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Women Belong on Campus: The College Life of Mary Daniels

By Guinivere Mayse

In the tumultuous landscape of 1940s America, the specter of patriarchy cast a long shadow, shaping societal norms and curtailing the aspirations of many. It locked doors for those who were not the Oliver Warbucks of the day.¹ Yet within this transformative period, as World War II reshaped access to higher education, seeds of change began to sprout. Women increasingly claimed space on college campuses and their presence signaled both resilience and defiance against systemic barriers. Census data reveals a steady increase in women's enrollment during this era, a trajectory that culminated decades later in women becoming the majority on American campuses, a testament to generations who persisted despite restrictive norms.^{2,3}

At the forefront of this struggle in the U.S.–Mexico borderlands stood Mary Daniels Taylor, whose indomitable spirit and hunger for knowledge defied expectations. Born in 1922 to Mamie and Albert Daniels in El Paso, it was here that she was tutored in history, photography, and Spanish from an early age.⁴ Her mother's teaching fostered a boundless curiosity that grew into a deep commitment to research. Mary's journey was shaped by both encouragement and constraint; she embodied a subversive determination. Specifically, she pursued a life as a scholar in the face of systemic societal pressures.

As we embark on this narrative voyage, it is crucial to recognize Taylor's exceptional significance beyond being a historical figure; she stands as a symbol of unwavering fortitude and resilience in the face of male-dominated



Image courtesy of J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor papers, NMSU Archives.

landscapes and the cult of domesticity that sought to confine her and other women striving for autonomy. This historical narrative testifies to the enduring spirit of women who not only belong on college campuses but also shape the very fabric of our quest for progress and equality. This article traces Daniels's personal and professional history through archival material of journals, personal writings, newspaper articles, and oral histories. Together, we will journey through time and understand why Mary Daniels is an incredible person who deserves more than a paragraph or two written about her. Even this article might not be enough to explore her exceptional existence.

It is essential for me to pause and acknowledge why this conversation matters so deeply. In reading about Mary Daniels Taylor, examining her work, and witnessing the passions that drove her, I feel a profound connection to her journey. Mary navigated challenges that resonate deeply with my own experiences as a queer female academic, confronting a world that often disregarded the voices of those outside the dominant narrative. History, too often, silences these perspectives—but I feel a responsibility to recover them, to remind the world that we are here, have always been here, and that our voices matter. In a society that sometimes devalues those it deems “other,” it is both a personal and



Image courtesy of J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor papers, NMSU Archives.

scholarly imperative to insist that everyone should be a part of the conversation of history. Mary's story is one among countless others historically marginalized, and by bringing her life and work into the light, even one story at a time, I hope to honor the resilience, intellect, and creativity of those whose contributions have been too long overlooked. In this way, the narrative of Mary Daniels Taylor not only illuminates a singular life but also exemplifies the broader thesis of this article: that women, in the face of systemic constraints, have continually forged paths of intellectual and cultural significance, demanding recognition and remembrance.

Mary was baptized, received first communion, and married in the same church. In addition, she met her future husband, John Paul Taylor, there. While John Paul is often remembered as an extraordinary figure—his Navy service, career in education, and later political life lauded as a legacy of public service—such accounts frequently overshadow the fact that Mary's own ambitions were constrained and reshaped in ways that reflected the gender expectations of her time. Their story illustrates how women's education was often redirected toward supporting roles within marriage rather than fostering independent scholarship. Though Mary and her children often recount that Paul was very supportive of her research and academia, he still wished to keep Mary's image as a diligent and good wife, mother, and host.

When the two met formally at a friend's recital in early 1941, Mary was pursuing her degree at the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy (now UTEP), while John Paul was at New Mexico State University (then the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts). Mary transferred to NMSU shortly thereafter, in order to be close to J. P. Taylor. This decision is framed in “Man from Mesilla” through a revealing anecdote:

They both took an international affairs class taught by Percy M. Baldwin, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. One

day he asked each student how he or she went about gathering data for the class. When Baldwin got to Mary, she said that she relied on Paul's excellent notes to keep her abreast of her assignments. Her honesty drew an enthusiastic response from her classmates and a knowing grin from Professor Baldwin.⁵

Despite Paul's talent in shorthand, Mary was the one diligently taking detailed notes and truly keeping J. Paul "abreast." This tension between documentation and reality reflects the broader societal bias Mary faced. It is tragic to me that even when her work was indispensable, the record presented her as secondary to her husband.

After John Paul's graduation and their engagement, Mary returned to El Paso to complete her degree. Under the mentorship of Dr. Isabella Zimmerman, she flourished as a writer, earning her degree in English with a minor in history. Despite the pressures to embody the role of wife above all else, as well as three children already in the home, Mary carved out space for her intellectual growth - specifically, she subverted the patriarchal expectations of mid-century academia. There are even letters between Mary and her friends where she urged them to meet the finish line. She reminded them that it is the most rewarding feeling to have your degree in your hands and that fighting for the degree was worth it, that the freedom of that piece of paper was worth it.

During those transformative two years, 1941-1943, Mary embarked on an extraordinary exploration into research. Digging deep into history through primary sources had begun a lifelong journey, an unquenchable thirst for knowledge that she couldn't resist. The culmination of this remarkable journey arrived more than five decades later in the form of a magnificent tome titled *As Wild as the West Ever Was*,⁶ an early history of her beloved town of Mesilla. Mary's quest for knowledge had its roots in the 1940s and persisted until 2004, resulting



Image courtesy of J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor papers, NMSU Archives.

in a masterpiece that captured the essence of her tireless pursuit.⁷ This tome stands not only as a record of rigorous scholarship but as a defiance against the ever looming threat of expectation that society that sought to limit her ambition.

The interview with Mary's children proved fruitful with specific topics such as her photography. As a child Mary had practiced piano and would say that when she played music, she found a silence and tranquility within herself. Her photography was something she sought to perfect, and this extended into her college years into 1945 with classes and seminars at the esteemed New York Institute of Photography.⁸ Here, she honed her craft through a blend of self-taught techniques and daring experimentation with light using an Ikoflex camera. She took black-and-white prints of the world around her. Her photography became a canvas for her soul, a reflection of her mother's teachings, and Mary's own innate talent.



Image courtesy of J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor papers, NMSU Archives.

Mary's photography wasn't just about aesthetics; it was a means to showcase New Mexico's breathtaking diversity and allure. In fact, this objective appeared in a grant proposal for a photo exhibition that Mary had designed.⁹ Through her passion, she sought to unveil the profound beauty of the region, a beauty that resonated with her on a deeply personal level. Her legacy lives on through her evocative imagery, which is a timeless tribute to her boundless curiosity and unwavering love for the enchanting landscapes she immortalized. Her photography evolved into an extension of her research which challenged the male-dominated conventions of the professional photographic world and asserted her vision as both scholarly and creative.

She began curating shows and exhibitions at New Mexico State University as early as 1942, showcasing its vibrant diversity within the hallowed halls of the Department of Art for numerous years.¹⁰ Her relentless efforts extended beyond mere displays. She tirelessly pursued grants, fostering the creation of a myriad of artworks, often women's arts, and transforming countless ideas into tangible realities. Through her exhibitions, she didn't just highlight the perspectives of one demographic, but rather encapsulated a diversity of voices from

white, Black, Indigenous People, and Latinx communities. Her dedication ensured that New Mexico's voice resonated across the nation, not just through her lens, but also through the stories she brought to life.¹¹ Becoming a curator and philanthropist was not an easy task for a woman of the Fifties, but Mary did not let it stop her. She took it upon herself to create a space she knew was needed.

In both her photographs and writing, Mary effortlessly combined her love for people's stories with historical and aesthetic elements. She could capture the essence of an entire story either through the lens of her camera or in beautifully crafted prose, turning dry historical facts into vibrant narratives. Her historical figures weren't flat names on a page; they became vibrant, complex characters, encouraging readers to think and interpret rather than just absorb information. Similarly, her photos didn't just capture random scenes; they highlighted dynamic individuals and significant places, making them relevant and impactful. Mary's college education and dedicated practice allowed her to meticulously blend research and photography into captivating tales.¹² And no one could tell Mary no. Paul knew this fact and would help make the dream possible if he could; he supported her every step of the way.

Her journey into publishing of her literary work began later, supported by her devoted husband and a close writing partner, Nona Barrick, whom she met during these formative years. Nona, a college alumna from North Carolina, met Mary through their husbands, and the two families became inseparable. This connection sparked a partnership, and the two became the Lennon and McCartney of borderland history. Together, they penned numerous pamphlets during college, contributed articles to esteemed publications like *New Mexico Magazine* and *The El Paso Times*, and delved deep into their shared passion for history. Their collaborative efforts culminated in the publication of *The Mesilla Guard* in 1976, a booklet delving

into Mesilla's rendition of the Texas Rangers. Priced at a humble \$3 each, their work reflected a harmonious blend of Mary's creative flair and Nona's organizational prowess.¹³ They were hailed as a perfect match, complementing each other's strengths to build and present meticulous research in an engaging and accessible manner.

Mary's contributions extended far beyond her research and photography; she ventured into teaching. She got her teaching license and worked at the Zack White Elementary School in El Paso.¹⁴ At this point, 1942, J. Paul was enlisted into the Navy, and Mary would not stay long at Zack White Elementary, as they both moved to New Orleans. When the war was won in 1945, they returned and married. After this, John Paul went to teach at an elementary school close to Mesilla, and Mary taught history to high schoolers at Bowie High School in El Paso. Mary ultimately became an English professor at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in 1946-1947. She worked for the university and eventually moved into the archives. During her tenure as a college professor, she taught alongside Paul. They taught a New Mexico history class together where they would bring the students on field trips across New Mexico and teach them the history the same way that Mary's mother had taught her. While Mary deeply cherished her role as an educator, teaching primarily served as a means of financial support while she wrote her book.

At NMSU, Mary contributed to several strategic and research-based initiatives. Notably, she collaborated with the New Mexico legislature on a significant project: the microfilming of over a million pages within the Durango archives, which were subsequently integrated into the Rio Grande Historical Collections at NMSU. Mary Daniel initiated this project during a visit to Durango with John Paul. They had gone for fun and for research: Mary looked for more information about a priest from Mesilla, Ramon Ortiz, who studied in the seminary run by the diocese in the 1830s. Whilst there, they met some folks at

the Catedral Basílica Menor de la Inmaculada Concepción. Afterwards, they were invited to the archives of the church. This collection is referred to as the Archive of the Archbishopric of Durango, where Taylor came across documents pertaining to the history of New Mexico during the Spanish and Mexican eras.¹⁵ Recognizing their importance, she felt compelled to share this valuable information with the world and began the Durango Microfilming process. The State of New Mexico records administrator, along with a former NMSU Archives and Special Collections staff member who worked on the project, praised it as "the most significant source of archival material relating to New Mexico in decades."¹⁶ I believe it was her contributions to the Durango Microfilm Project, along with her efforts in obtaining San Albino's designation as an official basilica, that



Image courtesy of J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor papers, NMSU Archives.

led to her being knighted as Lady Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem.¹⁷

Detailed accounts show that Mary played a pivotal role in the project's success. Yet, like many women in historical narratives, her contributions are often overshadowed by those of her husband. The microfilm collection is rightfully named The Mary Daniels Taylor Durango Microfilm Collections, yet the focus in many articles about this project seems to center on male workers.¹⁸ Mary was the driving force behind the Durango archives and the NMSU microfilm project, yet she is mentioned only sporadically. Her male counterparts receive most of the credit, which underscores how women's achievements are often silenced.^{19,20}

The tendency to downplay women's achievements is evident in the case of Mary Daniels Taylor and others like Jean Fulton and Claire Odenheim, whose vital contributions to projects such as the Real de Tierra Adentro Trail Association were overshadowed in favor of male recognition.²¹ Despite the participation of over fifteen men, only three women were acknowledged, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal biases that routinely minimize women's intellectual and professional accomplishments. In some of the few publications on the Taylors, like *The Man from Mesilla*, Mary is portrayed primarily through domestic and supportive roles, such as hosting, appearance, and child-rearing, while her scholarly publications and artistic passions are sidelined. This framing reinforces the societal narrative that women's worth lies in traditional expectations rather than their full range of abilities.

Through her lens and her life, Mary Daniels Taylor illuminated not only the breathtaking landscapes of New Mexico but also the profound depth of women's intellectual and creative presence in a world that too often sought to diminish it. Her art, scholarship, and collaborations reveal a legacy of resilience

and brilliance that resisted confinement to the narrow roles prescribed to her. To honor Mary is to confront the systemic erasure that has long silenced women's voices, and to recognize the transformative power of education and creativity in expanding the boundaries of possibility. Her journey affirms that women are not only rightful participants in academic and cultural life, but essential architects of it. They are visionaries whose contributions shape the richness of our shared history and inspire us toward a more inclusive and luminous future.

Guinivere Mayse is a public historian and art historian whose work explores intersections of feminist, queer, and Black visual and cultural histories. A graduate of New Mexico State University with degrees in Art History and History, she currently serves as Lead Curatorial Interim for a private car collection in Sunland Park, where she brings critical and inclusive perspectives to the interpretation of material culture.

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Echoes in the Valley: The Tale of Las Cruces and Mesilla

By Hamed Azizangilan

Where ancient trade routes crossed the Mesilla Valley, a story of two towns began. Before the crosses marked their silent vigil, before streets traced their patterns in the desert soil, this crossing point - “Las Cruces” in Old Spanish - marked where travelers’ paths converged along the Camino Real near Alameda Avenue. This name, perhaps born not from tragedy as legend claims, but from intersection and connection, foretold how this place would stand at the crossroads of cultures and dreams.¹



Las Cruces circa 1905, looking north up Main Street on a beautiful cloudy day. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

Long before the streets were drawn in the dust, the Mesilla Valley held older memories. Indigenous peoples made their homes around the San Andres Mountains, their villages dotting a landscape where an ancient sea once rippled. The bones of prehistoric creatures still whisper beneath the earth, while scattered pottery shards, arrowheads, and mysterious petroglyphs tell tales of those who first called this valley home.² The valley’s modern chapter opened with the Doña Ana Bend Colony in 1843. The settlers

persisted despite Apache raids. When Doniphan’s Missouri volunteers passed through during the Mexican-American War in 1846, they discovered a flourishing community with “plenty of grain,” a testament to the settlers’ resilience and the valley’s abundance.³

In 1849, at the request of the village’s alcalde Pablo Melendres, U.S. Lieutenant Delos Bennett Sackett transformed empty desert into possibility and a new town called “Las Cruces,” using nothing more than rawhide ropes to lay out an 84-block grid that would become the Mesquite neighborhood. Each measured line and angle spoke of American dreams taking shape in the desert soil.⁴ Meanwhile, after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, some Mexican nationals established Mesilla, seeking to remain under Mexican jurisdiction.

Cruz Alvarez, whose blood carried both Spanish and English heritage, remembered how the Gadsden Purchase of 1854 transformed his grandfather from a Mexican citizen into an American with the stroke of a pen. “The treaty itself states... all those citizens of Mesilla... who would stay here one year after the signing of the treaty, would automatically become American citizens,” he recalled, capturing a moment when paper policies reshaped human lives.⁵

Nature itself seemed to challenge Las Cruces’ ambitions. In 1854, an invisible enemy swept through the town. Stagnant water had collected in the adobe-making pits near the irrigation canal, breeding swarms of mosquitoes that brought malaria to the town’s doorsteps. “Almost every family had at least one member of the family prostrated, and about 20% of the citizens of Las Cruces died,” historian George Adlai Feather recounted. Even the surgeon at Fort Fillmore, the only doctor available, could only advise filling in the pits. But nature proved cruel -

when the land settled, the following year brought an even more severe outbreak. The epidemic grew so dire that court officers refused to come to “an unhealthy place,” forcing the county seat temporarily to Mesilla, which had been “only touched lightly by the epidemic.”⁶



Gathering under the peaceful, tree-lined streets of Mesilla, ca. 1880. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

A stranger could feel the contrast in the air between the two towns. In Las Cruces, the sound of hammers and saws echoed, hinting at a relentless quest for growth. Among the silent witnesses to this transformation stood the Nestor Armijo House, rising like an anachronistic apparition from what was once the town’s dusty outskirts. Built in the aftermath of the Civil War by Union Army veteran John D. Barncastle, this stately adobe mansion must have seemed like a mirage to residents of a town where most dwelled in simple jacals of mud and sticks. With its lime-plastered walls, wrap-around timber porch, and Victorian balcony, it stood as a testament to the town’s growing ambitions.⁷

In 1877, as Las Cruces continued its march toward progress, Nestor Armijo purchased the home, adding delicate gingerbread wood trim to impart a Victorian elegance that matched the town’s rising aspirations. The home’s three-foot-thick adobe walls held stories of both cultures: its construction methods spoke of ancient Mexican traditions, while its architectural flourishes echoed American Victorian dreams. Like Las Cruces

itself, the house embodied what preservationist Eric Liefeld would later call “our city’s blended culture.”⁸

In the local tavern in the following decade, Martin Lohman, the sheriff and a man of boundless ambition, held court. “Lohman was a prominent businessman who played a vital role in the development of Las Cruces, establishing various enterprises and serving as sheriff, which reinforced the town’s civic order,” George Feather recalled.⁹ He envisioned more than dusty streets and adobe buildings. He saw a thriving city built on the sturdy values of American progress. Hiram Hadley, the town’s educator, was at his side. He pontificated on the new school he aimed to establish: a place where minds could be molded to understand the American ideals he held so dear.¹⁰

But in Mesilla, life moved to the rhythm of tradition. Here, time seemed to slow down as if it were held back by the ancient adobe walls and sun-drenched courtyards. Stories and laughter spilled from the doorways of homes, drifting on the breeze. The people of Mesilla held their history close, a rich blend of Spanish and Mexican roots that grounded them. They celebrated together, raised their voices in song and memory, and cared for their land communally.¹¹



The Amador Hotel, ca. 1930s, currently under renovation, remains a legacy of Martin Amador and family. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

Among those who would shape Las Cruces's destiny was Martin Amador, who began as a humble teamster hauling goods to Fort Fillmore. Through determination and business sense, he established himself through horse trading and freighting, operating corrals where he kept and leased horses to soldiers. His marriage to a woman of the Ruiz family from Juárez brought him personal happiness as well as the capital that would fuel his future enterprises.¹²

The rivalry between the towns reached its climax when the debate over the courthouse reached a boiling point. In the newspaper, Mesilla was portrayed as chaotic, with its people described as unruly and backward. One Las Cruces editorial characterized Mesilla as filled with "Infinite scandals and abuses." The author even called for a new county seat.¹³ That call found its answer one cold January morning. While the people of Mesilla still stirred in their beds, the first news drifted over from Las Cruces: the courthouse, the very heart of county governance, was moving. Las Cruces leaders "pulled a fast one on Mesilla," orchestrating the courthouse transfer in a swift political maneuver.¹⁴

The year 1881 brought a transformation on iron wheels - the Southern Pacific Railroad. Las Cruces's position on higher ground, safe from the floods that often threatened Mesilla, had helped secure its selection as a rail stop. This move forever altered the balance between the two towns.¹⁵ The Amador Hotel rose as a testament to this new era of growth. By 1886, it boasted the city's first water system, powered by horses pumping water to a tank on the upper floor. Stories of the hotel became legend, be it the tale of Prohibition-era gin disguised in ginger ale bottles or the smoldering mattress that floated down a canal to accidentally ignite a bridge. In either case, these narratives captured the spirit of a town in transition.¹⁶

Life wrote quieter stories, too. In the 1930s, children like Ray Connell orchestrated daring raids on the MacDowell apple orchard, then retreated to shady hideouts with their sweet spoils. Near the railroad tracks, the Barker family farm spread its bounty "from Main Street over to the railroad," its 38 acres of asparagus reaching skyward. Young hands couldn't resist reaching through fences for the first tender spears of spring,



A train coming to a stop at the original Las Cruces Depot in 1901. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

prompting Mrs. Barker's predictable calls: "Your children are taking my asparagus!" - met with neighborly laughter about her abundance.¹⁷ Even in harder times, community bonds held firm. When Madonna High School found its pantry bare after construction in the 1920s, a local farmer's carrot crop donation made the difference between feast and famine. These moments of generosity wove through the fabric of the towns, binding neighbors together despite their differences.¹⁸

Today, walking these streets echoes the two hearts still beating to different rhythms. In Las Cruces, the energy hums with continued ambition, while Mesilla's plaza holds centuries of memory in its stones. Together, Las Cruces and Mesilla tell the story of the American Southwest as a complex harmony of cultures, with each town taking a different path toward its future.¹⁹

Dan Hamed Aziziangilan is a Public History graduate student at New Mexico State University. He works on art history, museum practice, and Borderlands memory. He presented at two Border History conferences in 2025: the New Mexico–Arizona History Conference in Las Cruces, and the Western History Association Conference in Albuquerque.

