business and a home. Ultimately, they also learned to take the lean years with the rich years since eventually they even out and create, in this case, ranches that, over 140 years later, still function and support further generations.

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<sup>83</sup> Jan Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise: Advertising the Texas Panhandle and South Plains, 1870-1917* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 7, 11, 12.

## Sheep Ranching

It was the beginning of spring when Juan Morgas and Pedro Ribera packed for their annual six-month trek to the plains near present-day Des Moines.<sup>1</sup> Both had a wife and six children to support. Maybe next year both would have another child. Each was packing the wagon with supplies sent by the *patrón* with Pedro also including his knitting needles, wool carder, and spindle. Like other men of his profession, he could knit his own socks and those needed by his family. Juan was an educated man who took a few books to read: the *Bible* and readings from some of the holy fathers. Out in the field, these men tried not to think about their families because the loneliness would drive them crazy. Each knew a lot about the weather and the stars. Juan and Pedro would not see each other frequently, but they did share some times and thoughts together. They were members of that long lost professional fraternity called *pastores*.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1500s, the Spanish arrived in what is now New Mexico, bringing huge herds of sheep. Once the colonies were established, these sheep multiplied and were initially used for food and later for wool. Eventually, New Mexico became the world leader of sheep production. This chapter will attempt to trace the history of sheep in New Mexico. This history will include arrival of the sheep, the sheep barons, the Jewish merchants, use of the *partidario* system, and the *pastor*.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a fictional account that represents the semi-annual movement of sheep flocks.

<sup>2</sup> Ruben Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 172. This word translates as shepherd.

The sheep industry was the first large livestock industry in northern New Mexico, with its history dating back to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores. It has changed in major ways through time, including breeds of sheep, the primary use for these sheep, and the markets tapped. Sheep herding was a business that involved many different positions. The three principal groups of men responsible for their care were the sheep barons, the mercantilists, and the pastores. The number of men employed by the sheep baron depended upon the size of the flock. However, the sheep needed regular tending, assistance during lambing time, and annual shearing.

Diego de Vargas, Juan de Oñate, and Francisco Vásquez de Coronado brought the common Churro sheep with them to New Mexico for the meat, not the wool. This humble animal, the lowest class of sheep in Spain, quickly adapted itself to the New Mexico terrain and thrived in the Southwest. Pedro de Castañeda, Spanish chronicler, recorded the arrival of five hundred cattle, one thousand horses, and five thousand sheep, which came with the Spanish. Historians regard the figure as inflated, but no one knows for sure. These sheep learned to get their water where they could, from morning dew and succulent plants, because they could withstand drought better than cattle. They barely held their own in numbers until the early 1700s, but by 1735 their numbers had greatly increased by a factor of three.<sup>3</sup> Josiah Gregg described the Churro as scarcely fit for anything but its mutton, which had “a peculiarly delicious flavor.” He believed the flavor was a result of the type of grass they ate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John O. Baxter, *Las Carneradas: Sheep Trade in New Mexico, 1700-1860* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 20, 21, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Josiah Gregg, *The Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. by Milo Milton (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1926), 135.

Between the 1790s and the 1880s, the Hispanos moved north due to overcrowding and need for pastures. They began to herd on the Llano Estacado and the Ceja, both of which were open grazing pastures, and prospered there for more than half a century. This move took the sheep herders into dangerous lands, where they had to be courageous to face wild animals, Native American warriors, isolation and loneliness. A large number of Hispanos became sheep herders because this was one of the few jobs open to them, especially once they owed money to a *rico*, and the raising of sheep became a thriving industry in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The Hispanic sheep barons decided to use the extensive grass ranges to feed their flocks. By 1876, there were few Native Americans in the Llano Estacado and Panhandle areas. In the autumn of 1876, Casimiro Romero and Agapito Sandoval of Mora County led the way by moving their flocks to the Panhandle and establishing traditional Hispanic plazas. Eventually, other herders from Mora, Las Vegas, Chaperito, and Anton Chico followed them. These flocks eventually spilled over into the Llano Estacado and on to the plains of Colfax and Union Counties. Some of the plazas the Hispanos established were along the Canadian River and into the Texas Panhandle. They built a plaza on the Atascosa Creek which would later become Tascosa. Another village was named Trujillo Plaza.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed them Cactus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 5-8; Richard L. Nostrand, "The Century of Hispano Expansion," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 62:4 (October 1987): 361.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Simmons, "Trail Dust: New Mexicans Once Braved Panhandle," *The Santa Fe New Mexican* 17 November 2007.