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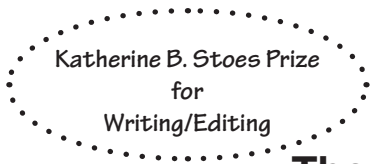
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The Wednesday Literary Club: The Role of Women in Las Cruces, 1940-1974

By Hannah Augustyniak

The Golden Age of America was the name given to the 1950s post-war era and alluded to the tremendous success of capitalism in the post-war climate. However, this era should be remembered as golden for a different reason - social change in the form of emerging modern views. Small-town women are a largely overlooked proponent of this change, but they played a huge role within and beyond their communities. The women of the American Southwest in the early Cold War period were still held to the expectations of the 'cult of domesticity,' an outdated Victorian standard of isolation, purity, and submissiveness.¹ While in the Borderlands women had a little more laxity and could do things like open businesses, file for divorce, and have bank accounts (under the expectation that they would retain their duties as housewives), they were still held to this standard. The 1920s permitted women to reconsider their place in society amid growing restlessness and disdain for old standards. The women of Las Cruces joined the Wednesday Literary Club with the intention of finding community, but it became much more.² As they grew to know each other, they learned more about themselves, too. Las Cruces women stepped beyond their boundaries and pursued positions of influence and power. This group fought to have a place in the 'second-wave' of feminism, and they managed to influence education and political organization.³ Over time, the women of the Wednesday Literary Club (hereafter WLC) found their own autonomy.

Before the initial rise of change in the 1920s, there were small changes being made consistently to create that tipping point. In 1892, three women from the East Coast formed the Wednesday Literary Club to remind them of their homes back east. The original New England

clubs, and the subsequent 'club movement' was initialized by middle-class, white, protestant women with an active hand in the church and early education. The organization, then known as the Arcadian Club, was formed to promote charity, introduce women to the public sphere, and promote welfare of their communities. It was said in 1967 that the founding members wanted similar privileges to their east-coast lives and as a result, they formed the club. It began with programs and papers on books about United States history, and the members were seriously dedicated to the club. They kept extensive records and yearbooks of the club and their writings, and too many missed meetings meant expulsion from the club. Most of their records before 1940 were destroyed due to a house fire. The remaining records and later newspapers describe them as 'not a frivolous club,' and their actions show they were promoting the study of history and cultures within their club – and then beyond it.⁴

Concurrently, in Las Cruces, the Women's Improvement Association (WIA) of Las Cruces was formed to improve the city socially, economically, and politically.⁵ These clubs shared a founding member: Emma Dawson. While the WLC tended to focus more on education and the academics of Las Cruces, there were overlapping ideals for the improvement of the town. The WIA contributed more to infrastructure and economic development of Las Cruces, while the WLC helped back these organizations, funded community service events, and continued to work on the social improvement of the town. The Arcadian Club was changed to the Wednesday Club in 1886, then officially to the Wednesday Literary Club in the 1920s. The name change signaled a greater emphasis on education, which would continue throughout the twentieth century.

During the Cold War, the WLC focused on learning, reading, and reviewing United States



Wednesday Literary Club, 1898. Elias Day Papers, NMSU Archives

history. These early beginnings set the foundation for later values of the club members, and having a background in history helped the women to gain momentum for future actions. By the 1940s, they had expanded their horizons and started to learn about world history, international affairs, classical literature, and local history and cultures. As the women discussed geopolitics, the newspapers continued to refer to their club meetings by their husbands' names and the type of decor they had presented. On February 21st, 1957, Mrs. Shelley reviewed *They Sought a Country* by Norman Nygaard, a book detailing the life of Norwegian immigrants at the turn of the century.⁶ In the article detailing this review, she is referred to only as "Mrs. William B. Shelley", and no details of her review are given. This trend continues for years after, crediting these women's contributions to uninvolved men. Starting in the fifties, the

WLC themselves stopped using their husbands' surnames in reports, began publishing their own books, and read more female authors in their meetings.

In the early 1950s, The United States saw an economic boom that led to suburbia and consumerism, factors that unintentionally linked themselves to feminist movements. Women had more access to community than ever before, and housework could be outsourced to appliances, which freed up time to create social groups.⁷ All over the states, a movement of women's clubs opened, much like the WLC, that discussed things like local and global issues, literature, and education. It's clear why this change was embraced—the war was officially over, and it allowed the cult of domesticity in the United States to fade.⁸

The reason that women living in the Borderlands were so influential in this era was the massive uptick in immigration. In the 1950s, Las Cruces experienced a substantial rise in population because of the White Sands Proving Grounds and college attendance at NM A&M (NMSU after 1958). A substantial portion of immigration came from the eastern United States or Europe, places with an already established foothold for women in politics and community spaces.¹² Most notably, many women were already involved within women's clubs, creating a space without men that promoted discussion and self-improvement, which eventually led to social and political reform.¹³

By the late 1950s, the WLC was responsible for helping many organizations around the city. One of the earliest notable effects falls in line with the Civic and Service Clubs Division, or community service. This campaign was one of the largest early community service

acts in Las Cruces and supported groups like the Boys and Girls Scouts, the Red Cross, and others. After this event, the WLC continued to support community service in Las Cruces, communicating and fostering the key principles of the club: expanding education, life skills, and camaraderie. They were also known to have made significant contributions to the Thomas Branigan Library during this time, including donations and contributions to materials. The Associated Women Students of New Mexico was an organization that was also heavily supported by the club, helping women find even more spaces for growth within Las Cruces. By helping these organizations aimed at women across the city, Las Cruces began to foster a more positive outlook on women and girls. This was especially evident in the realm of education. The club allowed women to contribute actively to post-secondary education spaces, and these examples of strong women encouraged others to think of their power beyond the home.



Wednesday Literary Club, Character Day, "Women of the Bible," May 17, 1911. Wednesday Literary Club Records, NMSU Archives

In the 1960s, women opposed the lingering ‘housewife standards’ and banded together to get themselves into spaces thought of as for only men. Many women formed movements that spurred on progression for women like Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique*, a book that detailed the dissatisfaction with being a modern woman forced into homemaking.⁹ In addition, the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union encouraged women to think “outside the box” as part of the nationwide “consciousness-raising movement”.¹⁰ This movement provided a framework for women’s clubs accomplishments, fostering a safe space for sharing personal experiences and creating community.¹¹ This ideology spread to smaller borderlands towns and likely influenced the WLC in their work, reviews, and writings. Though this club was not necessarily formed under the guise of being feminist, it still had feminist ideals. Members wished for women to have a voice in politics and education, as well as autonomy and the ability to pursue their goals.

The WLC operated in a way that allowed women to discuss community improvement. Women began to streamline changes in their neighborhoods through small consistent efforts. Some of these came from the content reviewed in the club, but most came through the works of the individual women.

Florence Erwin was one of these women from within the WLC that made huge strides for the community. She was responsible for leading the ‘Beautification of the Greater Las Cruces Area’ initiative (1965), she was Chairman for the Women of Las Cruces Committee (beginning in 1943), and she organized the records of the Wednesday Club for the Rio Grande Historical Archives (1974). Despite the fact that she only held an officer position for a few years, she did spearhead many large-scale changes within and outside of the club. including fostering the Las Cruces chapter of the Girl Scouts. In 1896, Erwin wrote in a report about the club changing with the times, saying “life [was] no longer that

simple.” She changed the name of the club and the priorities of every woman involved.¹⁴ For example, Erwin’s high standard of community drove her to create and host events throughout her years in the WLC. Additionally, her work with the Girl Scouts and other community service efforts encouraged the other members to lead initiatives of their own. Her efforts in the community allowed for the shift to be noticeable and took them from a mere social club to a group of influential and powerful women. Her steps in the right direction only encouraged her fellow members to take those steps, too, thereby ensuring that the WLC continued to contribute to the community for many years.

Another prominent member of the club, Opal Lee Priestley, also made impactful changes in Las Cruces. Lee Priestley immigrated to Las Cruces in 1947, likely to pursue a teaching job. While she began at the WLC as an already accomplished member of her past communities and a teacher, she gained a new footing within Las Cruces. Lee Priestley became a published novelist, children’s book author, and historian while living in this Borderlands town. She continued to teach classes on writing, and began as an advisor to NMSU’s chapter of Theta Sigma Phi (association of women in communications). She was also a winner of both the Zia Award and Woman of Achievement award for her work within the community, specifically for the women of academia. She continued to write, publishing over 1,000 works by 1960, including novels, children’s books, and historical reports.

Flora Hamiel, a later member of WLC, did great work to keep the WLC modern and expand their horizons. In 1970, she traveled to Spain and brought back reports she made abroad. Her intention was to expand the WLC to discuss more geographically and culturally diverse topics. She continued to be the expert in all things abroad for these women, as evidenced by her organizing of a European summer tour in 1961. In 1970, she was awarded NMSU’s Woman of Achievement



Wednesday Literary Club, 65th anniversary, 1957. Wednesday Literary Club Records, NMSU Archives

award for her work in Las Cruces and at NMSU. She established the first sorority on campus, Zeta Tau Alpha, contributed more than 12,000 hours to the Memorial General Hospital, and was active in many community organizations. Furthermore, Hamiel Hall on the New Mexico State University campus was named in honor of her many campus contributions.

As a member of the WLC for more than twenty years, Ruth Johns Lisle was another founding mother of Las Cruces. She mostly was committed to her work for the church and the WLC, but was active in all community service carried out by the WLC. Her biggest achievement to the WLC and the role of women at the time was publishing her book *Chickens Don't Turn to Dust*. This book is an autobiographical comedy set at the turn of the century in which she tells the tale of her youth and how she grew up in Las Cruces.¹⁵ This book was a way for word to spread about Las Cruces and Borderlands culture. In addition,

Johns Lisle set a precedent for credible women authors.

Women's history must acknowledge the women of rural communities and record their contributions. Women silently changed the entire social climate in and around the Las Cruces area, and recognizing them is the key to better understanding both women's and Borderlands history. The Wednesday Literary Club is just a small piece of the past, but these women were essential to the development of Las Cruces since its founding.

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End Notes

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Orla S. Casad: Adventurer in the Territory of New Mexico, 1878-1880

By Cherié L. Weible

In the span of Orla Samuel Casad's life, 1846 to 1928, the United States experienced a reform and evolution of its social and political structure, along with the opening of the era of expansionism. Casad's paths led him to participate in the early settling of La Mesilla, New Mexico Territory, as well as in the establishment of Pittsburg, Kansas. His involvement in political organizations, the military, and many fraternal and social groups allowed him to speak his opinion and influence his community. During his lifetime, Casad was representative of the spirit and backbone of America; for it was the common man who plowed the fields, raised the church steeples, established communities, and fought in wars. The common man built the foundation of America's future.

This paper uses examples from Orla S. Casad's life to illustrate one man's experience and participation in the creation of our country as we know it today. It is important to study Casad's life because he, like many others of his time, was striving to change the world around him. As a newspaper editor, educator, and lawyer, Casad became an influential member of his community. By following Casad's story during his time in Dona Ana County, Territory of New Mexico, we are studying an era of our ancestors that shaped the world we live in today. Casad's life is illustrative of our country's past as a nation of common people who developed a unique system of government where citizens are guaranteed basic rights and freedoms. Orla S. Casad was one of the common men that fought to keep those liberties for the future. By reliving, retelling, and recording the life of Orla S. Casad, we pay tribute not only to him, but to the millions of others who created the paths which ensured a tomorrow for future generations.

Early in his life, there were several events that influenced the young Casad. When he was fifteen, he dealt with the loss of his father, who died from tuberculosis. By the time he was seventeen, six members of his family had died, including his twin brother, Charles, in service for the Civil War.¹ The remaining family were his mother; siblings Finch, Laura; and himself. It was quite a struggle for them to make ends meet and Betsy, their mother, took in washing and boarders to add to whatever sons Finch and Orla could contribute to the family's income.² As a widowed mother of a son killed in the Civil War, Betsy, was also able to apply for and obtain a small pension from the U.S. Government.³

Another important clue about Casad's future, provided by the 1860 Census, is the location of the Babcock family. While Orla was growing up and working hard on the farm, his wife-to-be was enumerated in the town of Lebanon, Illinois. Alice M. (Allie) Babcock, age 5, was listed with her father William, mother Martha, and sister Kate. It is significant that William Babcock's real estate was valued at \$1,000 and his personal property was valued at \$10,000. His occupation as a nurseryman allowed him to provide his children with many luxuries, which would cause problems for Orla and Allie during their marriage when Orla could not provide a similar lifestyle for his new bride.⁴

The extended Casad family lived in Summerfield, Illinois, located three miles west of Lebanon, Illinois, so it is reasonable to assume that they saw each other often.⁵ Because of the large number of family members in the area, Orla was probably influenced by his uncles, aunts, and cousins. Orla, a young man seeking role models, was more susceptible to influence

after the death of his father. There are many similarities between the father's and son's lifestyles. Orla, like his father, was a soldier, church member, homesteader, Mason, and Justice of the Peace. He saw the importance of his father's participation in community activities and made an effort to do the same when his own time came to be an influential citizen. In need of a role model, he may have chosen his Uncle Thomas Casad, as later correspondence seems to indicate. In the meantime, more important issues were on the minds of all Americans as the onset of Southern secession took place.

Orla Casad returned to Summerfield, Illinois, after his service in the Civil War to farm with his older brother Finch, who was trying to make a living at tobacco farming.⁶ In 1872, Orla entered McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois, the same institution to which his grandfather, Dr. A. W. Casad, had contributed and helped build. According to the Centennial volume published by the College, Orla "finished the Scientific Course in 1875, receiving the degree of B.S. Later he received the degree of LL.B. He was a member of the Philosophian [sic] Society."⁷

In June of 1875, Orla received a letter from his uncle, Thomas Casad, who had migrated from Illinois to New Mexico, with intermediate stops in Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and California:⁸

We have been here now about six months and so far as I have seen the country I am well pleased with it[.] The Val[I]ey of the Rio Grande is a fine body of land[.] The climate is a verry [sic] pleasant one neither hot in summer or cold in winter. I will send you some papers the Mesilla News in each copy of which you will find an article over my signature description of the country to which I call your attention[.]⁹

Thomas wrote to Orla again in August of that year, once again promising of an opportunity at publishing a newspaper. "If you would come out and take charge of the paper I will either buy

it out entire or at least get a controlling interest in it if you filled the Bill well."¹⁰

About that same time in his early manhood, Orla became acquainted with Alice Mary Babcock. Whether he met her at a church, social, or work-related function is unknown, but the two decided to marry. The ceremony was performed by John W. Locke, president of McKendree College and a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, on September 20, 1876, at Summerfield, Illinois. Orla was twenty-nine at the time, and Allie was twenty-two.¹¹ Their first child, Ethel Estella Casad, was born the following year on December 5, 1877.¹²

In January of 1878, two and a half years after his first contact, Orla went to La Mesilla, New Mexico Territory, to inspect the area that his Uncle Thomas had described to him. Whether the towns of Summerfield and Lebanon, Illinois, seemed cramped for a young Casad, or the young man needed a father-like figure, or the responsibilities of a new marriage and a new family were overwhelming, Orla commenced upon his journey searching for a new beginning. By June of 1878, Orla had traveled from Illinois to New Mexico Territory, spending a short time in Colorado. Was Orla's Uncle Thomas supposed to make a man of this restless nephew? Or did Orla truly see westward expansion and New Mexico Territory as a quick solution to make a new start and pay off his debts? Whichever the case, Orla spent almost two years attempting to get a foothold in New Mexico Territory.

In April and May of 1878, serious plans for Orla's journey to New Mexico were being made. During his travel to Mesilla in June, he corresponded with Allie, describing some of the things he had seen.

I arrived [in El Moro, Colorado] the eve 8[:]30 after having traveled 1062 miles from Summerfield inclusive and must admit that I am somewhat travel worn. . . . Well Allie the trip so far has been magnificent; the better and most tractable country I think lies in

Kansas, especially at Emporia
The country from Emporia to Great Bend is good. Any where this side for farming purposes is inferior. All lands in Colorado are dependent on irrigation for fertility. But for stock my heavens the valleys are full. The stock looks well both sheep and cattle and very remunerative. The lands of Colorado and a portion of Kansas are hilly. Colorado both Mountainous, Hilly and rocky.¹³

Orla's written perception of the land he encountered demonstrates his ability to convey his thoughts. In the following passage, he is rather eloquent in his description.