One of the many ranchers in Union County was don Severino Martinez, born July 2, 1854, in Taos to don Pascual Martinez and Teodora Gallegos. Severino came from a family that had participated in Mexican government affairs. His grandfather was General Martinez and his father was a New Mexico territorial representative three or four times. His uncle was the famous Father Antonio José Martinez, controversial priest and activist in Taos.<sup>7</sup> Don Severino began ranching in Union County and later in Colfax County. Soon after his father's death in 1882, "Senator Dorsey and his gang began fraudulent land entries" in order to deprive Severino and other Tasoefios of their land grants. Due to this set of circumstances, he moved to federal land in the Black Lakes district (west of Des Moines), where he homesteaded and raised sheep and cattle.<sup>8</sup>

In 1873, don Rumaldo Celedon Martinez started his ranch, *El Ojo de Pinavete* (The Spring of the Pine), within five miles west of Des Moines.<sup>9</sup> He successfully fought off Native Americans and Anglo cattlemen to retain the land, which is still owned by his family today. He raised cattle, sheep, and horses; sold water to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad; opened the first mercantile and hotel in Des Moines; and opened dipping pens for livestock in the area.<sup>10</sup>

Mariano José Chaves was born December 8, 1808 to Francisco Xavier Chaves and Ana Maria Alvarez del Castillo. His father was the first Mexican governor in New Mexico. Mariano, with his brothers, was one of the prominent merchants on the Santa Fe

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<sup>7</sup> *History of New Mexico: Its Resources and People*, vol. 2. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Pacific States Publishing, 1907), 711.

<sup>8</sup> *History of New Mexico*, 717.

<sup>9</sup> El Ojo de Pinavete is approximately five miles east of Des Moines, New Mexico, in Colfax County.

<sup>10</sup> Kith, Kin, and Kind Friends, *Union County and Its People* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing, 1980), 174.



Trail. He would, of necessity, make trips between Santa Fe and Missouri via the Santa Fe Trail. Since he had worked around Anglos, he told his son they would soon be coming and to “learn their language to defend your people.” He, as well as the other Spanish merchants, sent their children to be educated in St. Louis, Missouri, and later in New York.<sup>11</sup>

Another sheepman was John F. Woford, born in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 22, 1844, son of John and Elizabeth Woford. In the spring of 1860, he moved to Union County. After many years of being a ranch hand, he claimed a ranch at the head of Dry Cimarron. He went into government service until 1880, when he finally settled thirty-five miles south of Clayton. In 1907, he had a flock of nineteen thousand sheep and was one of the most voluminous producers of wool in northeastern New Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

After 1880, due to overcrowding in New York City, the U.S. government rerouted some European immigrants to Galveston, Texas, “the Ellis Island of the West.” Consequently, New Mexico became the home of many Jewish families who would become a part of New Mexico’s growing mercantile business in the 1880s.<sup>13</sup> Of course, by the time they arrived, Charles Ilfeld and the Bond Brothers were already here.

Solomon Jacob Spiegelberg started the first Jewish family enterprise in New Mexico. He probably learned his business in St. Louis and then came to Santa Fe in 1854. Soon afterward, he opened a store in Santa Fe. Due to his severe health problems over the next

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<sup>11</sup> David A. Sandoval, “Mariano José Chaves: Merchant on the Trail,” *Wagon Tracks: Santa Fe Trail Council Newsletter* 1:3 (May 1987): 6.

<sup>12</sup> *History of New Mexico*, 718.

<sup>13</sup> Durwood Ball, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico: The Ravel Family* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, 2005), 3-4.

decades, he would travel frequently between Santa Fe and New York. However, his brothers Willi, Emanuel, Levi, and Lehman ran the business. Merchants had to operate within the barter system because of a shortage of cash in New Mexico. Therefore, they accumulated large herds of cattle and sheep. Eventually, these would be used by the merchants to establish their own ranches.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Ifeld came to New Mexico in the 1860s in order to escape the Prussian draft. For New Mexico, this was a fortunate event. He joined his brother Herman and others in working in a mercantile business in Taos, New Mexico. At that time, he was a clerk. Adolph Letcher moved his business to Las Vegas, New Mexico, and took Charles as a partner. In 1874, Charles bought out Letcher and developed his own organization. Ifeld Mercantile became a large part of the business scene in northern New Mexico. It was the supplier for the ranchers as well as the purchaser for the wool.<sup>15</sup> In establishing his business in Las Vegas, Charles faced some well-established firms run by Emanuel Rosenwald, Trinidad Romero and brothers, and John and Andres Dold. He would later buy out his partner and, in September 1874, established his company.<sup>16</sup>

Ifeld had many customers who paid him in beans, wool, lumber, cattle, sheep, bran, corn, wheat, hay, and oats. From the north, his customers sent him lumber. Ifeld viewed the coming of the railroad as a reason to specialize in wool and sheep. This change of

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<sup>14</sup> Noel Pugach, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico: The Spiegelberg Family* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, 2005), 2-7, 10.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Parish, "Charles Ifeld and Mercantile Capitalism in the Arid Southwest," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 24:4 (December 1950): 216-7.