West of West Las Auminias I had a splendid view of Pikes Peak, green horn Mountains, Spanish Peaks and the Raton Mountains. At the base of the Raton I am now resting. And as the train slowly swept in from the silent prairies off Pueblo to the south, I quietly observed the setting sun as it slowly sank behind Pikes Peak spangling its snow capped summit as it were with glittering gold, tingeing [sic] the ethereal blue of the Spanish Peaks with a ray of silver light--and then sullenly retiring behind the long chain of the Green horn Mountains at 8[:]:30 your time. 7[:]:30 here. It was magnificent--and well worth any man[']s attention.¹⁴

Orla continually corresponded with his wife. His observances of the new country he encountered are well worded. The next letter included a reference to his health, which had not been good, as well as his feelings about Kansas.

This climate is curing my dyspepsia I felt unusually well can eat a breakfast equal to a horse--in fact am feeling fine. . . . If there is any chance to do anything in N M I[']m going to do it, at present Kansas pleases me the best, but success may alter my opinions. . . .¹⁵

Orla signed the letter above "O. S. Casad, adventurer." A typical letter to Allie began with "Dear Wife and baby" and then went into the events that were taking place, instructions for

money he sent to pay off debts, and answers to her many questions. He always had many comments about Ethel, their daughter, and often sent money to have her picture taken so he could see how his infant daughter was growing.

Orla finally arrived in Mesilla on July 2, 1878. He wrote Allie a lengthy letter describing the rugged end of his journey and detailing many things he intended to do.

I have two opportunities of business, the Independent, or the Mill. With the paper I can work into the law. In the mill It is so much salary and no more, either will pay me better than teaching yet I cannot say that my prospects are more flattering than they were in Lebanon. Society is nothing here in comparison to Ills. Not an ME Church closer than 100 miles, and that is no distance here. Uncle showed me an acre lot which I will in that case build. His new building will join us on the right.

The country is so different here to what it is in Ills that I shall not attempt to describe and simply refer you to that article that we read in the Indiana paper, and could I but retouch the article might make it more true to life having seen the Mesilla Valley a privilege that correspondent had not.¹⁶

The area of New Mexico Territory that Orla moved to had a notable history before he arrived. Dona Ana county was one of the original nine counties in the Territory of New Mexico. It lies mostly in the land acquired from Mexico by the Gadsden treaty of 1853. The famed Mesilla Valley was the first portion of New Mexico to be settled by white men. Its rich agricultural land was planted in alfalfa, fruits, and other cereal grains.¹⁷

The Mesilla grant was made by the state of Chihuahua, and had its origin in the clause in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which provided that those Mexican citizens who did not desire to become and remain American citizens might remove from the limits of the United States to Mexico. Many

persons desired to take advantage of this provision, and most of these selected La Mesilla (then in Chihuahua) as a desirable location for such a colony. Application for the location was made to the government, the grant was made and a tract of country of well-defined natural boundaries was assigned to the colony.¹⁸

Because of the continual border changes between Mexico and the United States, the area of Mesilla was settled and resettled by Mexicans as well as Americans. The Gadsden Purchase, in which the United States paid fifteen million dollars for this land, annexed the area to New Mexico. This purchase ensured that the land would now permanently be a part of the United States. Orla's Uncle Thomas was an important part of the settling of this land.

In 1875 Colonel [Albert J.] Fountain removed to Mesilla, New Mexico, where he soon had a large law practice and took an active interest in political affairs and movements in the Territory as a Republican leader. He founded the *Independent at Mesilla*, beginning its publication June 23, 1877, with John S. Crouch and Thomas Casad as editors in collaboration with Colonel Fountain under the name of the Mesilla Valley Publishing Company. The paper vigorously opposed the organized band of cattle and horse thieves operating in Dona Ana county.¹⁹

Still, despite the growth of population, all the south-eastern portion of New Mexico is a rude, wild, and almost lawless region, where, in too many cases, the strong hand is the only arbiter of right and wrong, and where disputes of the most trivial nature are constantly ended with the crack of a pistol or gun.²⁰

Orla's new home was radically different from Illinois. In addition to being a different world socially, the physical land was strange too. "At Dona Ana and Las Cruces, in order to obtain water for domestic purposes, people were obliged to dig wells in the river-bed, the water oozing thereinto (sic) during the night."²¹ New Mexico

proved to be a dry, arid land with a large Mexican and Indian population. Orla grew accustomed to his new surroundings and wrote constantly to Allie. "I am becoming acquainted with the country and like it some better than when I last wrote you."²² Their separation, however, placed a terrible strain on their relationship financially and emotionally. Although Orla tried to get started with a business and have enough means to support his family, Allie from childhood experience was accustomed to having all she wanted. A continual disagreement over money can be read in the letters exchanged between the couple. Orla's stress is obvious in his next letter:

Allie it nearly kills me to be absent from you and the baby. I am anxious to get into business, build us a home and all that but do not crave a position that will keep me away from them or in any manner make them unhappy. The chances for making money here are better than in the states but requires on the part of man and woman a far [more] difficult exertion than I or you expected. If you were with me and we were doing well I have no doubt but that we would be happy. And when you come it must be without reserve for it will take all I can make in a year to pay debts, get you and the things here and fix us up. My nature will not allow us to be separated long. . . . If you object or think you cannot be happy here I will drop everything and return for I can assure you I am zealous as the grave and that once around will be my ruin. I know I am subject to blame when I cannot give you means but you know why and under what circumstances I came and must accept good intentions.²³

Orla was easily upset when Allie corresponded about their hardships or seemed to complain about their state of affairs. The couple's debt resulted in conflict between them. "Allie I do not want to fetter you we know our Lebanon experience and its result You cannot evade, and it hurts me whenever you refer to Lebanon Matters at least in the manner you speak of them."²⁴

Orla's letters home reveal him as a romantic, somewhat self-centered, and perhaps an inept young husband. The letters reflect his intelligence and efforts to support his family through hard work. A recurring theme in Orla's letters to Allie is his need to have a son to feel secure about his manhood. His views are reflected in the following passage: "I do not know that I ever will have much family, yet I earnestly hope that our union will be made more sacred and binding by the birth of a Son."²⁵ Although this was a common attitude at the time, it is obvious why Orla felt this pressure. With only two living siblings, neither of whom were married, Orla was the only one to pass on the Casad name through his father's family. Finch, the only other son, chose not to marry; and if Laura had married, her children would not have carried the name of Casad. While Orla's attitude seems chauvinistic and insensitive, his views show him clearly a product of his time. Although the couple had five children, they never had a son.

In addition to thinking about their future, Orla also informed Allie of his situation in Mesilla. "I have taken the Independent at 800 a year, and more if the investment will make it on the 800 I am secure and am bound for a year."²⁶

Some of Allie's letters to Orla are also helpful in understanding the influence she had upon him.

If you could get the school in L[ebanon] I would be glad & think we could live if we were out of debt. if perhaps you could get a school somewhere in Kansas & then buy a little land & if we had any luck could soon pay for it I could raise chickens & make butter to sell & we could get along I know. . . . if he [Thomas Casad] would let you have five hundred dollars & you buy land in Kansas you could soon pay him & do well at the law or stock raising. that is a good business & not very hard work.²⁷

As a result of Allie's need to be with Orla, she was able to persuade his moods and sway his opinions. His next letter reflected



Orla around the time he returned from New Mexico to Kansas in 1880. Image courtesy of the Orla Samuel Casad Collection, Pittsburg State University Special Collections and Archives.

his disappointment in the way their lives were unfolding.

You say you are sorry that you gave consent to my coming here. You are no more sorry about it than I am, for truly I can wish that I was well out of the Territory. I remained more to please my uncle than myself I felt as though I had been pushed to the wall and was compelled to do something. So here I am. In my last I wrote that it would be best for you to remain at Father[']s, though if ever I needed a wife it is now and here.²⁸

Yet, only a week later Orla wrote to Allie of other feelings. "The paper does a business of over three thousand dollars a year. I like it verry [sic] much."²⁹ Seemingly trapped in a situation,

Orla probably decided to do the best with what he had at the time.

Another factor that influenced Orla's moods and attitudes were his drinking habits. During Orla's two years in New Mexico Territory, it is apparent in many letters that he was drinking frequently and excessively. In these letters, Orla rambles on about various irrelevant topics. He often experienced illness in the form of fever and stomach problems that were most likely directly related to his habitual drinking. Throughout his life, Orla continued to struggle with alcoholic tendencies.

Orla's real struggle and dilemma were his desire to be with Allie this clashed with his desire to sojourn freely around the country.

I do not care to spend all my days in this particular spot, yet if I can make money am going to stay. . . . I have no desire to stay without you. When the house is ready I shall send for you. I have come here to stay and if there is much in the paper and I think there is I will save my money and in time buy me a house if not here in Texas. If I keep my health Lebanon or Summerfield will know me as a citizen soon again.³⁰

Later Orla wrote, "I am so mad about my leaving sometimes that I feel like busting my head." Then, if Orla's life could get more complicated, it did. He found that he too was subject to the violence of the rough country he was living in.

I have had a good deal of trouble the last month, bad press, no paper no ink and have been at a heavy expense. My issue has been robbed twice and recent developments have shown that the party was a knave and scoundrel. The ink was at one time greased, so that it would spread all over the paper, thereby making it illegible. I have bought me locks and keys, otherwise repaired the building, so that no one can get in. This week have had no trouble. It would not matter much for me to leave the territory, but I cant be driven. I have procured a good self "cocking" revolver and the

first fellow that endeavors upon me will get the contents of it. Yes I have omitted to state that a letter came to me finding I was a new man, intimating that my course had better be so-so, laying down a few things for me to observe or I had better vamouse the ranch. It was one of those southern intimidation letters that we used to read in the papers. I answered the letter inviting the gentleman to go below and when I needed his advice would sound the trumpet for him. I will get to be a hard case yet wont I.³¹

In this letter home, Orla wrote extensively. On page six he wrote sarcastically about a relative who was to be married. His humor and wit is evident in this passage and the reader can only laugh at Orla's attitude towards his situation. ". . . so Mattie is getting ready to marry is she you ought to have let me know the day and perhaps I could have sent her a present, I have so much money you know." Orla also writes, "I have drank [*sic*] whiskey ever since I took the fever, . . ." ³² Orla kept writing to Allie enclosing bits of information about his daily life.

School teaching is preferable to what is to be done here especially when this d--d town and country is taken into consideration. . . . I am anxiously awaiting the election here on the 5th of next month, would not be at all surprised if there was a little war here on that day and of course all news papers are targets on such an occasion.³³

Orla's attempts to become associated with the law proved successful. One letter written to Allie is on the letterhead of William L. Rynerson, District Attorney 3rd Judicial District New Mexico.³⁴ His next letter speaks of his admittance to practice law.

Your letter of Nov 3 came in today Just one hour before I was examined to be admitted as a practicing attorney in the US District Court of New Mexico. According to the rules it was necessary for me to stand on examination, which I accordingly did in open court--lasting over two hours. Whereupon the U S

District Attorney recommended that I be admitted to practice in all the courts of the territory of New Mexico. My papers were made out and duly signed this morning so in the morning will appear in the United States Court take the oath and have my name enrolled. I have two cases in the territorial court which meets next week consisting of \$2400. I guess I will make some money after while.³⁵

Apparently, Orla was involving himself with any money- making opportunity in New Mexico. "I have bought over two hundred acres of land and would not exchange for any Kansas land I ever see, It can be made to produce 25 bushels of good wheat to the acre." And later, "I won one of my cases the other I got the eyes beat off me but bless your soul I made them a speech the like of which I'm told was never made in any Court room."³⁶

In January of 1879, Orla wrote about a variety of things that were happening in Mesilla and his life.

There is no news of note only frequent stealings and Indian outbreaks. . . . Some times I think will return for good, then when I feel right well think I will stay. It is rather hard for me to compromise myself to return to either L[ebanon] or S[ummerfield]. though I often wish myself in Lebanon. If I had the means would immediately go to Indianapolis and set up in the Law. But as I have nothing but my Intellect and will have to remain here It would have been much nicer if I had gone to Ind. in the first place, it makes me real heart sick some times when I think of a good effort and attendant small results here, and what it might of been in the law some where else.³⁷

In February of 1879, Allie and Ethel made the trek to Mesilla, New Mexico, for the first time. They stayed in the Territory until late August or early September of that year. There are no letters to document what happened in their lives for this eight-month gap, but Orla's letters home resumed soon after Allie departed from his presence.

"I have seen no time during our marriage but what I could have made a living sufficient to have left our domestic affairs unbroken."³⁸ After Allie's visit, Orla grew more impatient to rejoin her and his daughter Ethel. After her excursion to New Mexico, Allie was disappointed at what she found. Orla was almost insistent that she join him; Allie was just as determined that he should return home. She found Mesilla, as a backward, uncivilized place with no rail service or regular roads. The large and rough Mexican and Indian population that added to the adventure for Orla was strange and frightening for Allie. To compound their problems, the Mesilla Valley Independent ceased to publish in July of 1879.³⁹ The suspension of the paper took the annual \$800 from their budget. Orla admonished his wife in his letters "your severe sickness was brought on by your refusing, homesickness and desire to be with papa and Mama. That must all be broken up."⁴⁰ The couple was frustrated at their situation and not being able to find a livable solution. Orla's drinking only increased his jealousy of Allie, apparent in several letters. In his next letter, Orla was willing to compromise.

I am now at work in the mill at fair wages and my board. . . . Now to show you that I have no desire for others than legally my own and that I have as high regard for your family as that of my own, that if your Father goes to Kansas and buys land that I will go to[o] and if I have not money to buy land as soon as I can get on my feet I will buy a team and implements and will farm his land and teach school in the winter. I received a letter from Aunt Jennie and she speaks well of Beulah or at least that vicinity. I have no fears but that we will get along If we will only stay together and that assurance I must have from you. . . . My business will all be settled up here shortly and that is a shape that will leave me satisfied and naught can be said of me but that I am an honorable man.⁴¹

Orla then became involved in the Indian situation in the Territory. Since 1868, the Apache Indians had been raiding the white settlers and

travelers in an effort to restore their homelands. Orla participated in the military efforts during the Apache Wars to corral a band of Indians known as Victorio's Apaches, so named for their leader.⁴² Orla's wrote to Allie of his observations. "We returned from the scout last evening traveling 160 miles, remaining in the saddle most of the time, there were 70 men, Col. [William Logan] Rynerson in command. We did not meet the Indians they having fled to the Flovila Mountains."⁴³

What kind of a reaction would Allie have had to Orla's letters that detailed the Indians' atrocities, knowing that he was likely to be involved in any military action? The newspapers reported the Apaches' outbreak and it is likely that Allie was aware of the seriousness of the situation.

On Sunday, a volunteer company of 30 men, under Capt. C. Crouch, went from Messilla [sic] and Cruces to their aid. They met 100 Indians near Colorado City, 18 miles from Slocum's ranche [sic]. The killed in this fight were W. T. Jones, County Clerk of Donohue County, and four Mexicans. On receipt of the news at Messilla [sic], two companies of 80 men were raised commanded by Col. [W. L.] Rynerson, and were composed of the best men in Messilla [sic] Valley.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Allie continued to wait for Orla as he hinted at promises of meeting her in Kansas. "In regard to Kansas I am still willing to go and to trust that your answer will be satisfactory."⁴⁵

Orla finally started to make serious plans for leaving Mesilla. He wrote lengthy and detailed letters to Allie trying to come up with a plan that would be satisfactory to both of them. Allie's aunt, Mrs. E. J. Feagle, lived in the Girard, Kansas, area. Apparently, Mrs. Feagle was corresponding with her brother, William Babcock, about the southeast Kansas area. Whether Allie came up with the idea for Orla to teach school in Beulah, or her father suggested the plan is unknown. However, after Allie's visit to Mesilla,

and her rejection of living there, Orla may have found her suggestion reasonable since he had seen Kansas and was pleased with the land.

I will say that I will go to Beulah, I have made up my mind to go to teaching. . . . If I remember correctly it is only three miles from Girard the county seat[.] I can open up a law office there go up and back on the train, morning and evening. . . . send me the names of the directors and I['ll see if I cannot get the refusal of it [school] for next year. It will give me a start and if there is anything in the country, I think I will fetch it. I['ll work on here until I can get a little ahead, and if necessary will meet you in Beulah. . . . I would much rather know that I could teach even if it was only 6 months and at normal wages[.] If I can get the school I know it will come out right and then in time a law practice can be secured in the country that will pay largely.⁴⁶

Orla's kept experiencing many adventures. His next was the meeting of Governor Lew Wallace. Wallace had been appointed governor of New Mexico in 1878, just after Orla's arrival. Wallace having served as a General in the Civil War and now practicing law in the southwest, was quite a character.⁴⁷ Orla wrote a "manful defense" for Governor Wallace in the Mesilla Valley Independent and Wallace personally thanked him for his support. Orla's uncle Thomas was "much pleased for I scaled a notch that he was not looking for."⁴⁸ Orla began to make a steady effort to be caught up on all of his debts.

The part I played in the Indian trouble here gave them confidence in me[,] that and paying my debts[,] regardless of my Uncle[,] has given my [sic] credit that I shall not abuse. In time my debts in Summerfield and Lebanon shall be paid and then it will be a strong necessity that will never catch me again.⁴⁹

As the year 1880 opened, Orla didn't fail to correspond with his wife. His letters often show his impatience at not being able to leave for Kansas. "At least we can go to Beulah, and make a start, there is perhaps more than one school that

can be reached, You can go soon as you think best or at least as soon as I get money to you. I do not care to return to Summerfield or its confines.” And later in the same letter, “I am not going to stay here more than to the first of May.”⁵⁰

Thomas Casad owned a large tract of land in the Brazilo Land Grant. As Orla waited for the right time to leave for Kansas, he continued to earn money working on his Uncle’s farm and at the mill. “Came up from the Brazilo . . . am still seeding wheat on the Farm. . . . I have had no letter from Beulah would like to know as to the school, I cannot stay in the valley longer than May.”⁵¹

Then, just as Orla had made up his mind to meet Allie in Kansas, gold was discovered in the Mesilla area. Had it not been for Thomas’ constant harassment of Orla, he may have never left the Territory. It is not clear what Thomas did to make Orla convinced that he should leave Mesilla. Perhaps it was not a single event, but several small things that kept building. Orla’s opinion of his uncle changed dramatically in the two years’ time that he lived under his roof. It seemed to Orla that the family was trying to steal all of his belongings. He also thought that Thomas was trying to pay him as little as possible for the labor he put into the farm. Because of Thomas’ attitude, Orla may have felt as he did in Summerfield; cramped for space by too many family members in the area. Another reason is that the gold didn’t “pan out,” as indicated in the following letter.