<sup>16</sup> William J. Parish, *The Charles Ifeld Company: A Study of the Rise and Decline of Mercantile Capitalism in New Mexico* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 22, 28.

business forced a change from a credit or barter system to banking with an emphasis on loans and smaller inventory. In the early 1880s, Max Nordhaus worked for Ifeld and would later become his partner. Ifeld and Nordhaus started doing business by accepting sheep from the ranchers. Over time, they build up huge herds and by 1896 were forced into the *partidario* system.<sup>17</sup> This system employed *pastores* over the next two and a half decades. The younger brothers of Charles and later his sons took over the business, which successfully continued until World War II, when no family members were interested in taking over the business.<sup>18</sup>

Frank and George Bond grew up in Quebec, Canada in the 1860s. Afterward, both brothers migrated to New Mexico, where they became important in the sheep industry. Both eventually established mercantile businesses that purchased wool. Both men were interested in the Sheep Sanitary Board and the Republican Party. George established a store in Wagon Mound in 1883 and later moved to Colorado. Frank Bond was in partnership with his brother in Chamita, New Mexico, until 1904. After this, Frank Bond continued in business with the Wool Warehouse in Albuquerque and with Bond-Baker Company in Roswell.<sup>19</sup>

In 1886, Morris Herzstein opened a store in Las Vegas, which he used as a base of operations for his territory in Colfax, Mora, and San Miguel Counties. In 1890, he opened a store at Casa Blanca in Union County and later in Liberty, and finally by 1897, he opened a mercantile in Clayton, New Mexico. In 1907, he rebuilt his store as a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 59, 60, 113, 154.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Tobias and Sarah R. Payne, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico: The Ifeld and Nordhaus Families* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, 2005), 21.

<sup>19</sup> Grubb, "Frank Bond," 142, 172, 173, 178, 271.

general mercantile and eventually expanded into ranching, sheep raising, real estate, and farming.<sup>20</sup>

Over time, sheep became a huge industry in New Mexico. Many mercantilists ran successful businesses with thousands of people who had jobs as herders. There were many fights between the sheep men and the cattle men, which eventually resulted in fewer sheep being pastured. In addition, there are still many ranchers in northern New Mexico who had a successful business in sheep until they were forced to switch to cattle.

New Mexico has been a leader in the sheep trade for many years. Until the U.S.-Mexico War, Mexico was the market for many huge herds. Some claimed that New Mexico delivered over five million sheep in one year.<sup>21</sup> Following the war, the industry turned to the east and supplied vast amounts of mutton and wool to the mid western and eastern United States between 1850 and 1900. The Civil War pushed New Mexico into wool production, instead of just mutton.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the war, the sheep went to market in California and Chihuahua, where the miners needed this meat for sustenance.<sup>23</sup> While the Rio Abajo district led the region in sheep production, there were also massive herds in northern New Mexico. Anglo traders noted the massive flocks while traveling the Santa Fe Trail. Records for 1843 indicate that four hundred thousand sheep were exported. By

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<sup>20</sup> Noel Pugach, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico: The Herzstein Family* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, 2004), 2, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Alvar Ward Carson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry, 1850-1900: Its Role in the History of the Territory," *New Mexico Historical Review* 44:1 (January 1969): 27.

<sup>22</sup> Carson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry," 25.

<sup>23</sup> Marc Simmons "Trail Dust: Unraveling New Mexico's Historic Wool Trade," *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, 24 September 2005.

1856, ranchers who sold their own sheep were fine with the market, but speculators could no longer get an adequate return by reselling sheep.<sup>24</sup>

The wool from the Churro found a profitable market in the United States in 1854. A load of the wool procured a modest price despite its indifferent quality. This coarse wool went into the manufacturing of carpets and blankets. Originally, the sheep ranchers did not clean the wool; they sold it unwashed until, in 1883, Albuquerque acquired its first cleaning plant to scour the wool. Clean wool garnered a higher price.<sup>25</sup>

The arrival of the Anglos changed the industry by bringing in the “heavier-set, wool bearing full blooded Merino rams” from the East.<sup>26</sup> George Giddings brought the first one with him from Kentucky to northeastern New Mexico.<sup>27</sup> In the 1870s, ranchers crossbred the Churro with the well-bred Merino sheep to improve the quality of wool and quickly changed from mutton to wool production.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis was on lamb production instead of wool.<sup>29</sup> By 1900, Union County was the leader in wool production.<sup>30</sup> One of

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<sup>24</sup> According to White, the Rio Grande Valley was divided into the Rio Arriba (Upper River) which was north of Santa Fe and the Rio Abajo (Lower River) which was south of Santa Fe. Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 42; and Baxter, *Las Carneradas*, 90, 107, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Simmons, “Trail Dust: Unraveling.”