Yours of the 10th was rec’d last Tuesday it found me on the Brazilo still sowing wheat. . . . Gold has been discovered within 8 miles of the Fort am going out in a couple of days. If all right will take another claim. . . . Now Allie the Mesilla Valley is the best part of New Mexico and if you want to come back just say so.⁵²

Am still seeding wheat and from indications my Uncle intends to keep me there, which will not be more than two months longer, for the change will hasten

my departure. I was not created to be his hand or a boss for his Mexican hands. Since I went on the Farm he has been sued twice on account of his negligence with regard to the acqua [sic] which part I attended to for him and more than succeeded in giving satisfaction to the people. . . . We are now in the midst of a big snow storm the first this winter and in honor of the occasion . . . I went to church. Last night the young folks had a reading at our house, a society of which there is formed consisting of all the young folks of Mesilla. I read the VIII chapter of the book titled The Last of the Mohicans others read the succeeding chapters until seven chapters were read. . . . If appearances are anything I’m old and truly the last two years have left their mark on my personal [i.e. person]. . . . If Girard is anything of a place I have no fears but that I will make a living. The mines have proven a failure, the assays not warranting an expenditure sufficient to their working. As for me I can not as I desire above all things to make a practice of the Law. Of course teaching will be a necessary adjunct, and in those vocations I shall feel more satisfactory to myself; and perhaps my wife.⁵³

As the time drew nearer for Orla to head for Kansas, he and Allie had many things to discuss. They decided that boarding would be less desirable than keeping a house and Orla wanted to keep Allie at home instead of working. Then, there was always the worry about income when they arrived in Beulah. “I have not heard from Beulah and cannot say as to going there would prefer to go to a new Country, even Beulah. I have given you my reasons for not going to Summerfield.”⁵⁴ It is apparent here that Orla needed a new start, preferably one without Allie’s family just across the road. There was also the constant reminder of how Thomas had changed in his attitude towards Orla and his affairs. “I am afraid that Thomas Casad will yet live to be poorer man than your Father, and I can truly say that I could wish that I was well out of the Territory.”⁵⁵



Orla in 1911 while serving as a police judge in Pittsburg. Image courtesy of the Orla Samuel Casad Collection, Pittsburg State University Special Collections and Archives.

In his final few letters from Mesilla to Allie, Orla is impatient and easily agitated. He is disgusted with Thomas Casad's family, mindful of past mistakes, and eager to make a fresh start with Allie.

Finished up the Brazilo Saturday have planted 125 acres of wheat in less than 2 weeks have beat all my predecessors my Uncle included, the wheat is coming up and looks fine. I am perfectly willing to go to Kansas and if there is any blame just put it on me, and truly I can see no blame to be attached to either. I am glad to teach and will take the school at Beulah, for I speak truthfully when

I say I ought never to have left the schoolroom, at least until I could have stepped out with some means, at least enough to have made a start in business or the law. . . . The family have lost nearly everything I have or rather used them up, and now that shirt that you sent me is gone, and last night I had to go and buy two shirts in order to dress for church I know they are the dam-dst family out of H-II I wonder sometimes that Uncle does so much for them, but thank God I will soon be away.⁵⁶

Your letter came today. and I am much pleased that you have written am not so well as usual and very impatient to get away. do not know yet when I will start not later than May however. Had a letter from Aunt Jennie this week and from the way she writes they will give me the school in Beulah. It does not pay much but will give us a start so much for that. . . . If that vicinity is good around Beulah I will be satisfied for I can go to Farming and had just as live [sic] do that as anything, so we can have a home and be to each other Husband and wife.⁵⁷

By this time, Allie had been away from Mesilla for about seven months. Orla's impatience can be read in his final two letters written from Mesilla. At this time, the couple still did not have a confirmation that Orla would be able to teach school in Beulah, Kansas, but Orla seems willing to leave New Mexico Territory anyway.

Have but little to write of Shall leave here any day between the 15th and 20th of the month. . . . I will reach Beulah by the middle of April, and would like it much if you could be there. . . . I forwarded last week a written application for the school. the encouragement is such as to lead me to think that I will get it. If not perhaps I can do better. Aunt Jennie thinks if I get there in time can get a summer school.⁵⁸

I cannot say of what time I will reach Beulah, the Indians are reported bad, and it will be necessary to be cautious, as well as wakeful and perhaps combatful. But however I just as leve [sic] fight

Indians as do anything else now I have not heard from the directors yet, so I may get the school and I may not. I am going to get away from here at any event. . . . Kiss my baby for me.⁵⁹

With this final letter to Allie in March of 1880, Orla packed his bags, paid his debts, and left on his long, slow journey back to Crawford County, Kansas.

By April of 1880, Orla was more than ready to be reunited with his family. Having straightened his affairs in Mesilla, Orla was on the road to Kansas. In a letter to Allie written on his way home, he seems to ramble impatiently much like his final letters from Mesilla.

I have been 30 days on the way. We traveled mostly at night to escape Indians, which we just did as a young man by the name of Gonzales was killed by the Indians 3 days after us. Having escaped the Indians our Train Master sailed out on the Jornada Del-Muerto to almost certain death from want of water. Water giving out after we left a stretch of over 100 miles without Aqua you remember the Jornada. . . . I am glad to know that you are in Beulah, am in hopes that you are pleased, I will be down about as soon as the train will take me⁶⁰

The Girard Press first recorded the presence of Orla in Crawford County, Kansas. “Mr. O. S. Casad, Miss Ward, and Miss [Anna] and Mrs. Willoughby, are attending the Normal. They are well satisfied as far as heard from.”⁶¹ This newspaper account confirms that Orla arrived in Crawford County, intended to teach school, and was attending classes to obtain the proper certification needed for his credentials. This fact is further substantiated by another announcement: “The Beulah public schools will open the first Monday in September. O. S. Casad, teacher. 10 months term.”⁶²

As Orla settled down with a job, he became involved in community affairs. The year 1880 for Orla Casad was a chance at another new

beginning. His establishment as a schoolteacher helped his success and by the next year his family was expanding. April 2, 1881, Allie Lenora Casad, to be known as Nona, was born to Orla and Allie.⁶³ Orla was probably disappointed this was not his long-awaited son, but welcomed the arrival of his new daughter joyously.

In 1896, almost twenty years after he left New Mexico Territory, Orla received a letter from an E. S. Casad living in the country of Mexico. Although the author’s identity has not been positively identified, the writer strikes issues that were still important to Orla. The letter also indicates that although Orla had been a successful part of his community of Pittsburg, Kansas, for almost a decade, that he still had a longing for adventure and for the freedom to travel.

You say have not much worry if your mind is clear mutch [sic] better than money. . . . You spoke of Cripple creek you are Crip[p]le enough without going to Cripple creek and your family is best of[f] with you near them. Got a letter from E. J. Jones he states that he was compiling a history of the Casad family referde [sic] him to you as that is the only way you can pass your name to posterity.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

By the end of Orla’s life in 1928, he had played many roles in building the communities he lived in. The social activities he took part in helped create the culture of his time, and our time is affected by these past events.

When Orla came to his final days, one can only speculate whether or not he considered his life a success or failure. How can anyone measure a life? Perhaps looking back on his life, Orla was able to honestly evaluate the heartaches and times of disappointment along with his experiences of joyous success and happiness. He had made something of himself, established a home, and raised a family.

The small contributions of one individual common man have created our community today. The small contributions of many common men have created today's world. What have we learned from studying the events of one individual's life? Perhaps the lesson is from where we have come as a nation and a people. Knowing one's past is the first positive step in creating and developing our own future.

While there are thousands of different stories about thousands of common men and women, each has a similar effect as it leaves a mark on society through different events. If we learn nothing else from Orla's life, let us remember him as an individual who was always searching for one step higher than he had already found. Orla's tomorrow has become our today.

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End Notes

- ¹ "Military Service Record for Charles C. Casad," File: Co. F, 2 IL Cavalry, Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Record Group 94), National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.
- ² Julia Dagenais, Wichita, Kansas, to the author, Pittsburg, Kansas, 28 May 1994. Original in possession of author.
- ³ "Military Pension Record for Charles C. Casad," File MO C 305-503, Records of the Veterans Administration (Record Group 15), National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.
- ⁴ 1860 U.S. Census, Saint Clair County, Illinois. p.601, National Archives Microfilm M-653, Roll 225.
- ⁵ World Book Atlas (Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1990), 240.
- ⁶ "Military Service Record for Orla S. Casad," File: Co. B, 62 IL Infantry, Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Record Group 94), National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.
- ⁷ Centennial McKendree College, (Lebanon, Illinois: McKendree College, 1928), 240.
- ⁸ 1880 U.S. Census, Dona Ana County, Territory of New Mexico, p.13, National Archives Microfilm T9, Roll 802.
- ⁹ Thomas Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Orla Samuel Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 20 June 1875. The Casad correspondence is located in Special Collections, Leonard H. Axe Library, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas, and is the source for this and all ensuing quotations.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8 August 1875.
- ¹¹ Marriage License for Orla S. Casad and Alice M. Babcock, 2 September 1876, St. Clair County, Illinois.
- ¹² Certified copy of page 801 of Casad Family Bible.

¹³ Orla Samuel Casad, El Moro, Colorado, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 14 June 1878.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16 June 1878.

¹⁶ Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 3 July 1878.

¹⁷ History of New Mexico: Its Resources and People (Los Angeles: Pacific States Publishing Co., 1907), 2:561-3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:172.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:349.

²⁰ The New York Times, 28 March 1880, "The Southern Frontier", p. 10 col. 1.

²¹ Ibid., 20 June 1880, "The Southern Frontier", p. 10 col. 3-4.

²² Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 19 July 1878.

²³ Ibid., 6 August 1878.

²⁴ Ibid., 10 August 1878.

²⁵ Ibid., 13 August 1878.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, to Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, 18 August 1878.

²⁸ Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 20 August 1878.

²⁹ Ibid., 28 August 1878.

³⁰ Ibid., 7 September 1878.

³¹ Ibid., 13 October 1878.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 23 October 1878.

³⁴ Orla Samuel Casad, Los Cruces, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 29 October 1878.

³⁵ Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 14 November 1878.

³⁶ Ibid., 5 December 1878.

³⁷ Ibid., 27 January 1879.

³⁸ Ibid., 16 September 1879.

³⁹ Winifred Gregory, ed. American Newspapers, 1821-1936: A Union List of Files Available in the United States and Canada (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1937), 436.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9 October 1879.

⁴² Apache War is a term used to describe an almost continuous state of conflict between whites and Apache Indians of the American Southwest between 1868 and 1886. With the passing of Spanish rule in Latin America, relations between the Apache and the white settlers gradually worsened. Animosity was heightened after the region came into American hands. Apache lands stood squarely in the path of American westward movement, increasing the friction as travelers and settlers gained in numbers. Leaders of the various Apache bands almost constantly raided the frontier settlements and travelers on the road to the west. Taken from The Encyclopedia of the Central West by Allan Carpenter, New York: Facts on File, 1990, 22.

⁴³ Ibid., 19 October 1879.

⁴⁴ The New York Times, 17 October 1879, "More Indian Murders", p. 2 col. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 23 November 1879.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10 December 1879.

⁴⁷ Lew Wallace, Autobiography Vol. 2, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers), 1906, 912.

⁴⁸ Orla Samuel Casad, Mesilla, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Summerfield, Illinois, 5 December 1879.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29 December 1879.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11 January 1880.

⁵¹ Ibid., 18 January 1880.

⁵² Ibid., 25 January 1880.

⁵³ Ibid., 1 February 1880.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 15 February 1880.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 22 February 1880.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 29 February 1880.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8 March 1880.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 15 March 1880.

⁶⁰ Orla Samuel Casad, Las Vegas, New Mexico, to Alice Mary Babcock Casad, Beulah, Kansas, 23 April 1880.

⁶¹ "Sheridan Township," Girard Press, 29 July 1880, p. 2, col. 3.

⁶² Ibid., 2 September 1880, p. 3, col. 6.

⁶³ Certified copy of page 801 of Casad Family Bible.

⁶⁴ E. S. Casad, Mexico, to Orla Samuel Casad, Pittsburg, Kansas, 1 March 1896.

New Mexico, China, and India: The Asian Visions of Sixteenth-Century Conquistadors in the *Tierra Nueva*

By Elizabeth Horodowich

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the mapping of the lands to the west of the Atlantic--the lands that we today call America--presented a series of challenges, questions, and problems for European cartographers and cosmographers. Early modern European mapmakers had to find a way to assimilate the growing knowledge of these new and hitherto unknown lands with ancient Ptolemaic models and struggled mightily to get new information “right.” Confusion about many aspects of American geography persisted for even hundreds of years after 1492, including whether straits across these lands could lead to Cathay, whether the Yucatan and California were islands, and in particular whether these newly encountered lands were a separate continent or an extension of Asia.¹ Where this question was concerned, the vast majority of sixteenth-century European cartographers posited that Asia and America were connected. The earliest European maps of these lands tended to show an Asiatic mainland in the north that extended from Cathay to what we today call Labrador and Newfoundland. That is to say, the great majority of early modern European maps made North America an extension or peninsula of Asia: a single landmass linked by a continental bridge that extended roughly across forty degrees of latitude in the north.

There were good reasons for such an approach. Connecting Asia and the lands to the west of the Atlantic would explain the biblical origins of New World peoples, as well as how the ten tribes of Israel could have crossed an Asiatic continent and arrived in what eventually became called the Americas. In addition, the depiction of Spanish possessions in the transatlantic world as terrestrially contiguous with Asia would always

be in the interests of the Spanish crown. Spanish interpretations of Habsburg expansion were invested in portraying Spain as having a foothold in Asia, and the cartographic rhetoric of Spanish imperialism often worked to place the lands of New Spain in closer proximity to the wealth of the East either by describing or depicting a narrow Pacific or by collapsing the lands of the East and the West in Spanish texts and images.² In any case, the vast majority of sixteenth-century world maps and maps of the Americas presented one unified and contiguous Amerasian continent that incorporated American lands into the Asian landmass. As just one example of this, in 1550, the Venetian cartographers Giacomo Gastaldi and Matteo Pagano depicted the lands of Asia and the lands that we today call North America as joined by a land bridge: one that here, allowed lions and elephants to roam the lands of the American West and Canada (Figure 1). While some cartographers experimented with separating the continents, their maps were very much in the minority.³

With this cartographic background in mind, we can easily imagine how in the imaginations of the scores of conquistadors who traveled north from Mexico in the sixteenth century, Asia lay to the west and north of the lands that we today call New Mexico, which they understood as a gateway to Asia. The idea of a land-based expanse from Mexico northward to China and India and the ability to reach the riches of these Asian lands by crossing this expanse was one that regularly drove the expeditions of a great variety of conquistadors in the sixteenth-century New Spain, though one that has not traditionally received much attention. This short article will explore the various ways in which the accounts of the travels of four European explorers of the



Figure 1. Giacomo Gastaldi and Matteo Pagano, *Dell'Universale* (Venice 1550), British Library Maps C.7.C.17, detail.

lands that we today call New Mexico—Fray Marcos de Niza, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, Juan de Oñate, and Antonio de Espejo—were fundamentally motivated by the desire to reach Asian lands and wealth, which these men all believed to be close at hand.

Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of New Spain from 1535-1550, played a crucial role in propelling a series of successive expeditions into the *Tierra Nueva* in first half of the sixteenth century, and the many accounts that these expeditions produced yielded a cumulative record of the quest to reach China, or at least a significant outpost of Chinese civilization, from Mexico. For instance, Mendoza sent the Franciscan friar and missionary Marcos de Niza to search for a series of walled towns that had first been described to him by Cabeza de Vaca. De Niza eventually wrote an official report describing how between March and September of 1539, he departed

from Culiacán and traveled along the upper Rio Grande. While it has long been debated whether or not De Niza actually completed this trek to the north, he reported having sighted from a distance the wealthy city of Cibola (or the present-day Zuni pueblo in what is today west-central New Mexico), believed to be one of the legendary seven Cities of Gold, which he estimated to be as large as Mexico City.⁴

Upon his return in the fall of 1539, the friar's stories generated a stir in Mexico City and as they spread, the Asian promise of the *Tierra Nueva* grew to fantastical proportions. On October 18, 1539, Rodrigo de Albornoz, the treasurer of New Spain, wrote a summary of de Niza's journey for his superior the royal treasurer in Spain, reporting that de Niza had visited a land populated by camels, elephants, and people wearing camlet, a luxurious fabric made from a combination of silk and camel hair that

according to Marco Polo came from the city of Kalacha in what is now northwestern China.⁵ On October 9, 1539, the Augustinian friar Gerónimo Ximénez de San Estéban reported that he had heard de Niza describe the inhabitants of Cibola wearing “silk clothing down to their feet” (de Niza’s relation had only mentioned cotton) as well as temples with walls “covered with precious stones. I think he said they were emeralds. They also say that in the country beyond there are camels and elephants.”⁶ Even de Niza’s barber, it seems, became caught up in the excitement, reporting that while he was shaving the friar, de Niza told him that on his journey he saw “women [who] were accustomed to wear golden necklaces, and the men, belts made of gold” (de Niza only reported seeing turquoise on his journey).⁷ According to archaeologist Richard Flint, additional pieces of the de Niza narrative, such as his visit to a place named Marata (a town in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula, according to Ptolemy’s *Geography*) contributed to “the popular conviction of the day that North America was an extension of the Orient.”⁸ A decade and a half later, in 1556, the Venetian cosmographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio produced an Italian translation of de Niza’s *Relación* in his *Navigazioni e viaggi*, altering de Niza’s report to make Cibola sound wealthier than it was. Ramusio describes Cibolans using “drinking cups made of gold and silver. They employ [these metals] more often and in greater quantity than [they do] in Peru.”⁹ Extant, original Spanish copies of the *Relación* omit the passage and make no reference to gold or silver when speaking of Cibola, suggesting that Ramusio added it on the basis of rumor. Everyone who heard about de Niza’s travels, it seems, added to the speculation about the lands to the north and the potential nearness of Asian lands.¹⁰

Contrary to what one might expect, subsequent Spanish expeditions northward by land from Mexico appeared to bring China even closer. Based on the tentative but firsthand knowledge gleaned from de Niza, Mendoza

was certain that subsequent explorations would reach either Cathay or some equally wondrous eastern territory. He therefore organized in late 1539 a two-pronged expedition to the north, by land and by sea, sending ships up the Gulf of California with Hernando de Alarcón to carry supplies and seek a harbor where they could rendezvous with a land party led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. While stationed in Tiguex (near modern Albuquerque), Coronado was presented with a native not local to the region but from the “interior land” to the east. “They called the Indian Turco because by his appearance he seemed like one”—a Turk, that is. He recounted that his home country, named Quivira, was rich, with large cities, where common people ate from plates and bowls worked in silver and gold, as one would expect in Asia. The land had a wide river with fish as big as horses, and the lord of the land took his siesta under a tree hung with golden bells, because it “gave him pleasure.” Coronado’s imagination was fired and he followed El Turco’s directions, traveling eastward and northward over many weeks and the increasing grumbling of his soldiers, eventually arriving in what is today central Kansas, the farthest point in his journey. Disappointed by what they found, some of Coronado’s men concluded that El Turco had lied and led them astray, putting him to death before returning on the long route back to Mexico City.