<sup>26</sup> Carson, “New Mexico’s Sheep Industry,” 32.

<sup>27</sup> Frank H. Grubbs, “Frank Bond: Gentleman Sheepherder of Northern New Mexico, 1883-1915,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 35:3 (July 1960): 171; P.A.F.W., “Frank Bond,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 20:3 (July 1945): 171.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Simmons, “The Lore of Sheep and Goats,” *Coronado’s Land: Daily Life in Colonial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 149.

<sup>29</sup> James R. Gray, “Sheep Enterprises in Northern New Mexico,” *Bulletin 454* (University Park, N.Mex.:

the first things the Anglos learned was the necessity to develop at least a smattering of Spanish in order to understand what to supply their shepherders.<sup>31</sup>

Initially Kansas was the selling point for the New Mexico wool. It was not many years before enterprising people established mercantile businesses to handle all sorts of things, including the sale of wool. There were many people who opened mercantile establishments. These establishments, run mostly by Anglos of German-Jewish origin, played a large role in the sheep industry. They not only sold the wool, but they pushed for improving flocks and also loaned money to small operators.<sup>32</sup>

After the Civil War, sheep ranching in New Mexico became a big industry. The New Mexico herds extended north through the eastern section of Colorado Territory. A lot of these sheep were sold to the mining camps until this business declined.<sup>33</sup> At one time, the Colfax and Union County areas had extensive sheep ranches. Today only a few small ones are still operating.

Over time, millions of sheep ranged over northern New Mexico. The 1890 U.S. census revealed that New Mexico was the largest producer of sheep and their products in the country. Colfax had a total of 18,092 sheep that produced sixty-one thousand pounds of wool annually. Mora, Rio Arriba, and San Miguel counties were the home of more

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Agricultural Experiment Station): 2.

<sup>30</sup> Carson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry," 39.

<sup>31</sup> Lillie Gerhardt Anderson, "A New Mexico Pioneer of the 1880s," *New Mexico Historical Review* 29:4 (October 1954): 251

<sup>32</sup> Carson, "New Mexico's Sheep Industry," 36.

<sup>33</sup> *Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster*, vol. 11 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1967), 60-61.

than 400,000 sheep, approximately one-third of the sheep in New Mexico. The other large ranches were located in Bernalillo and Valencia counties with more than 500,000 sheep or forty-six percent.<sup>34</sup>

In sheep ranching, many people performed jobs important to the industry. The sheep inspector ensured the meat animals were free from disease. The mercantilists provided the place for the sheep ranchers to sell their product at a good price. The sheep ranchers, of course, provided the sheep. However, the *pastor* was the most important person. He was the one responsible for the welfare and protection of the sheep and for paying the large price for any loss of animals. Unfortunately, he was also the person who made the least money off the sheep.

In addition, the sheep industry became a huge enterprise because many people pooled their talents to make it so. The Anglos and the Hispanics got over their prejudices of each other in order to make a living in the Southwest. The Hispanics brought the Churro, which at the time was a good thing and adapted to the harsh life. It is doubtful whether the Merino would have adapted. By the time the Merino arrived, life was a bit easier and the sheep were able to survive and crossbreed.

Some friction developed between the cattle men and the sheep men. Cattle could range freely; sheep had to be fenced in. Texas law compelled sheep men to buy their land while the cattlemen could use the range freely. In Texas in 1883, the small farmer cut the fences because they regarded the land as free grazing. Also, large cattle ranchers

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<sup>34</sup> *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1895), 258.

would cut the fences. This longstanding battle with cattle would drive sheep from many areas of the west.<sup>35</sup>

Before 1846, most Nuevo Mexicanos knew only two classes of people: *patrones* and *peones*. Before the Americans came, the *patrones* generally took responsibility for the *peones*, who labored for them. The patron owned everything and *the* peon was paid for his work in goods. In fact most were members of the *partidario* (contract institution) system in which the peon leased the animals, received his pay in animals, and suffered all losses and reverses.<sup>36</sup> This caused the peon to always be in debt to his patron, and when he could not pay it, his children assumed the debt upon the father's death.<sup>37</sup> This same system, with a few changes, was employed later by the Anglos. Stella Sintas tells of a time when her father, Lewis Martinez, worked for C. B. Irwin in 1949. Lewis brought his brother, Ernest, to work for Irwin in 1950. When his brother left in 1952 owing money, Irwin held Lewis liable for the debt. Lewis paid the debt because he assumed he did owe the money and besides he did not have the money to fight it in court.<sup>38</sup>

There were four different types of *partido* contracts which were usually for in kind payment. The type of contract entered into depended upon the wants of the patron. In essence, the patron loaned a certain number of sheep to the pastor, who was expected to

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<sup>35</sup> V. W. Lehmann, *Forgotten Legions: Sheep in the Rio Grande Plains of Texas* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1969), 106-7.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Nostrand, "The Century of Hispano Expansion," *New Mexico Historical Review* 62:4 (October 1987): 364.

<sup>37</sup> "The Southwest: A Vast Empire Springing into Existence. A pleasant interview with Governor Hendricks," *Indianapolis (Indiana) Sentinel*, 30 May 1881.

<sup>38</sup> Stella Sintas interview.



return them with the required payment each year. Normally, payment would be a twenty percent increase for the rancher per year. In other words, for every one hundred sheep loaned to the pastor, he must return one hundred and twenty to the patron. The second type was in wool: two or three pounds per animal per year. If the patron loaned one hundred sheep, he expected two to three hundred pounds of wool each year. The third was a twenty percent increase plus some wool. The fourth was for money. This system is several hundred years old and is suited to American capitalism. Whether run by the Spanish sheep barons or the American capitalists, the herder suffered all losses. The Anglo sheep rancher learned to be a patron in his own way.<sup>39</sup> Historian Winifred Kupper writes that the owner “had to learn if he did not want his herder recalcitrant, lazy, and untrustworthy, he must turn him loose and let him pretty much alone.”<sup>40</sup> In essence, he learned not to criticize the Hispanic way of life or it would cost him dearly.

The New Mexico pastor had the most dangerous job. Sheep herding was an art developed over many a lonely day. They were the poorest of the poor, using bows and arrows or a leather sling to kill predators and to defend themselves from the raiding Navajos and Apaches.<sup>41</sup> A well thrown stone could cause either a fatality or very serious wound to a human or an animal. Not only was the sling shot used as a weapon, but a good sheepherder could employ it to turn a flock of sheep by throwing stones in front of the leaders, thereby forcing the direction they would take. The Hispanic sheepherder had

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<sup>39</sup> Larry S. Lopez, “Sample Partido Contracts,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 52:2 (April 1977): 111.

<sup>40</sup> Winifred Kupper, *The Golden Hoof: The Story of the Sheep of the Southwest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 46.

<sup>41</sup> Marc Simmons “Trail Dust: The Great Sheepherders of New Mexico,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican* , 1 February 2003.

many hours in which to practice and become skillful. According to Marc Simmons, they “ranked as the supreme marksmen in hurling missiles with a sling.”<sup>42</sup> A good sheep dog was also a part of his arsenal. It would chase any of the predators such as wolves, bears, and coyotes. A dog especially came in handy when the *pastor* was asleep.<sup>43</sup>

Gordon Taylor, an Idaho shepherd, recalled an episode when bears and coyotes attacked and killed a flock of sheep and another episode when a bear pushed two or three hundred sheep over a cliff and caused them to smother to death. He stated a good sheep dog is worth a good herder. They never touch the sheep, instead going around and turning the sheep in the correct direction. They rarely bark at the sheep, as this causes the animals to go in an unwanted direction.<sup>44</sup>

A sheep camp was not the pastoral, nostalgic, romantic image some have of it. The pastor initially had a small tent and slept on the ground. Later in the 1900s, these men often had a wagon, which looked a lot like the rugged or primitive camping trailers seen on our twenty-first century highways. A horse or a vehicle towed the wagon, which had four wheels and a tongue. These wagons were usable in most places the sheep went. However, there were times when the herders traveled by horse. The wagon was large enough for a sleeping area and a place to keep supplies, and included a drop-down kitchen cabinet and small propane stove.<sup>45</sup> Periodically, maybe once a week, the boss

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<sup>42</sup> Marc Simmons “Trail Dust: Slings a Popular Tool, Weapon for Shepherders in Territorial Times,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, 19 April 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Baxter Black. “The Sheep Camp.” *The Deming (N.Mex.) Highlight* 4 October 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon B. Taylor, interview by Harold Forbush, 25 March 1970, Upper Snake River Historical Society, Rexburg, Idaho.

<sup>45</sup> Portable stove, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portable\\_stove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portable_stove).

brought additional supplies to the herder.<sup>46</sup> The pastor had an important job, with a lot of responsibility, especially around lambing and shearing time.



Figure 11. Sheepherder's wagon, Rosebud County, Montana LC-USF33- 003175-M3.

The lambs were born in February and March. Tending them required a larger number of workers in the field. These men set up a large tent in which to keep the newborn lambs warm. The ewe would automatically follow her lamb. Later the men moved the animals into a catch-pen to allow time for the bonding of the mother and the lamb. Following bonding, marking, and branding, the pair returned to the range.

The wool protects the sheep in fall and winter, but is uncomfortable in summer. Shearing the wool protected the sheep in warm weather and provided wool that the owners sold on the market.<sup>47</sup> From colonial times, men used a knife for shearing sheep.

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<sup>46</sup> Black, "The Sheep Camp."