An accompanying soldier and chronicler of the Coronado expedition of 1540–42, Pedro de Castañeda de Nájera, insisted that El Turco had led them in the wrong direction, holding instead to the dominant belief that the route to Asia lay to the north and west, and in doing so described a geographic extension connecting New Spain and Asia.

Just as this land of Nueva España is a [continuous] landmass with El Perú, so is it also with Greater India or China, unless there is a strait in that direction which divides it. Rather, the width of the land is so great that it leaves room for there to be such large unsettled areas as there are between the two seas. [That is]

because the coast of the [Mar] del Norte beyond La Florida turns toward Los Bacallaos and then turns toward Norway. And that of the [Mar] de Sur [turns] to the west, forming another peninsula toward the south, in its curve nearly like the bend of India.¹¹

Castañeda described the Pueblo Indians as a constellation of communities centered on Tiguex, proposing that these people had come “from that part of Greater India, the coast of which lies toward the west of this land. They may have descended through that region, crossing those mountain ranges, coming downstream along that river [Río de Tiguex], and settling in the place that seemed best to them.”¹² All the Spaniards needed to do was reverse the migratory path that had brought the Indians themselves to their present location.

If the lands from which those people originate were entered, magnificent news would probably be obtained. [That is] because, according to the direction, [that land] is the beginning of Greater India, although [in] remote regions, unfamiliar and unknown. [And also] because, as is proven by the coast, the land is very far to the interior between Norway and China, in the middle of the land[mass].¹³

Castañeda puts China and India into extended continuity with Mexico in an Amerasian continent, much the way that European maps at this time had imagined this landmass. Recording the site of a recent burial and a cross made of twigs tied with cotton thread, he hypothesized that these people “in some way . . . possess some knowledge of the cross of Christ, Our Redeemer. It could be by way of India, from where [the Indians] originate.”¹⁴ Castañeda’s interpretation of evidence not only applied contemporary Spanish cartographic ideas, but also ideas that could be found in various forms in writings about the new world. As just one example, the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, who spent years in different parts of the new Spanish colonies, including Guatemala, Oaxaca, Chiapas,

and Mexico City, asserted that “all of our Indies are the last part of what was called the Indies in antiquity.”¹⁵

Among the Spanish, there were also those who rejected the idea of a joined Mexican-Chinese landmass, yet even these naysayers still saw possibilities for imminent contact with China by traveling northward. In his 1552 *Historia general de las Indias*, for instance, Francisco López de Gómara duly reported that “many believe that the land up there unites with China . . . and for that reason one should sail along the coast in the area that remains unknown, even if it is at the cost of our king, because there is so much there, and the one who follows through would have a lot to gain.” Yet he himself held to the view that “they will not join, since Asia, Africa, and Europe are islands.”¹⁶ He expected that further explorations would eventually find an upper Pacific coast filled with ports already well traveled by Chinese ships, and he applauded the expeditions of de Niza and Coronado in search of the new passageways to China, even as he adapted those reports to suit his maritime vision. The original account of Coronado’s spoke of the boundless riches that could be found in this Quivira, where “there was a river in a plain two leagues wide. . . . And [there were] a great many exceedingly large canoes with more than twenty rowers on each side, which also carried sails. The lords traveled on the poop, seated beneath awnings. On the prow [there was] a large eagle of gold.”¹⁷ López de Gómara offered again this account but introduced a significant change of location from inland river to ocean coast: “They saw on the coast ships which had pelicans of gold and silver on their prows, with merchandise that they thought to be from Cathay and China, because they made signs that they had sailed thirty days.”¹⁸ By moving Quivira from the plains to the Pacific coast, Gómara retroactively corrected Coronado’s misbegotten inland venture.

The new image of a port of Quivira on the ocean, with large vessels arriving from Cathay,

was then consolidated and embellished by the many editions, adaptations, and translations of Gómaras highly popular account. In his 1584 “Discourse of Western Planting,” the English chronicler of European exploration and navigation in the sixteenth century Richard Hakluyt’s translation of Gómaras passage offered even more information about the great port of Quivira.

Againe, when he [Coronado] was afterwards at the towne of Quivira, which is scituated by the sea side in the latitude of 40 degrees, he founde there shippes with maryners, which had the picture of a birde, called Alcatrazzi [albatrosses], in silver upon their bonnetts and on the forepartes of their shippes, which signified that they were thirtie daies sailinge to that place whence it is saied that they muste nedes be of Cathaio or China, seinge that there is none but Spanishe shippinge upon all the coaste of the backside of Noua Spania.¹⁹

Just as Marcos de Niza’s audience in Mexico City excited the imaginations of his influential listeners, the spreading retellings of Coronado’s journey transformed the inland capital of Quivira (located by modern scholars in Kansas) into an active Amerasian port harboring Chinese ships.

Visions of Asia continued to motivate expeditions to the west and north of New Spain right through the sixteenth century. In 1573, King Philip II sent a copy of his *Ordinances for the New Discoveries, Conquests, and Pacifications*—a guide to the legal principles governing Spanish territorial expansion—to Juan de Oñate, who was appointed to explore and settle lands on the northern frontier of New Spain, eventually leading to the founding in 1598 of the province of Nuevo México (an area much larger than the present-day state of New Mexico). The king requested that Oñate undertake a survey of this territory’s coastline and harbors, indicating the continued Spanish belief—even after the establishment of the Manila galleon trade across the Pacific starting in 1565—that these lands lay perhaps not far from China.²⁰ Oñate in fact

requested permission to take shipbuilders on his expedition.²¹ Later, in October 1598, having heard reports of pearls and having seen their shells, Oñate traveled west across the Rio Grande and led a detachment of mounted soldiers to search for the South Sea “whose trade with Peru, New Spain, and China should not be underestimated.”²² He launched an additional expedition in 1604 to search for the Golden Fleece, in ancient mythology located in Colchis in Asia, but now believed to be near the Gulf of California.²³

Gaspar Pérez de Villagrás epic poem narrating the Oñate expedition, the *Historia de la Nueva México* (1610), echoes Castañeda’s earlier account of the Coronado expedition in suggesting the Asian origins of the people of New Spain. Having garnered information from the oldest native inhabitants (*naturales*) of the region concerning the “ancient origins, arrival, and settling of the Mexicans,” he asserts, “in my view, all who live in what we call the Indies came from the great China.”²⁴ The widely reported “sightings” of Chinese ships off the western coast of the *Tierra Nueva*, as well as the remarkably civilized and well-resourced societies encountered along the way, suggested to readers in New Spain and Europe that a Mexican-Asian network in fact existed before the arrival of the Spaniards and was only now being understood and developed.²⁵

Given the Chinese orientation of the European experience of Mexico and of the further encounters with the communities and cultures of the *Tierra Nueva*, it is not a surprise that the earliest history of China written by a European was composed in sixteenth-century Mexico. *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof* (*Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*), written by the Augustinian friar Juan González de Mendoza (c. 1540–1617), was first published in 1586, to be followed by a plethora of translations and further editions in the years to follow and over the next century. Mendoza came into contact with numerous

transpacific travelers whom he interviewed when they passed through his convent in Michoacán. His main informants were Franciscan missionaries returning to New Spain from China and the Philippines, and his history of China is largely a compilation of their accounts.²⁶

Mendoza's history begins with a lengthy discussion of Chinese culture, including descriptions of marriage and burial practices, clothing, architecture, language, the provinces of China, its government, and the Chinese use of both artillery and printing, drawing on the accounts of a variety of travelers to Ming China in the 1580s to do so. Toward the end of his volume, however, Mendoza turns to the account of Antonio de Espejo, a wealthy explorer from Mexico City who traveled in 1582–83 to the villages along the northern frontier of New Spain, yet another expedition to *Nuevo México*.²⁷ Even though Mendoza's entire book is a testament to the missionary activity and cultural exchange opened up by the regular crossing of the Pacific by the Manila galleon trade that began in 1565, the Espejo expedition into the northern Mexican hinterland follows the well-established pattern of imagined land-based continuities between New Mexico and Asia.

As had been the case for many expeditions northward from the lands of Mexico into New Mexico, Espejo encountered along the way examples of local handiwork that seemed to promise Asian proximity. For example, along the Rio Grande the local *Indios* possessed "many curious things made of feathers of different colors, and many mantles made of cotton, barred with blue and white, like those that are brought from China to trade for other things." When Espejo asked about the origin of these products, the locals replied that "five days' journey from there, towards the north-west, there was a great quantity of these goods." They also showed the Spaniards "stones of rich metal," and again the locals said that the stones came from a place five days' journey to the north and west.²⁸ Further north

along the Rio Grande, in a province called Quires, above the thirty-seventh parallel, Espejo noted "a magpie in a cage, as is the use in Spain, and parasols (*tirasoles*), like those that are brought from China, and painted on them the sun and the moon with many stars."

Further north still they came to the town of Cia, where the dwellings were well painted, the surroundings rich in minerals, and where the people seemed to have greater dignity and better government than any seen so far. Finally they arrived in the large town of Zuni, "which the Spanish call Cibola," where they saw some inhabitants practicing forms of Christian worship, a holdover of the missionary work of the Coronado expedition from decades earlier, as well as a few Spaniards left there who had almost forgotten their native language. There they learned that sixty days farther on there was a great lake with several towns around it, a land full of gold where the natives wear gold bracelets and earrings. Coronado had tried to get there, Espejo notes, but had run out of water and had had to turn back.²⁹ In a venture in that direction before heading back, Espejo finds communities more civilized than any he had encountered before, as well as strong evidence of silver and gold in the area. Mendoza's China compendium is based on accounts of friars who had sailed to the Philippines and the islands near China, people who knew first-hand the rigors of the long transpacific crossing. Yet, inside his *Historia del gran Reyno de la China*, the Espejo venture into Nuevo México from the early 1580s still holds out hope that the lands north of Mexico and their inhabitants were independently connected to China through overland trade and cultural exchange.

What these accounts all suggest is that far from being understood as a remote hinterland on the northern fringes of New Spain as we might understand them historically today, for these explorers and those who read their accounts, the lands that we today call New Mexico represented

a territorial hinge that led directly to the wealth of Asia. For this reason, they were worthy of conquest and exploration, since a knowledge of these lands could potentially lead to the dazzling riches of the Orient, to be found for these conquistadors seemingly just beyond the next stretch of desert or mountain pass.³⁰

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End Notes

¹ See Eviatar Zerubavel, *Terra Cognita: The Mental Discovery of America* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2005).

² See Ricardo Padrón, *The Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020).

³ See Edward Luther Stevenson, *Terrestrial and Celestial Globes Volume 1: Their History and Construction Including a Consideration of Their Value as Aids in the Study of Geography and Astronomy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 94–145.

⁴ “Relación of Fray Marcos de Niza, August 26, 1539,” in *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539–1542*, ed. and trans. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), pp. 59–88, at p. 75. See also *The Journey of Fray Marcos de Niza*, ed.

Clive Hallenbeck (Dallas: University Press in Dallas, 1949). At the time, Cibola—the name for both a group of pueblos, and the principal pueblo among them—was a regional center for trade in turquoise, bison hides, feathers, and shells between the pueblo cultures and the northern parts of Mesoamerica.

⁵ “Letters from Antonio de Mendoza and Rodrigo de Albornoz, October 1539,” in Flint and Flint, *Documents of the Coronado Expedition*, p. 92. See Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Ronald Latham (New York: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 105.

⁶ Joaquin García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección de documentos* (Mexico City: Editorial Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1941), p. 94, translated and cited in Henry Raup Wagner, “Fra Marcos de Niza,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 9 (1934), pp. 184–227, at p. 223.

⁷ “Testimony of Witnesses in Habana Regarding Fray Marcos’s Discoveries, November 1539,” in Flint and Flint, *Documents of the Coronado Expedition*, pp. 95–105, at p.100.

⁸ Richard Flint, “When East Was West: The Oriental Aim of the Coronado Expedition,” in *The Latest Word from 1540: People, Places, and Portrayals of the Coronado Expedition*, ed. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), pp. 105–16, at p. 109.

⁹ Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, ed. Marica Milanese, 6 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1978–88), vol. 3, fol. 359r.

¹⁰ In 1576, Bernal Díaz del Castillo noted that de Niza’s report in Mexico City described the lands of Cibola to Mendoza as neighboring the South Coast, or the coast of the South Sea (*porque le hizo relacion, que las tierras de la Cibola estaban en la comarca de la costa del Sur*). Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera da la conquista de la Nueva España* (Madrid: Del Reyno, 1632), p. 235r.

¹¹ “The Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola, Pedro de Castañeda’s Narrative,” in Flint and Flint, *Documents of the Coronado Expedition*, pp. 378–493, at p. 414.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 421. An anonymous account of Coronado’s journey also claimed that the buffalo of the plains Indians were the same kind of cows that Marco Polo had seen in China and the same humped oxen that the Venetian merchant and traveler Niccolò dei Conti had seen in Ethiopia, as described the Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini. See *The Journey of Coronado, 1540–1542, From the City of Mexico to the Grand Canon [sic] of the Colorado and the Buffalo Plains of Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska*, ed. George Parker Winship (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1904), p. 196.

¹³ “The Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola,” p. 422.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹⁵ “Aquestas Indias nuestras son cabo de la que antiguamente se llamó India,” Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apologética historia sumaria*, ed. Edmundo O’Gorman, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1967), vol. 1, p. 109 (book 1, chap. 22, “Las Indias Occidentales son parte de Asia”); see also vol. 1, p. 77.

¹⁶ See Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 1999), p. 303 (chap. 212).

¹⁷ “The Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola,” p. 400.

¹⁸ “Vieron por la costa naos que traían arcatraces de oro y plata en las proas, con mercaderías, y pensaron ser del Catayo y China, porque señalaban haber navegado treinta días.” Gómara, *Historia general*, p. 305 (chap. 213). See also Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, 2 vols. (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), vol. 1, pp. 45–46.

¹⁹ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. Edmund Goldsmid, 16 vols.

(Edinburgh: E. and G. Goldsmid, 1885–90). vol. 13, p. 240. See also vol. 13, pp. 190 and 243, and vol. 14, p. 134.

²⁰ Marc Simmons, *New Mexico: An Interpretive History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), p. 37, and George Peter Hammond and Agapito Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595–1628*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), vol. 1, p. 31.

²¹ The explorer Rodrigo del Rio de Losa similarly argued in 1582 that the proper outfitting for the exploration of New Mexico would include material that could be used to build vessels, believing that this territory reached to straits near China. See Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 1, p. 53.

²² See Hammond and Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate*, vol. 1, p. 486. See also pp. 393–97 (“Expedition to the South Sea and the Salines”), and vol. 2, p. 699 (Fray Juan de Escalona’s Letter to his Prelate, October 1, 1601).

²³ See Simmons, *New Mexico*, p. 42.

²⁴ “Con aber entonado todo aquello/Que de los más antiguos naturales/Ha podido alcanzarse y descubrirse/Acerca de la antigua decendencia/Venida y población de Mexicanos/Que para mí yo tengo que salieron/de la gran China todos los que habitan lo que llamamos Indias.” Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, *Historia de la Nueva México* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), p. 17 (Canto II: 292–98).

²⁵ This sense of connectivity between Mexico and China continues to be reported in the great chronicles of the missionary orders in Mexico in the seventeenth century. The Augustinian chronicler Juan de Grijalva, for instance, describes a matrilineal structure: Mexico was the daughter of Spain, and as friars from Mexico disseminated Christianity around the world Mexico in turn became the mother to new Catholic communities in Asia: “De quien esperamos que à de ser tambien

madre y cabeça, estendiendose por aquel mundo, que tiene en sus confines del Iapon, y de la gran China.” Juan de Grijalva, *Cronica de la orden de N. P. S. Augustin en las prouincias de la Nueua España* (Mexico: Juan Ruyz, 1624), p. 98, col. 4. The Franciscan Juan de Torquemada’s chronicle *Monarquía indiana* (Seville: Cavijo, 1615) also mingles the history of missionary work in the Americas, Japan, China, and the Philippines. For New Spanish missionaries, Mexico and Asia formed a single transpacific world.

²⁶ Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran Reyno de la China* (Madrid: Querino Gerardo Flamenco, 1586). See Padrón, *The Indies of the Setting Sun*, pp. 183–200; Henry Raup Wagner, *The Spanish Southwest, 1542–1794: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 116–63; Christina H. Lee, “Imagining China in a Golden Age Spanish Epic,” in *Western Visions of the Far East in a Transpacific Age, 1522–1657*, ed. Christina H. Lee (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 43–65, at p. 43; Serge Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde: Histoire d’une mondialisation* (Paris: La Martinière, 2004), p. 278 n6.

²⁷ All subsequent translations produced from the original Roman edition did not contain the Espejo account, resulting in two general groups of editions: those with the Espejo account, and those without it. See Wagner, *The Spanish Southwest*, p. 119. In the editions of Mendoza’s text that contain the Espejo account, it is located in part 2, book 3, chaps. 7–10.

²⁸ Mendoza, *Historia del gran Reyno de la China*, part 2, book 3, chap. 8. Because this text was printed in so many editions as well as translations, my references are to books and chapters rather than page numbers.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. 9.

³⁰ See Elizabeth Horodowich and Alexander Nagel, *Amerasia* (Princeton: Zone Books, 2023), especially Chapter 8, for an expansion of this discussion here.

Fabián García:

The Great Horticulturalist of the New Mexico Borderlands

By Peter Kopp

Southern New Mexicans know well that Fabián García (1872-1948) is the “Father” of the New Mexico chile pepper industry. The Chihuahuan-born horticulturalist immigrated to the Gila Mining District with his grandmother as a toddler. Sarah Casad of Mesilla later adopted the pair into her own family after her husband Thomas became ill and died. At that point, García received a proper education for the first time and then became part of the first graduating class of New Mexico A&M (now NMSU). Immediately after graduation, the institution hired García as a scientist who would study and improve all types of plants and crops. It was a chile pepper cross, New Mexico No. 9, that brought him his lasting fame for launching the state’s pepper industry. In subsequent decades Roy Nakayama, Paul Bosland, and others expanded upon García’s foundation.