<sup>47</sup> Sheep Shearing Fact Sheet, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, [www.umass.edu/cdl](http://www.umass.edu/cdl) accessed [October 21](#), 2011.

In 1829, Charles Bent brought several pairs of “*tiheras de tresquilar*” (shears) with him.<sup>48</sup> In the beginning they were unpopular among the sheepmen.<sup>49</sup> By April, the lambs were born and could be sent out on the summer pastures. At this time, a band of men involved in shearing traveled from one camp to another. The crews sheared the ewes and rams, not the lambs. The shearers, expert at their business, used manually operated shears.<sup>50</sup> Stella Sintas recalls a time when she watched the crews using gasoline-powered shears. Each machine had five sets of shears on each side. With these shears, the crew could work through a large herd in two days, a faster pace than shearing by hand.<sup>51</sup> Now, the shearing crews use electrically operated shears. The crew placed the sheared wool or fleece in a sack, and transported it to one of the mercantile establishments to be sold.



Figure 12 .Antique Sheep Shears [http://www.icollector.com/5-Primitive-Sheep-Shears\\_i10276998](http://www.icollector.com/5-Primitive-Sheep-Shears_i10276998)

<sup>48</sup> Ruben Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 224, 230. This translates as shears used in sheep shearing.

<sup>49</sup> Black, “The Sheep Camp.”

<sup>50</sup> I had the opportunity to watch my Grandfather Lewis Martinez shear a ewe. It took him less than ten minutes and left no nicks nor cuts on the lamb.

<sup>51</sup> Stella Sintas, interview by Conchita Sintas, notes, Raton, New Mexico, July 8, 2011.

A shepherd had a lot of time to kill while he watched the sheep. He led a lonely life with considerable stretches of time to sit and think, compose poetry, or whittle. During the winter, he had to contend with the cold and start fires with a flint rock using wet wood. Olaf Swenson, a Wyoming shepherd, told Elinore Stewart, a homesteader, that after six months of herding, a person does not realize just how people-hungry one can get. Shepherds had an overwhelming need to see and talk to people.<sup>52</sup>

Winifred Kupper wrote a book about the life of these southwestern sheepherders. She spent many a day learning from an old shepherd, Robert Maudsley.<sup>53</sup> During her time with him, she learned that sheep needed to be a part of a flock when the sheep were vulnerable. She also learned that each sheep has a scent gland in its hooves, which helps mark the trail for the others. This scent lasted on the ground only a short time.<sup>54</sup>

Silvestre Mirabal was born May 10, 1864, in Seboyeta, New Mexico, becoming a farmer, stock raiser, and political leader. In addition to his other duties, Silvestre Mirabal served as a Territorial Sheep Inspector for twelve years.<sup>55</sup> A sheep inspector

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<sup>52</sup> Elinore Pruitt Stewart, *Letters on an Elk Hunt*, <http://www.gutenberg.org>: 14.

<sup>53</sup> Kupper, *The Golden Hoof*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Kupper, *The Golden Hoof*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas William Herringshaw, "Silvestre Mirabal," *Herringshaw's National Library of American Biography: Contains Thirty-Five Thousand Biographies*, vol. 4 of 5. (Chicago, Ill.: American Publishers' Association, 1904-1914), 195.

examined brands and issued clearance certificates. In addition, the inspector checked for scabies or any other infectious or contagious disease.<sup>56</sup>

Before the cattlemen established their ranches in Union County, the sheepmen were already there. The sheepmen were already an established entity in New Mexico, with a history that dates back to the days of the Spanish Conquistadors. This industry included Hispanic and Anglo sheep barons, pastores, and merchants. Sheep herds in New Mexico were huge and remained so until the end of World War I. This whole enterprise was built on the special needs of the pastor who spent many a lonely day away from his family to make a subsistence living. In the end, it was not the cattlemen who replaced the sheepmen; it was changes brought about by World War II.

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<sup>56</sup> New Mexico Brand Laws, [http://asci.uvm.edu/equine/law/brands/nm\\_brand.htm](http://asci.uvm.edu/equine/law/brands/nm_brand.htm), accessed October 21, 2011.

## Epilogue

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam  
And the deer and the antelope play  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day

Home, home on the range  
Where the deer and the antelope play  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day

*Home on the Range*  
Brewster Higley and Daniel Kelley

The cliché “the more things change, the more they stay the same,” fits ranching in northeastern New Mexico. Once the Native Americans and the Santa Fe Trail were subdued, the *ricos* moved their sheep herds to this area, as well as into the Llano Estacado. There they were to remain until after World War II.<sup>1</sup> The cattlemen came in with their herds, after the Civil War, and eventually replaced the *ricos* and their sheep herds. The homesteaders came in around the turn of the twentieth century, attempting to replace the cattle men and remained until after World War II. Throughout the vast open areas of northeastern New Mexico, there are empty hulks of houses, barns, and old field equipment. The Johnson Mesa area was the home to a couple hundred people who claimed upwards of a thousand acres for farms. By the end of the Dust Bowl Years, most of these people had sold out and moved elsewhere. Now those same homesteads are merged to form several huge ranches that run cattle on them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ruben Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 202.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Olsen, “The Failure of an Agricultural Community: Johnson Mesa, New Mexico,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 58:2 (April 1983): 113.

The population has had its share of changes. In 1900, the population in Colfax County was 10,150; in 1920 was a high of 21,550; and in 2010 was 13,750. In 1900, the population was 4,528; in 1920 was a high of 16,680; and in 2010 was 4,549. With the coming of the ranches, homesteading, and the railroad, the population saw a drastic increase. Following the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl years, and the realization that the land was more suited to ranching than farming, the population saw a drastic reduction to turn of the twentieth century figures.

Cattle have been moved all over the United States since the end of the Civil War. In the modern era, that movement continues on both a national scale and an international scale. Calves are born in both Canada and Mexico and imported into the American West, where there is sufficient feed. In most cases, it is more economically feasible to bring the calves to the feed than take the feed to the calves. Mexico sells the cattle to Texas, which in turn redistributes these calves to other states including New Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

One of the biggest changes in the ranching industry in Colfax and Union Counties is in the ownership of the land. Starting in the 1970s, Ted Turner and John Malone, media moguls, acquired several ranches in the American West. Both of these men are known in the media and financial worlds as being tough and ruthless. However, when it comes to their ranching empires, it is a different story, more like a labor of love. These men run their ranches as economically self-sustaining.

Ted Turner started acquiring land in the 1970s with various properties east of the Mississippi. His first ranch purchase was the Bar None in Montana in 1987. Since then

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<sup>3</sup> Dennis A. Shields and Kenneth H. Mathews Jr., *Interstate Livestock Movements*, Report number LDP-M-108-01 (June 2003): 2, 15. [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov). Accessed April 29, 2012.



he has acquired a total of fifteen ranches in Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. In New Mexico, he owns the Ladder Ranch in southeast New Mexico, the Armendaris Ranch in south central New Mexico, and Vermejo Park Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico. Turner buys these properties for environmental reasons and to provide safe havens for animals, one of which is his herd of 55,000 bison, the world's largest private herd.<sup>4</sup> Turner says that Vermejo Park sits "on top of valuable natural gas that is being extracted by an energy company that has the rights. They do this work very carefully, extracting the gas while protecting the ranch's beauty and wildlife."<sup>5</sup>

John Malone owes his cowboy lifestyle to Bob Magness, his business mentor. In 1981, he acquired his first ranch, Cow Creek Valley (22,000 acres). Since then, all his ranches are managed by the Silver Spur Land and Cattle Company, which he formed to manage his ranches in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. In New Mexico he owns the TO Ranch (250,000 acres) in Colfax County and the Bell Ranch (290,100 acres) in Harding County. When he purchased the Bell Ranch in 2011, he became the number one private land owner in the United States, with Ted Turner in second place.<sup>6</sup> Malone bought these ranches because he loves the outdoor lifestyle, especially fishing. In addition, he bought the property to save it from the developers. His motive, he says: "Hey, this is a beautiful piece of property, I'd like to protect it."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ted Turner Ranches <http://www.tedturner.com/home.asp>. Accessed April 28, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Ted Turner and Bill Burke, *Call Me Ted* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008), 272.

<sup>6</sup> Monte Burke, "John Malone Overtakes Ted Turner as Largest Individual Landowner in the U.S.," *Forbes* (March 10, 2011), 35. [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com).

<sup>7</sup> Mark Robichaux, *Cable Cowboy: John Malone and the Rise of the Modern Cable Business* (Hoboken,

There have been other changes to the individual ranches since 1950. James Gray, associate professor of agricultural economics, performed a study on fifteen sheep ranches in Rio Arriba and Taos counties in 1957, 1958, and 1959. Due to financial constraints, northern New Mexico had been reduced to a small-scale sheep production. The ranches ranged from 200 to 1,400 head of all ages. He estimated the average acreage per ranch was 4,800 acres with an average of 760 sheep. They grazed in the spring, summer, and fall on federal land. In winter, owners fed the flocks about one thousand pounds of hay per head. By the end of the financial year, the rancher in northern New Mexico earned less money. For 1957, 1958, and 1959, their average receipts were \$9,909. After expenses, their return was \$2,279.<sup>8</sup>

The ranches that had previously run sheep and cattle, now only run cattle. According to Long, manager of the TO, until ten or fifteen years ago many ranches ran sheep because there was a government subsidy for them. Since there is no longer a subsidy, the sheep are not on the ranches.<sup>9</sup> Also, Ernest Perez, rancher, stated that today, without this subsidy it is cheaper to import wool products. Therefore, the number of sheep on ranches has dropped. In the 1990s, the U.S. had seventy-five million head of sheep; in 2005 there were about six million head.<sup>10</sup>

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N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2002), 281-288.