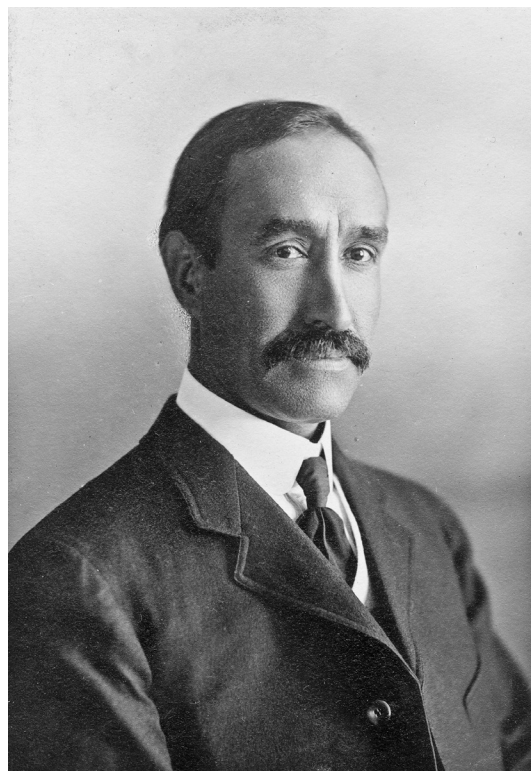
When García died in 1948, he left the college property upon which the university created the Fabián García Science Center—this includes the Chile Pepper Test Garden rich in colors and aromas during the summer and fall. García also donated a large sum of money that helped establish García Hall and a scholarship in his name for students who shared his immigrant background. Today, there are other markers of García on the landscape. NMSU now has a García Annex. The Seed House, of which he used for his office and other activities still stands in an otherwise nondescript part of campus. And García’s simple gravestone still sits peacefully in the Las Cruces Masonic Cemetery.

Yet this is all only part of García’s story. And it is only part of how García’s legacy manifests itself onto the landscape.

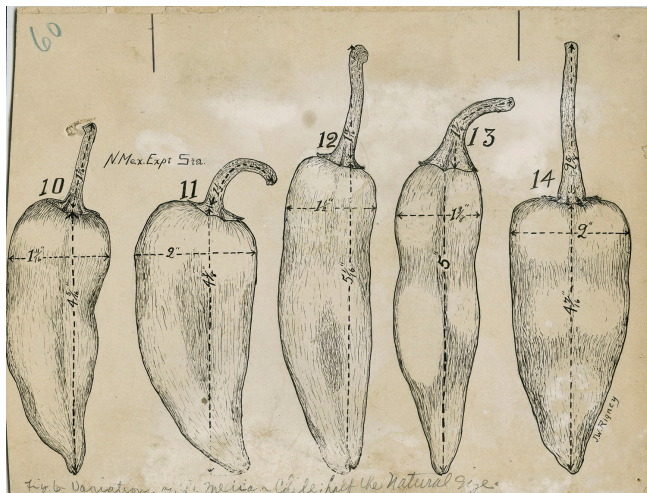
Over his fifty-year career, García introduced and cultivated thousands upon thousands of plants in the Mesilla Valley. He studied desert

environments across the world to see how new flowers, fruits, nuts, vegetables, shade trees and more might exist where they had not before. He acquired samples. Then he crossbred those in the hope that the hybrids would suit his desert home and benefit its people. His lifework not only changed nearby botanical landscapes, but more broadly parts of the entire U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

García transformed environments, economies, foodways, and lifestyles not just in New Mexico, but across the continent, from Florida to Baja California. People on both sides of the border have thrived upon new plants that García and his protégées introduced. And farmers rely on his plant crosses to the present day—including the Southwest cotton and pecan industries, as well as the onion industry across the Sun Belt. Additionally, his efforts can be found lining neighborhood streets in the Southwest, providing shade and



Fabian Garcia portrait. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.



During his long career as a horticulturist at NMSU, García developed several varieties of chile still widely used today. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

beauty. (Allergic to the mulberries in downtown Las Cruces? You now know who to blame.)

During his college years at New Mexico A&M (1890-1894), García drove a horse and buggy from the Casad home on the Rio Grande, past the Mesilla Park train station, and up the mesa toward campus. As a budding plant scientist, he would have noticed how the native vegetation changed with the elevation. Mesquite near the Rio Grande turned to creosote. Prickly pear burst onto the scene. Cholla and ocotillo joined at higher elevations. Today, that route—now University Avenue—still provides homes for that native flora, but it looks a lot different. And the reasons why all go back to García.

If you take that same route from the Rio Grande to campus today, you'll pass an unending display of García's innovations. The pecan orchards that line Mesilla streets are a result of his work. At the eastern edge of Mesilla, cotton fields (some with dilapidated cotton gins still standing as of the recent past) date to García's work in tangent with the arrival of modern irrigated agriculture after the construction of Elephant Butte Dam in 1916. Further east on University resides the Mesilla Park neighborhood covered by a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and other flowers and ornamentals not native to this place. Those too go back to García's

introductions and innovations. Then, to the eastern edge of Mesilla Park stands the Fabián García Science Center with fruit trees, chiles, grapes and more—all that he introduced during his career. The last stop on this little tour, past Interstate 25, stands campus itself where García introduced and crossbred plants in the Seed House and a variety of greenhouses and test acreage. This is all to say that along with the legacy of the chile pepper, García should be remembered for much more. Life and landscape in this part of the world today is the product of transformations he began over 130 years ago.

García's contributions have been overlooked in the historical record. By telling the stories of chile peppers, cotton, shade trees, and more, it is my that hope that he will be remembered more broadly as one of the great horticulturalists of North America alongside Luther Burbank and George Washington Carver. At the very least, I hope that communities in southern New Mexico recognize García's historical significance more broadly than just his chile pepper story. From the chile fields of Hatch to the tree-lined streets of Las Cruces, or Alamogordo, and to the Fabián García Science Center, García has left an extensive and indelible imprint on the region's landscape and history. Once you see it, it'll never escape you.

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Tijerina's Ghost: Chilili and the Sovereignty of New Mexico Land Grants

By Gage Anderson

Driving along NM 337 on the east side of the Manzano Mountains, visitors are confronted with commanding signs from La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili, telling visitors that land sales, littering, trespassing, and photography are all forbidden.¹ This confrontational billboard is as political as it is curious and lies at the center of New Mexico's history. Land grants are an integral part of the story of New Mexico. These communities, at the frontier of a frontier, were typically located on the fringes of the disparate islands of Spanish civilization north of El Paso del Norte. As a result, these centers were historically disconnected from the population centers of New Mexico.² Indeed, largely because of the de facto independence enjoyed due to their geography, as well as the concessions given in their founding charters, land grant communities have a robust history of self-governance.

This paper aims to examine the land grant's understanding of sovereignty, especially in the aftermath of Tijerina's activism in the mid-20th century. Reies Tijerina was a Chicano movement activist who was particularly active in the 1960s and 1970s and largely focused on the injustice faced by Land Grants. Because of this attachment to Tijerina, most scholarship surrounding New Mexico Land Grants generally analyzes land grants from a racial, legal, or cultural lens. While these analyses are useful to understand the Land Grant movement within New Mexico, they do not focus on the political power held by land grants. La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili (Chilili Land Grant) has been chosen as a case study for analysis due to the of sources, the lack of direct Tijerina or La Alianza activity, and their relative isolation from other centers of the Chicano movement, especially those involved directly in the land grant movement (Chilili is

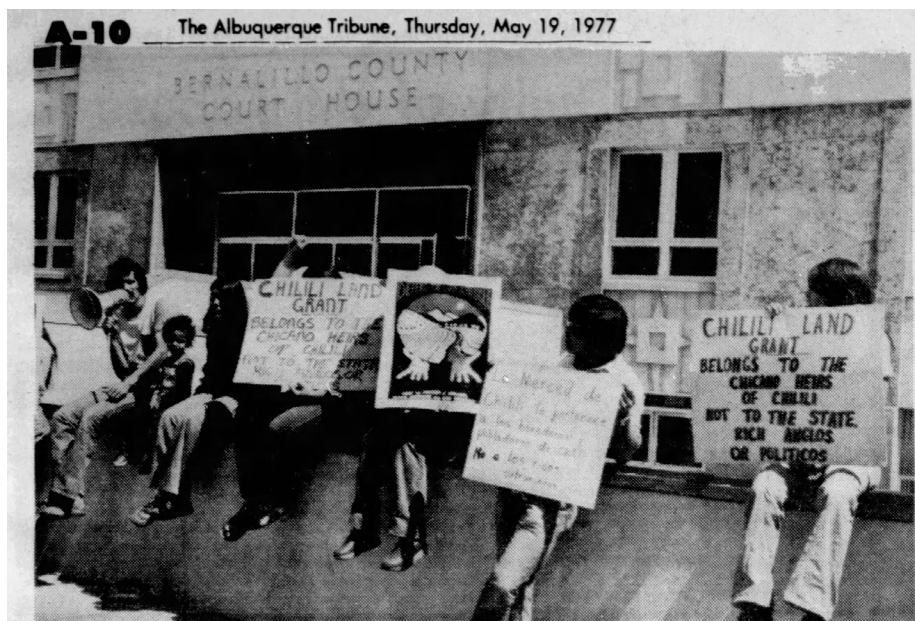
about 40 miles from Albuquerque, on the east side of the Manzano Mountains). This paper seeks to understand Tijerina's ripples, rather than his direct work.

To understand Tijerina's activism and its consequences, one must first understand the origins of the controversy surrounding land grants. The Spanish—and later Mexican—governments established a system for distributing land among settlers loyal to the crown, usually either as compensation for service, to deter raiding from nomadic Indian groups, or both. Land grants were made both to individuals and to communities, many were created to encourage the creation of formal communities. The lands described in these deeds were often collectively controlled by the communities to which they were designated and were largely independent of interference from the Spanish or Mexican states. These land grants often came with communal water control through Acequias—institutions which still exist today.³

Though the land grants came with the Spanish and the colonization of New Mexico in the late sixteenth century, many early Spanish records were lost in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.⁴ Ironically, it is partly because of the destruction of



*A sign posted prominently off NM 337 in Chilili, NM.
Ryan (2014)*



these records that many of the earliest surviving land grants belong to the various Pueblo Indian groups.⁵ Following the Pueblo Revolt, the establishment of land grants continued under Spanish and later Mexican rule of New Mexico. In particular, an especially large amount of land grants was established during Mexican rule. Despite the brevity of Mexican rule over New Mexico, 35 of the 141 or so designated land grants come from the Mexican period, including Chilili, Tajique, Torreon and La Salina,⁶ as well as Tierra Amarilla, famously the subject of much of Tijerina's work.⁷ Particularly intertwined with much of the controversy of these land grants is their impressive size, especially the later Mexican grants, which had deeded land grants as large as 1.7 million acres.⁸ Many of the land grants in southern New Mexico come from the Mexican period, such as the Doña Ana Bend Colony Grant, which was established in 1839.⁹

By 1848, when the Americans conquered New Mexico, it became very clear that the status quo for land grants could not continue. The friction between the American and old systems is perhaps best exemplified with by the tensions surrounding the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. This treaty initially contained a clause—Article X—which required the United States to recognize

the existing rights of Spanish and Mexican land grant communities—including the right to their lands. Article X was stricken from the version of the treaty the United States would eventually ratify.¹⁰ Suddenly, with the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, a legal precedent which protected the rights of land grant communities for over 200 years dissolved. Much of the motivation behind striking Article X from the final treaty came from the would result from

the transfer of land grants from the Mexican to American legal systems. As Associate Editor Connor Kim describes in an article for Harvard Undergraduate Law Review “because of this ambiguity of the document concerning Mexican-American rights, the enforcement of the law led to legal barriers for Mexicans. . . . Due to differences in the American and Mexican property rights, the imposition of the American individual, private land ownership system onto the Mexican system dependent on common land ownership made it difficult to accept land grants. If multiple people share the same farmland, it is hard to define who truly “owns” property and therefore would be eligible for citizenship.”¹¹

Because many of these land grants were given to communities to create ranching or agricultural settlements during the Spanish and Mexican colonization of New Mexico, wide swaths of the land set aside in land grants were communally owned: communally worked fields, communal rangeland, communally administered and distributed water. This communal ownership was largely incompatible with the American system because there was not an individual owner of these communal lands. The uncertainty surrounding this, compounded with the vague boundaries of many land grants, resulted in a

legal gray area. Ultimately, land grants became prime targets for American land speculators and newcomers.

Because of this confusion, W. A. Keleher rightfully describes practicing law with land grants as “legal archaeology” in an article for *New Mexico Historical Review*.¹² Such “legal archeology” is further complicated in New Mexico due to contradicting legal precedents and real-world application of the law. For instance, in *Pino v. Hatch* (1854), the Court held—in essence—that while there was no clear owner of common land, there was a means to show loose claims suggesting possession.¹³ As W. A. Keleher describes: “The court held in that case that... papers purporting to show the existence of such a grant, although not sufficient to pass absolute title, should be admitted in evidence as against one having no better right, to show the time and mode of gaining possession, from which title by adverse possession might be established.”¹⁴ While there was a legal precedent that would supposedly defend the rights of land grant communities, this became difficult to parse and was often ignored, especially regarding communal lands.

The resulting legal complications surrounding the status of Land Grants became the conditions which saw the rise of the infamous Santa Fe Ring: Anglo-American politicians, lawyers, and other such speculators who—from 1865 to the 1890's—exploited the legal ambiguity of such land claims to acquire large swaths of property formerly part of land grants.¹⁵ Following a period of dubious land sales, legal sleight-of-hand, and chronic corruption in the New Mexico Territorial Government, much of the land formerly belonging to these land grants entered private—often Anglo American—hands.

The resulting confusion surrounding land grants and their intersections with American law eventually led to their current legal status in New Mexico. This groundwork for the status of Land Grants as legally defined sovereign entities first came in 1907 when “An Act to Provide for

the Management of Community Land Grants Confirmed by the Congress of the United States, and to Define the Duties and Powers of the Trustees Thereof” (hereafter referred to as Chapter 49) was codified.¹⁶ This act is notable for the Trustee Governance it established for the Spanish and Mexican Land Grants. This law, and all subsequent amendments, are listed under Chapter 49 of the *New Mexico Statutes*. Extant land grants are governed by a board of trustees—members of the community—in a manner not dissimilar to a non-profit corporation, or a small civic entity run by a civic council rather than a mayor. This board maintains control of the remaining communal land, which is often supplied through purchases made by the board of trustees or via donations made by members of the community.¹⁷

This is not to say the issues surrounding Land Grants have been resolved—quite the contrary. This legislation only added to the legal chaos caused by the Santa Fe Ring and later court rulings. One such United States Supreme Court ruling particularly affected land grant communities. *Montoya v. Gonzalez* (1914) upheld a New Mexico statute which granted a simple title to individuals who had possessed former land grant land for at least 10 years.¹⁸ This ruling further exacerbated the headache that became Land Grant law. Such is the result of the mixing three hundred years of history spanning three empires, several wars and rebellions, corrupt land dealings, squatting, armed skirmishes, and decades of litigation. It is in such confusion—combined with continued economic speculation of Land Grant holdings and the fervor of racial consciousness in the United States surrounding the 1960's which sets the stage for Reies Tijerina's activism.

Reies Tijerina was at the forefront of the Chicano movement, which itself was part of larger calls for social change and racial equality in the United States during the 1960's. Much of Tijerina's work focused on the land grants of New Mexico.¹⁹ In a series of events now

infamous in New Mexico history, Reies Tijerina established himself as a militant member of the Chicano movement, most notably through his raid on the Rio Arriba County Courthouse. Indeed, Tijerina did not shy away from violence to achieve his goals²⁰ and was colloquially known as “The Malcolm X of the Chicano Movement”, and self-described as “King Tiger”. In the late 1960’s, La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (The Federal Alliance of Land Grants), the organization Tijerina founded and led, involved itself deeply in the land grant cause, most famously with the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant of northern New Mexico, and the self-proclaimed Republic of San Joaquin del Rio Chama in the echo amphitheater of Carson National Forest.²¹ This activism was founded out of a deep resentment for the United States’ troubled history with land grant law, particularly the removal of Article X of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.²² This ultimately leads to the present. How have these 400 years of legal history impacted land grant communities? What about Chilili?

La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili (colloquially referred to as the Chilili Land Grant or simply Chilili) was established and abandoned several times—first as a Tanoan Indian Pueblo followed by periods of Spanish settlement and resettlement—over the course of New Mexico’s history,²³ though the extant community was established by Mexican decree in 1841.²⁴ The land grant is home to 126 as of the 2020 census²⁵ and is largely composed of descendants of the founders of the Mexican land grant.²⁶ Chilili had their own struggles with land speculators. In 1942, the Chilili Cooperative Association was incorporated for the purpose of acquiring lands from the Chilili grant. In 1973, El Comité Para Reformar y Preservar Las Tierras de la Merced de Chilili (The Committee to Reform and Preserve the Lands of the Chilili Grant) was established, largely as a reaction to the creation of the Chilili Cooperative Association.²⁸ This legal conflict ultimately resulted in a legal defeat for Chilili in *Moya v. Chilili Cooperative Association, Inc.* (1974), in

which the New Mexico Supreme court upheld the previous trial court’s claim that the sale of Chilili Commons Land was not protected under Chapter 49 since these lands were commons land and did not have clear ownership.²⁹ This compounded with alleged property tax delinquency on the part of these commons lands, which therefore deeded to the State of New Mexico (which was indeed how the Chilili Cooperative Association obtained the land in the first place, by purchasing the land from the State of New Mexico and paying off the delinquent taxes).³⁰ Driving through the community today along NM 337, a passerby would be greeted—or more accurately warned—by a series of signs which plainly restrict outsiders and assert the sovereignty of the land grant. At the center of the town, at one of the primary intersections, a sign reads as follows: “La Merced del Pueblo de Chilili is a self-governing entity. No trespassing, picture taking, land sales, littering. Respect what we love.”³¹ Similar signs are dotted across the community. President Juan Sanchez describes the origins of these signs “The signs went up in 1996. At that time there were a lot of land sales going on in the east mountains and with the land grant. We were looking for a way to let the public know how we felt about our land and that we didn’t agree with it being sold and so we started putting up signs all over the land grant boundary.”³² This assertion of sovereignty was not popular outside of Chilili. As President Sanchez recalls “Some of the land claimers didn’t like it and had the [Bernalillo County] Sheriff’s Department take them down by force, but we put them up with a few days.”³³ Along with being the current President of the Chilili Land Grant, Juan Sanchez is the Chair of the New Mexico Land Grant Council, a body which represents the interests of all of New Mexico’s land grant communities.³⁴ It is therefore plain to see that between these signs, a deep involvement in the contemporary New Mexico Land Grant Movement, and a website which details their history, assertion to self-governance (including a flag), Chilili plainly illustrates their struggle for



A large sign prohibiting the sale of land Briseño (2022)

sovereignty. Chilili undeniably maintains strong involvement in the Land Grant struggle, especially from a political lens. Much of this fervor was emboldened by the Land Grant movement of the late 1960's. Regarding Tijerina, President Sanchez notes "As for Reies [Tijerina], I met him when I was five, my grandfather installed the land grant movement in me. He followed Reies [Tijerina] and the [Land Grant] movement for many years. Throughout Reies [Tijerina's] fight for land grants, what Chilili got from it was that the federal government really screwed the land grants out of their land. [The] biggest issue was and still is that the government has violated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. That was Reies [Tijerina's] biggest argument."³⁵

These efforts, as well as spats between local law enforcement and the community among other such controversies clearly demonstrate an understanding of the Chilili land grant as a culturally distinct, self-governing entity that regularly asserts its sovereignty. As Elaine Briseño of the Albuquerque Journal writes "[The s]igns in the area ... leave no doubt about the fierce protectiveness the people of the community still feel about their land and their way of life."³⁶

My examination of the Chilili land grant's political activity analyzes the Chicano movement of New Mexico through a post-Tijerina lens. Many scholars have addressed the Tierra Amarilla land grant and Tijerina's involvement using Tijerina's autobiography *They Called Me "King Tiger": My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights*. However, little modern scholarship focuses on Chilili's struggle for sovereignty. Indeed, very little literature is dedicated towards Land grants as sovereign entities at all. The conversation surrounding Land Grants is typically understood as part of the Chicano Movement, or as a legal complexity surrounding land ownership. Specific to Chilili, scholarship largely ignores this community or only acknowledges them for their curious name.³⁷

I believe it is plain to see that further research into the political actions Land Grant communities of New Mexico would prove to be a valuable cause. In fact, in the research for this paper I had been in touch with the President of the Tomé Land Grant. In my exchanges with President Andrea Padilla, the governing decisions being made—while not being described by President Padilla as "sovereign" in an independent sense—nonetheless show the agency and the legal power endowed unto the Tomé Land Grant make decisions for their community.³⁸ I strongly believe that scholarship surrounding Land Grants do not pay nearly enough attention to their political environment and their desire for sovereignty.

Gage Alvin Robert Anderson is an undergraduate student at New Mexico State University studying Anthropology, History, and Biology. A proud New Mexican, Gage has always maintained a fascination for the cooperation and conflict between the peoples of New Mexico. The intersection between cultural preservation and political power is of particular interest in his work.

End Notes

¹See first image

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¹⁶NM Stat § 49-1-1 (2014)

¹⁷ NM Stat § 49-1-1 (2014)

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²⁰Tijerina, Reies López (2000)

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²⁸Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Land Grant Committee, October 29-30, 2018, New Mexico Land Grant Council Records, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

²⁹ Moya v. Chilili Cooperative Association, Inc.(1974)

³⁰ Moya v. Chilili Cooperative Association, Inc.(1974)

³¹See first image

³² Sanchez, Juan (2025)

³³ Sanchez, Juan (2025)

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Warren Fay Shedd of San Augustine Springs

By Troy Ainsworth



The hand-carved wooden cross that once marked the stock raiser's grave in the Big Bend Country of Texas no longer remains to murmur a brief requiem: "En Memoria / Milton Faver / Quien Murio / El Día 23 de Diciembre / Del Año 1889 / A La Una de la Tarde." Milton Faver's gravesite, atop a hill overlooking his ranch along Cibolo Creek in southern Presidio County, served within living memory of those who knew him as the resting place of one of the region's titanic figures, a man whose life and deeds since his arrival in the Big Bend in 1858 had assumed larger-than-life dimensions. Among the Hispano and Anglo denizens along the border, Don Meliton, as he was known, was shrouded in an air of obscurity, his origins, like those of the Kid in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian; Or, the Evening Redness in the West* (1985), remote and forgotten. Forty-four years after his death, an article in the *Voice of the Mexican Border* described Faver as the "mystery man of the Big Bend."¹ In the late Nineteenth Century, not a few corners across America's western frontier featured a character or two similar to Milton Faver, including the Organ Mountain country in the southern reaches of the Territory of New Mexico. Warren F. Shedd, a shadowy and minor contributor to the Mesilla Valley's story during the era, fits that description, as he appears in fragmentary excerpts of southern New Mexico history without much focus or specificity on his life or accomplishments. Though Faver's life story provides considerable color to tales of the Trans-Pecos of Texas, Shedd unintentionally scripted a comparable life narrative in a separate part of the Chihuahuan Desert on pace with his Texan contemporary's far downstream the Rio Grande.

As the story goes, Milton Faver hailed from Independence, Missouri, where as a young man he had fought a rival over the affection of

a beautiful woman, and in a heated moment gun shots were exchanged. Faver, convinced that he had mortally shot his opponent, fled – and he apparently traveled far from Missouri out of fear of apprehension by the sheriff. His flight led him to Meoqui, a pueblo south of Ciudad Chihuahua and southwest of Presidio del Norte on the Rio Grande. As an eighteen-year-old young man in Meoqui, he found employment with Francisco de Leon, who operated a flour mill, and within a year or two then engaged in the more lucrative occupation of freighting goods along the routes connecting Ciudad Chihuahua with Santa Fe to the north and San Antonio to the east. His marriage to Francisca Ramírez, the sister-in-law of Richard C. Daly, a pioneer Anglo settler in the Big Bend, resulted in his settling in Presidio del Norte until about 1855 or 1857, when Faver relocated his family twenty-five distant to the banks of Cibolo Creek. Or, as the story goes, Faver numbered among the thousands of argonauts who sought their fortune in California, but, with his route crossing through northern Mexico, he abandoned his plans and his journey ultimately ended in Estado del Chihuahua. Or, perhaps, as a native of Virginia, he was captivated by the lure of Texas, and in the early Eighteen Fifties he arrived on the raw frontier and settled in the Big Bend. In any event, at least three years prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War, Faver had begun raising livestock on a vast ranch where he built three haciendas, known as La Morita, Cibolo, and Cienega, to operate his extensive land holdings and large herds of cattle, horses, goats, and sheep.²

Even after Faver's death in late 1889, the names of his three haciendas remained well known throughout the region. Moreover, these enormous residences during his lifetime and after served as gathering places for settlers throughout



James K. Livingston, William E. Baker and Warren F. Shedd, pictured in December 1891 at Sugar Loaf Spring, east side of the Organ Mountains. Image courtesy of NMSU Library and Special Collections.

the area and were landmarks. Similarly, Shedd's ranch in the Territory of New Mexico served a comparable role, and in the late Eighteen Sixties through the middle Eighteen Eighties, Warren F. Shedd was the eponymous name associated with references to this well-known but notorious homestead on the slopes along San Augustine Pass.³ Shedd's ranch figured into episodes of the Lincoln County War, livestock raising in the Organ Mountains, arid-climate health seeking, and wayside hostels, yet within the contexts of these historical chapters Shedd himself often was overlooked and obscured. Moreover, the Warren F. Shedd of Doña Ana County has occasionally been mistaken for the American Civil War Union Army officer of the same name. Consequently, the life stories of these two distinctly different men have been intertwined in the historical record, a conflation of biographies that has shrouded the accurate details of the New Mexico Shedd's story.

To begin, the two men were contemporaries, both born in the same year. The future Union officer hailed from the village of Acworth in Sullivan County, New Hampshire, where he was born on February 22, 1821, to William Shed and Jemima Spaulding Shed. Nine months later, Andrew Wilkins Shedd and Lydia Emily Harris Shedd welcomed a son into their family, whom they christened Warren Fay Shedd. In the early Eighteen Twenties, Lydia and Andrew Shedd resided in Sardinia, New York, where their son Warren spent his youth. As a young man, he farmed and taught school in his hometown, before leaving his home to pursue similar pursuits in Wales, New York, and later in Erie, Pennsylvania. While many aspects of Warren's early life remain obscured, his marriage to Emily J. Wilcox on April 18, 1848, marks a milestone of his young manhood. The newlyweds' life together was short-lived, though, as in 1852 Warren F. Shedd

emigrated to the Illinois prairies, apparently without his wife.⁴

Across the subsequent nine years, Shedd created a new life, first as a resident in Winnebago Depot and then Malta, Illinois. While the historical record is silent on much of his initial activities in the West, even less certain are his reasons for participating in the great migration of settlers from the East into the continent's heartland. Whether he was motivated to relocate only three years after his marriage due to Emily's death, or possibly his divorce or abandonment of her, is unclear, nor can his vocation in Illinois be ascertained, but Shedd is known to have secured two civil service appointments within six years of his arrival in his new home state. In 1854, President Franklin Pierce nominated Shedd to the postmaster's position in Winnebago Depot, which was confirmed that year on July 3. Later, toward the end of his term in office, President Pierce recommended Shedd to assume the vacant postmaster's position in Malta, which was duly approved on February 16, 1857, only three weeks before the inauguration of his presidential successor, James Buchanan.⁵

In between his two Federal appointments, Shedd married for a second time on September 18, 1855, in Rockford, Illinois. On her wedding day, Mary Tompkins Dodge née Fuller, his new wife, was a twenty-six-year-old native of Tonawanda, Pennsylvania, and an apparent divorcée. In Winnebago, where the couple made their home, a daughter, Emma Belle Shedd, was born on November 6, 1856. After moving to Malta to assume his new duties, Shedd became father to Carrie on April 12, 1858, and then to Charles Fuller on January 12, 1860. Thirty-eight-years-old at the time of his third child's birth, Shedd appeared poised to enjoy a long life of matrimonial tranquility in Illinois as a family man with stable employment as a civil servant, but his actions in the months after his son's arrival into the family suggest unhappiness and dissatisfaction with his station in life. In the spring of 1861, as

agitation in the South in the aftermath of Abraham Lincoln's presidential election devolved into a robust secession movement, Shedd unexpectedly decided to prospect for gold in Colorado to seek his fortune.⁶

In August of 1861, while Shedd labored near Leadville and Denver, the other Warren Shedd enlisted in the Thirtieth Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers. Captain Shedd served with distinction during the war, commanding Company A in its campaigns in Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and North Carolina. Subsequently, he rose in rank to Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, and at war's end to Brevet Brigadier General. After the Thirtieth Illinois Infantry mustered out of service in 1865, Shedd returned home to his family and farm, but within a few years, he migrated further into the West, settling in the southern reaches of Dakota Territory. Shedd lived out the last years of his life farming near Rapid City, and on August 29, 1881, his life ended.⁷ In comparison, former postmaster Shedd performed a considerably less dangerous role in defense of the Republic during the Civil War. He appears to have drifted away from the Colorado gold fields to New Mexico, where he became the commissary clerk at Fort Craig, presumably shortly before the Confederate campaign in 1862 to route Union troops from the territory. Little else is known of Shedd's activities for the remainder of the national tragedy, but shortly after the war's end he was engaged as sutler at Fort Selden, which places him in Doña Ana County no earlier than the spring of 1865.⁸

For reasons known only to himself, Warren Fay Shedd decided to settle permanently in the Territory of New Mexico, effectively abandoning his family in Illinois. After his short stint in government employment at Fort Selden, he settled at the springs along the slopes of San Augustin Pass between the Organ and San Augustin mountains and began raising livestock. Shedd hired José L. Gallegos in 1865 to manage the ranch, and within only a few

months their herd numbered several thousand head of cattle. Eighteen Sixty-six witnessed frequent depredations by Mescalero Apache horsemen, who swept into the Tularosa Basin and the Mesilla Valley out of the White Mountains, stealing livestock with impunity. Shedd's San Augustin ranch, Gallegos claimed, lost as many as two thousand cattle that year during the raids. Curiously, though, Shedd first appears on the Doña Ana County tax rolls in 1867; thus, his loss of so many cattle both represented a significant reduction of personal property but also an unintentional lowering of the amount of property taxes owed to the county. Despite the theft of livestock, Shedd persevered and maintained his ranch, and at the beginning of the Eighteen Seventies his combined personal estate and real estate were valued at \$1,500. Yet in another curiosity, when the census enumerator arrived at the San Augustin ranch, he gave his age as forty, shedding nearly a decade by claiming he was born in about 1830. He made no mention of a wife or children, an omission that, coupled with the discrepancy in his age, adds to the pattern of obscurity and uncertainty about exact events in his life. Whether Shedd intentionally engaged in such practices only darkens the shroud of mystery enveloping his biography. Yet in any event, while he was operating a ranch at San Augustin Springs in Doña Ana County in 1870, his wife and three young children had receded into his past life in Illinois.⁹

As the new decade opened, Shedd diversified his operations to include mining and land speculation. In July of 1870, first he deposited \$100 with the Office of the Surveyor General in Santa Fe for a survey of the San Augustin Mining Claim and then he filed papers with the same office relative to the Texas land colony under the auspices of Dr. John Charles Beales. Though neither endeavor proved financially lucrative, three-and-a-half years later, Shedd divested a large portion of his ranch holdings for a considerable profit when he sold land to Benjamin Davies and Henry Lesinsky for

\$2,000 on January 2, 1874. Shedd continued to raise livestock, but by 1878 he shifted his primary business interests from cattle and sheep raising to hostelry. For about five years, Shedd lodged guests in his home until the summer of 1883 when he completed construction of a hotel on his property. "Old man Shedd is still busy with his new hotel," the Organ correspondent for the Rio Grande Republican wrote. "He has two stories finished, both surrounded by handsome porches, and it begins to wear quite a comfortable look. His vegetable garden of five or six acres, surrounded by a wire fence, is flourishing, and we presume will be profitable to him also. Mr. Shedd with his family still lives in his frame house near-by, till the hotel is finished."¹⁰

Interestingly, the allusion to Shedd's family, confirmed in census records, refers to his wife, Isadora, and a boy named Marlin [Martín?] Jaramillo, his son, and not to Mary and their three children in Illinois. While little information is recorded about either member of Shedd's household in San Augustin, he clearly in fact or in practice had become the head of a new family in New Mexico while remaining legally married as he had been since 1855. Shedd's domestic situation suggests he had either firmly abandoned his Illinois family or he was ambivalent about matrimonial vows. Regardless, his arrangement at San Augustin casts a dim light on his character and raises questions about his moral views. Similarly, in a shadowy manner, he figures into a criminal episode that involved several principals in the Lincoln County War, when thieves ran stolen livestock to his homestead. In September of 1877, Jesse Evans, Tom Hill, and several others stole a number of horses and mules belonging to John Henry Tunstall from the corrals at Richard M. Brewer's ranch. Brewer, joined by Charles Bowdre and Josiah G. Scurlock, rode south from Lincoln County to Shedd's ranch, surmising Evans and his riders would drive the stolen livestock there. Brewer's hunch proved accurate, as the outlaws arrived shortly after the pursuers, but the question remains whether Shedd

was known to trade in stolen livestock or was sympathetic to horse thieves.¹¹

Perhaps Brewer, like many others, simply recognized that Shedd's ranch was the most likely destination due to its location at San Augustin Springs. Moreover, it was simply well known, as evident in a letter Tunstall wrote on January 20, 1878, to his family in London: "The trip I am about to take is to Mesilla, on some land business, so you can get down your map & trace the route, first through the mountains past Dowlin's sawmill, the Indian agency & another sawmill [Blazer's] on to Tularosa past Lost River the White Sandhills, Shed [d]'s ranch San Augustine pass, Las Cruces & Mesilla." Five years earlier, Louis Hommel, the editor of the *Las Vegas Gazette*, when "[c]rossing the San Augustin range of mountains about eighteen miles from Cruces" in the spring of 1873, found "a fine spring of plenty of good water and a hospitable landlord, in the person of Mr. W. F. Shedd," who "welcome[d] the wayfarer with all the delicacies of a stockranch [sic] to stretch out the tired limbs and refresh the parched lips." Despite Editor Hommel's glowing words about the "energetic frontiersman" and his thriving livestock operation, Shedd's ranch in the 1870s maintained a reputation as a safe haven and hiding place for cattle rustlers and horse thieves in southern New Mexico.¹²

In contrast to the unsavory reputation surrounding him with regard to disreputable characters, Shedd earned a respectable reputation in other manners. His two-story hotel, "a delightful little nook, fanned by mountain breezes," offered respite from the summer heat to travelers and invalids alike. Styled the San Augustine Hotel and located on the east slope of the Organ Mountains, Shedd's hostelry, constructed of adobe and containing thirty-five rooms, welcomed visitors seeking relief, and G. H. Teagarden, the proprietor of the Organ Mountain Coach Line, provided transportation from the Commercial Hotel in Las Cruces to Organ and San Augustin to passengers six days

a week. In addition to his role as hotelier, Shedd managed to secure an appointment as postmaster at San Augustine in Doña Ana County, a term that ran from March 13, 1882, through August 27, 1885, when Benjamin E. Davies succeeded him. In the midyears of the decade, though, the San Augustine Hotel only achieved marginal success, despite, as one observer asserted, "I can see no reason why that San Augustine may not in the near future be noted among the famous health and pleasure resorts of New Mexico." Indeed, upon the resort's opening, it was hailed as the largest hotel in the Territory south of Socorro, a noteworthy landmark providing all the modern conveniences, and Shedd hired two gentlemen named Forster and Rose to manage its operation.¹³

In an unexpected turn in about 1885, however, Shedd's life in New Mexico became known to a relative of his, who in turn wrote Mary Shedd of her husband's presence in Doña Ana County. An apocryphal story tells that Charles Fuller Shedd journeyed to the Territory to find his father, a man he last saw in early 1861 and only knew by name and reputation, but upon locating him, the son was unable to convince his long-lost father to return with him to his former home. Contrary to one historian's assertion, Shedd remained at San Augustin until the late summer of 1896, when at the age of seventy-five he moved to Las Cruces to board in William L. Rynerson's house. Thirteen months later, his daughter Carrie Shedd arrived in southern New Mexico and persuaded her father to rejoin her in Arkansas City, Arkansas, to reunite with her mother, whom he had not seen for thirty-six years. Thus, in late 1897, Warren Fay Shedd departed the Territory, never to return. His and Mary's reunion lasted less than two years owing to her death on July 16, 1899, and though few details are known of Shedd's final years of life, his own passing occurred on April 19, 1904, in Elgin, Illinois, at the state's insane asylum – a curious ending to an intriguing character whose actions added color to late Nineteenth Century New Mexico.¹⁴

Fragmentary and mysterious, Shedd's life and legacy, like that of Milton Faver's, requires a more extensive examination to differentiate misunderstanding from accuracy. While a second historian claims that the "mysterious character" living at the foot of San Augustine Pass was "more likely" the Union officer of the Thirtieth Illinois Infantry, the assertion is inaccurate and easily refutable.¹⁵ Herein dwells the task confronting historians in the quest to piece in the mystery. Yet in the grand perspective, Warren Fay Shedd indisputably contributed a memorable and significant chapter in the annals of southern New Mexico history, a chapter worthy of further study and illumination.