<sup>8</sup> James R. Gray, "Sheep Enterprises in Northern New Mexico," *Bulletin 454* (University Park, N.Mex.: Agricultural Experiment Station, 1961): 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Long (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 13, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Perez, interview by Ramona L. Caplan, July 25, 2004 and February 27, 2005, Interview Abstract, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The ranches in the previous chapters have undergone changes since the 1950.

### **TO Ranch**

The TO Ranch underwent many management changes during the last sixty plus years. When Adam G. Thompson died in February 1955, his sons Alexander and Adam ran the ranch. On April 1, 1962, the ranch was sold to Jack Renfro.<sup>11</sup> According to Roger Long, the current ranch manager, Renfro retained it for two years until he died. It then had a succession of owners: Bart Casaus, Doctor Lee, and Lee Cohn. Now the ranch belongs to John Malone, the Liberty Media mogul.<sup>12</sup>

### **Moore Ranch**

Alice Moore continues to make outstanding contributions to range and ranch management. She has received the following awards: Excellence in Grazing in 1979; Outstanding in Grazing in 1982; Rangeman of the Year in 1986. Her ranch is known for its high quality of horses that are bred and raised for sale.

### **Chase Ranch**

Gretchen Sammis, having grown up on the ranch, took over management of the ranch in 1956.<sup>13</sup> She obtained a BS in science in 1948 and taught for one year at the University of Wisconsin, before she became home sick. Later she earned her MA in physical education at the University of Colorado, where upon she accepted a teaching position in Cimarron, which she held for seventeen years. She needed the outside income by the

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<sup>11</sup> Wesley Brown (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 15, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Long (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 13, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Conrad, "Worthy of the Chase: Gretchen Sammis, BS '48 works the family ranch," *Mirage Spring* (1991): 25.

time she inherited the ranch. It was too small to make a comfortable living.<sup>14</sup> Ruby Gobble has been the foreman for approximately forty years. She ran the ranch while Gretchen taught school. She had brood mares that needed a stud and placed them on the Chase Ranch. Within a short time, she moved to the ranch permanently.<sup>15</sup>

Gobble told of an incident during the Blizzard of 1989. Sammis was at a conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. The temperature in New Mexico got down to -22° F in the morning. They lost many calves, but were able to save some because Gobbles brought them into the house, hand fed them, and kept them by the stove. The lesson learned from this was to reset the calving time to March instead of February. Gretchen Sammis passed away on August 14, 2010. A trust transferred the property to the trustees who will set up “a museum and operate the ranch as a model historic ranch. Gobble will continue to live there.”<sup>16</sup>

### **CS Ranch**

Charles Springer was the force behind the building of the Eagle Nest Dam, which he called a failure. However, it became a popular seasonal resort and vacation spot for both skiing in the winter and fishing and boating in the summer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Conrad, *Worthy of the Chase*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Gretchen Sammis and Ruby Gobble (ranchers), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 8, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Sammis and Gobble interview. Obituary of Gretchen Sammis, *Albuquerque Journal* (N.Mex.), August 25, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> David L. Caffey, *Frank Springer and New Mexico: From the Colfax County War to the Emergence of Modern Santa Fe* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 174.

On June 14, 1953, Linda Mitchell met and married Les Davis. At this time, they moved to the CS Ranch. Today, Linda and her children still work on this historic ranch. Her son Kirk is the president of the CS Cattle Company.<sup>18</sup>

### **Brown Ranch**

Today, at least one adult in the Brown family must work away from the ranch to pay the bills. Dianne Brown, John's wife, teaches science at the Branson School in Branson, Colorado and their son Brian works for Folsom Well Service. In spite of their outside careers, they persist with running the ranch because it is their life style and the land has been in the family for over a hundred years. One of the new technologies the Browns are bringing in to diversify their operation and make ranching viable is to set up wind-power companies.<sup>19</sup>

When all is said and done, ranching in northeastern New Mexico has undergone changes in the ownership of the land, use of the land, and the future of the land. Some of the larger ranches such as Vermejo Park and the TO Ranch have a secure future as long as environmental activists such as Ted Turner and John Malone own them. The other smaller ranches have had to diversify. Some have become dude ranches, others sell wildlife hunting permits.<sup>20</sup> The biggest issue facing most of these ranches involves the future. Several ranchers were asked about the largest problem they face. Each of them, except for the CS Ranch, indicated that the younger generations are not interested in remaining on the ranches.

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<sup>18</sup> Linda Davis (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 8, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Keller, "Home on the Range," *New Mexico Magazine* (May 2011): 25-29.

<sup>20</sup> Alice Moore (rancher), interview by Conchita Sintas, July 13, 2009.

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