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End Notes

¹While an authoritative biography on Milton Faver has not been written, references to his life and accomplishments appear in various sources. See, for example, "Don Milton: Milton Faver, the Big Bend's First American Cattle King." *Voice of the Mexican Border* 1 (September 1933): 22-26; Leavitt Corning, Jr., *Baronial Forts of the Big Bend* (San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1967); Roy L. Swift and Leavitt Corning, Jr., *Three Roads to Chihuahua: The Great Wagon Roads That Opened the Southwest, 1823-1883* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1988); Arthur Gómez, *A Most Singular Country: A History*

of Occupation in the Big Bend (Salt Lake City, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, 1990); Killis Almond and Sue Moss, "Historic Resources Associated with Milton Faver—Agriculturist." National Register of Historic Places Nomination (1995); and Troy M. Ainsworth, "A Murder in the Big Bend: The Killing of Will Noel at Shafter in October 1889." *Journal of Big Bend Studies* 26 (2014): 7-26.

² Corning, Jr., *Baronial Forts*, 42-64; Swift and Corning, Jr., *Three Roads to Chihuahua*, 31-32.

³ Multiple source documents alternate the spelling of San Augustine in which the second word appears as Agustin, Augustin, or Augustine. The spellings herein reflect their appearance in the source documents.

⁴ "Warren Shedd" and "Warren F. Shedd." Ancestry.com, *North America, Family Histories, 1500-2000* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016; Frank Edson Shedd, *Daniel Shed Genealogy: Ancestry and Descendants of Daniel Shed of Braintree, Massachusetts, 1327-1920* (Boston, Massachusetts: The Shedd Family Association, 1921): 371; "Emily J. Wilcox." Ancestry.com, *Geneanet Community Trees Index* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2022. In the 1850 U.S. Census, Emily and Warren Shedd were enumerated as thirty- and twenty-six-years-old, respectively, residents of Wales, Erie County, New York. However, when the census taker accounted for the couple on September 16, 1850, he was twenty-nine-years old.

⁵ Ancestry.com. *United States, Appointments of U. S. Postmasters, 1832-1971* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁶ Shedd, *Daniel Shed Genealogy*, 371-372.

⁷ *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1862* (Springfield: Baker & Phillips, Printers, 1863): 140; National Park

Service, *U.S., Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007; Historical Data Systems, comp. *U.S., American Civil War Regiments, 1861-1866* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 1999; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, 1861-1904* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007.

⁸ “Territorial Topics.” *The Las Vegas Daily Optic*, Monday, April 13, 1896, page 3, column 1. With the establishment of Fort Selden in April of 1865, Shedd’s arrival in Doña Ana County coincides with this event.

⁹ “Indian Depredation Case Calls to Mind Conditions Thirty Years Ago,” *The Albuquerque Daily Citizen*, Thursday, March 2, 1899, page 1, column 4; Ancestry.com. *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. In the spring of 1899, Shedd and George E. Blake, a partner in the ranch at San Augustin, filed suit for \$30,000 against the United States government for their losses sustained in 1866, a case that was heard in district court in Albuquerque. Although Shedd and Blake sought \$30,000 in damages, they claimed their actual losses were closer to \$60,000.

¹⁰ United States Surveyor General’s Office, New Mexico. Letters Sent, Volume II [May 14, 1856-December 24, 1874]: 289; Ancestry.com. *New Mexico, U.S., Land Records of New Spain, 1692-1916* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016; Doña Ana County Deed Book E: 583-584; “Organ Tones,” *Rio Grande Republican*, Saturday, August 18, 1883, page 1, column 6.

¹¹ *1850 U.S. Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo: UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009; *New Mexico, U.S., Territorial Census, 1885* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010; William A. Keleher, *Violence in Lincoln County, 1869-1881: A New*

Mexico Item (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957): 260.

¹² Frederick W. Nolan, *The Life and Death of John Henry Tunstall* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1965): 262; Louis Hommel, “Home Again.” *Las Vegas Gazette*, Saturday, April 26, 1873, page 2, column 1; Paxton P. Price, *Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley* (Las Cruces: Yucca Tree Press, 1995): 176-177.

¹³ *Las Vegas Morning Gazette*, Tuesday, March 29, 1881, page 1, column 6; *Rio Grande Republican*, Saturday, August 11, 1883, page 4, column 7; *Official Register of the United States, Containing a List of Officers and Employés in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service on the first of July, 1885. Volume II: The Post-Office Department and the Postal Service* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885): 558; *Rio Grande Republican*, Saturday, September 2, 1882, page 1, column 7; “San Augustine as a Health Resort.” *Rio Grande Republican*, Saturday, July 3, 1886, page 1, column 2; *Rio Grande Republican*, Saturday, October 28, 1882, page 3, column 3.

¹⁴ Shedd, *Daniel Shed Genealogy*, 371-372; *Rio Grande Republican*, Friday, September 11, 1896, page 3, column 3; Kenneth V. Faunce, *The Fort Bliss Preacquisition Project: A History of the Southern Tularosa Basin* (El Paso: United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center, Fort Bliss, 1997): 51-52; *The Las Vegas Daily Optic*, Saturday, October 23, 1897, page 3, column 2; *Peabody Genealogy*. Ancestry.com, *North America, Family Histories, 1500-2000* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016; *Illinois, Select Deaths Index, 1877-1916* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

¹⁵ Martha Doty Freeman, “The Ranch at San Augustine: Shedd, Davies, and Cox.” In Duford W. Skelton, et al., *A Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Doña Ana Range, New Mexico*. Texas Archeological Survey Research Report No. 69 (Austin: University of Texas, 1981): 128-129.

Clyde Tombaugh's V-2 Rocket Tracking Station

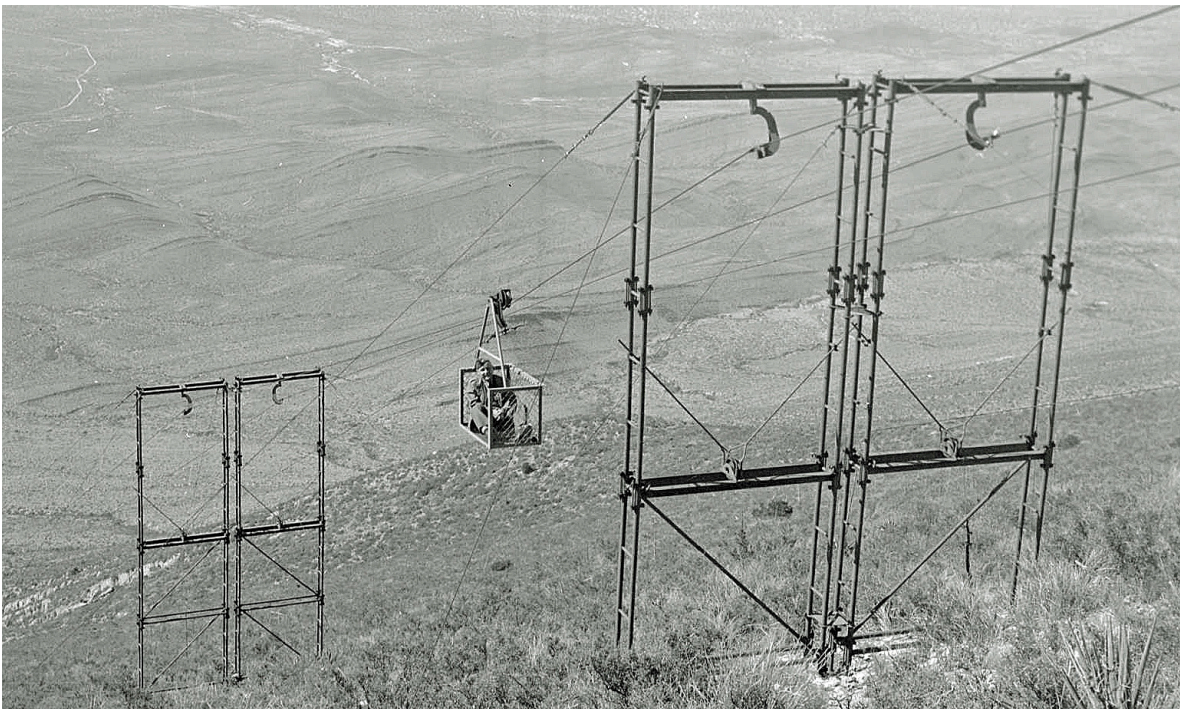
By Jim Eckles

In 1946, Clyde Tombaugh, the astronomer who discovered the planet Pluto, came to Las Cruces, N.M. and went to work at what is now White Sands Missile Range. He was in charge of the optics branch, which means he had to figure out how to film rockets and missiles in flight—usually from safe places miles away. It was a new challenge for the Army, and with Tombaugh's experience with telescopes, he was able to show the military how best to film those vehicles with clarity and precision.

To get away from ground haze and into clear air, in 1947 Tombaugh went looking for high points to place cameras that would capture the flights of German V-2 rockets and newer American developments. One site he chose was the top of San Andres Peak, just 28 miles

northeast of downtown Las Cruces in the San Andres Mountains. At 8,230 feet, the peak offered an unobstructed view of almost every aspect of a V-2 flight from beginning to end. The top of the peak was thousands of feet above the dust and haze often found near the Tularosa Basin's surface. Also, it turns out, the view from the top is almost 100 miles in every direction.

Once the site was identified, the next step was to build a small station on top to protect men and equipment from common mountaintop elements such as rain, winds, lightning and freezing temperatures. Like many mountaintops, the big problem here was getting on top. San Andres Peak is a long, knife-edge ridge running north and south with a small tip in the middle. The east side is just a series of cliffs that drop into



Major Lloyd Smith riding the tram and nearing the top. He gives scale to how small the baskets were. Image courtesy of White Sands Missile Range.

the Tularosa Basin. That leaves the west side, which has a brutal incline. A road was ruled out.

The solution turned out to be a small tram running up the west slope to the top of the hill, which was later named Ropes Springs. Ropes Spring made sense because in the late 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps turned old ranch structures at the spring into a recreation site complete with a swimming pool and picnic grounds. It was fairly easy getting there from U.S. Highway 70 on graded desert roads. Once the tram was installed, it was used to haul building materials to the site and then transport men and equipment back and forth when it was completed.

According to Charlie Brink, who was chief of the White Sands survey office, the tram was purchased from a company in Colorado. Before the buy, Brink surveyed the route up the peak so the specs could be written. The tramway was 7,200 feet long and ascended 2,200 vertical feet from its terminal on the west side to a point just below the top.

Once the parts and pieces of the tram were delivered, a team of soldier engineers led by Master Sergeant Roy Horsley erected it. Fred Kidwell then took over with White Sands personnel to blast out a level spot 60-by-20 feet on the east edge of the summit and construct the site.

The tram was anchored at the bottom and top to small but solid steel frames which were pinned to concrete blocks. There were 11 pairs of towers in between to hold up the cables.

The towers were put together like the scaffolding used in building construction. Each tower was apparently skidded up the mountain in pieces and then bolted together on site – much the way a child would put together a Tinker Toy tower. Each one was basically a rectangular frame, and the tram cars traveled through the center of those frames. The bottoms or feet on the towers were not anchored to the ground in blocks of concrete. Instead, guy wires held each



The military photographer shot this while riding in the basket and was only two towers up from the bottom. The photo is from a White Sands Missile Range history and is clearly labeled Feb. 17, 1948 and probably not long after completion of the instrumentation site on top. Image courtesy of White Sands Missile Range.

tower erect the same way they hold a radio station antenna in place.

When I first visited the tram around 1980, the towers were still standing. Not anymore. A few years later there was an incident where a helicopter clipped one of the cables during a desert bighorn sheep survey. The helicopter was fine, but officials decided to knock down the towers to prevent a more serious accident in the future. A team went up and cut the cables on each tower and allowed them to fall in place. Whitney Kroschel, San Andres National Wildlife Refuge Manager, recently confirmed that the towers are still where they fell decades ago.

At each tower site, there were two towers standing side by side. (see accompanying photos) A stationary cable hung from the top of each tower and was anchored at both the top and bottom. This stationary cable acted as a “rail” for the cable cars to hang from and roll along.

The term “cable car” is a bit of a misnomer as they weren’t much more than metal baskets. They were very small with room for only one



This photo taken from the west edge of the CCC swimming pool and looking east at San Andres Peak is undated and provided by the Bob Gamboa family during a family picnic outing to the site.

person to ride in comfortably. Those who actually rode it told me two people could go together, but they would have to sit side by side facing outward with their legs dangling out the open side. The baskets hung from a frame that was equipped with wheels that rode on the stationary cable.

The second cable was attached to the cable cars themselves. It was a continuous loop going up through one line of towers and down the other side. One car was fastened to this loop at the base of the mountain and traveled up through one series of towers. The other car was on the other side of the loop, in the other series of towers, and positioned at the top. By moving the loop one direction or the other, they were able to move one car up while the other one came down and then reverse the process.

The system was powered with a special gas-powered motor that allowed the cable to be pulled one way or the other. Whenever the tram was being used, two soldiers from White Sands were always on hand to operate it. A telephone line strung below the towers allowed them to talk

to the people on top and bring them down when their mission was complete.

According to M/Sgt Horsley, it typically took 15 to 20 minutes to make the trip one-way. The basket could handle about 300 pounds. In contrast, it took two to three hours to hike up to the top. I've done it twice, and there is a great variety of desert plants/cactus that stabs and jabs unprotected legs.

The mountaintop quickly grew into a real instrumentation site, equipped with a German Askania cinetheodolite to film missile tests. A concrete-block building was built on the east edge of the peak. Beside it is a mount on the concrete pad for placing and operating the cinetheodolite. Electricity was provided by a portable generator, and heat came from an oil heater. A radio provided the crews with launch information and timing data. Communications was vital so the operators would know when to turn their instrument on and start filming – the V-2s were fired from a launch complex 21 miles southeast of San Andres Peak.

All the building materials and equipment were carried up the mountain on the tram. The construction crews rode it back and forth. They even carried pipe and a portable welder to build a railing along the east edge so no one would accidentally walk off the cliff.

Lester Christiansen was in charge of this cine site and said he rode the tram more than anyone. It took two men to operate the old Askania cine, and Christiansen said he never had to look far for a fellow operator. Many people were interested in the adventure of riding above a steep mountainside covered with piñon, scrub oak, sotol, cholla, ocotillo, century plants, and mountain mahogany to get to one of the best viewpoints in southern New Mexico. It was certainly an unusual journey and a day without normal bureaucratic chores.

Christiansen said he saw a mountain lion down below once on a ride. John Phillips, the chief of the Askania units for all of White Sands at the time (and also Christiansen's boss), talked to the author, as well. He said he also rode the tram frequently and once surprised a desert bighorn sheep on top. The startled animal leaped down the ledges on the east face of the mountain.

The most unanticipated inhabitants on the mountaintop were the ladybugs. Phillips said it was common to have them crawl up your pant legs. I noticed this same phenomenon when I visited the peak. There were hundreds and hundreds of the orange and black bugs on the rocks.

Sometime in early 1950, *National Geographic* magazine photographer J. Baylor Roberts made the tram ride. He wanted to photograph an instrumentation site being used in support of V-2 missions. These photos would accompany an article about cameras photographing the earth from above (60-80 miles up). Before 1950, several V-2s and Aerobee rockets were sent aloft for this purpose. The caption for the photo of Christiansen and Phillips operating the cine does not have a date.

In fact, the whole article carefully avoids placing dates on any of the photos or any of the camera missions flown at White Sands. It simply refers to "V-2's." It is a summary article about the value of the whole program but uses photos from a single mission to illustrate how it worked.

The author of the article was Clyde Holliday, who was a technical photographer for the Naval Applied Physics Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. He developed the camera used on a V-2 flight on Oct. 24, 1946 that provided photographs labeled as the "first images of earth



From the October 1950 issue of National Geographic magazine and shot by J. Baylor Roberts. John Phillips and Lester Christiansen are operating the cinetheodolite, which uses a motion picture camera to film the flight of a missile or aircraft, and records on each frame of film the exact time of exposure and the elevation and azimuth angles of the lens. It took two men to operate the cine. One turned a crank to raise and lower the lens – the elevation of it – as the other turned a crank that rotated the whole camera around in a circle – the azimuth angle. Working together, after much practice, they could keep the rocket or missile focused in the center of their frames of film for the entire flight.



The tram base with a soldier in position to operate the tram. The small building was for storage and maintenance equipment. Shot on Feb. 17, 1948. Image courtesy of White Sands Missile Range.

from space.” In the 1950 article, he refers to a camera that he flew on three different missions, so he obviously visited southern New Mexico several times.

For the *National Geographic* article, Roberts took a photo of Christiansen and Phillips manning the *Askania* at the Clyde Tombaugh site. The color photo appeared in the October 1950 issue of the magazine in an article called “Seeing the Earth from 80 Miles Up.” Most of the photos in the article were shot at White Sands by either Roberts or Holliday.

In the article, Holliday speculates about the future use of high-altitude photography of the earth. He talked about photos being used by meteorologists and wrote, “To make the

best forecasts, weathermen need to know what conditions prevail at any given moment over a wide area. If guided missiles carrying cameras could be sent out crisscross over the entire continent of North America, photographing in a few hours all the cloud banks, storm fronts, and overcasts, weather forecasts could be made more accurately than now.” He was exactly right—except that now, we use satellites carrying cameras instead of missiles.

Things did not always go smoothly on the mountain. Christiansen said during the hot summer months, the top cable would warm, expand and droop. Then, when he and his partner rode over areas close to the ground, the basket sometimes dragged on the rocks and cactus. On

the other hand, winter temperatures seemed to be especially cold on top and the oil stove didn't help much.

In addition, Christiansen said there were several days when he was forced to walk down from the summit because of high winds. The tram also stalled occasionally, leaving men dangling between towers until the soldiers could get it going. Phillips remembered a time when it quit when he was only partway down. After waiting 30 minutes, he decided it wasn't going to be fixed anytime soon. Luckily, he was less than a hundred feet from a tower, so he went hand-over-hand on the top cable to the tower and walked down.

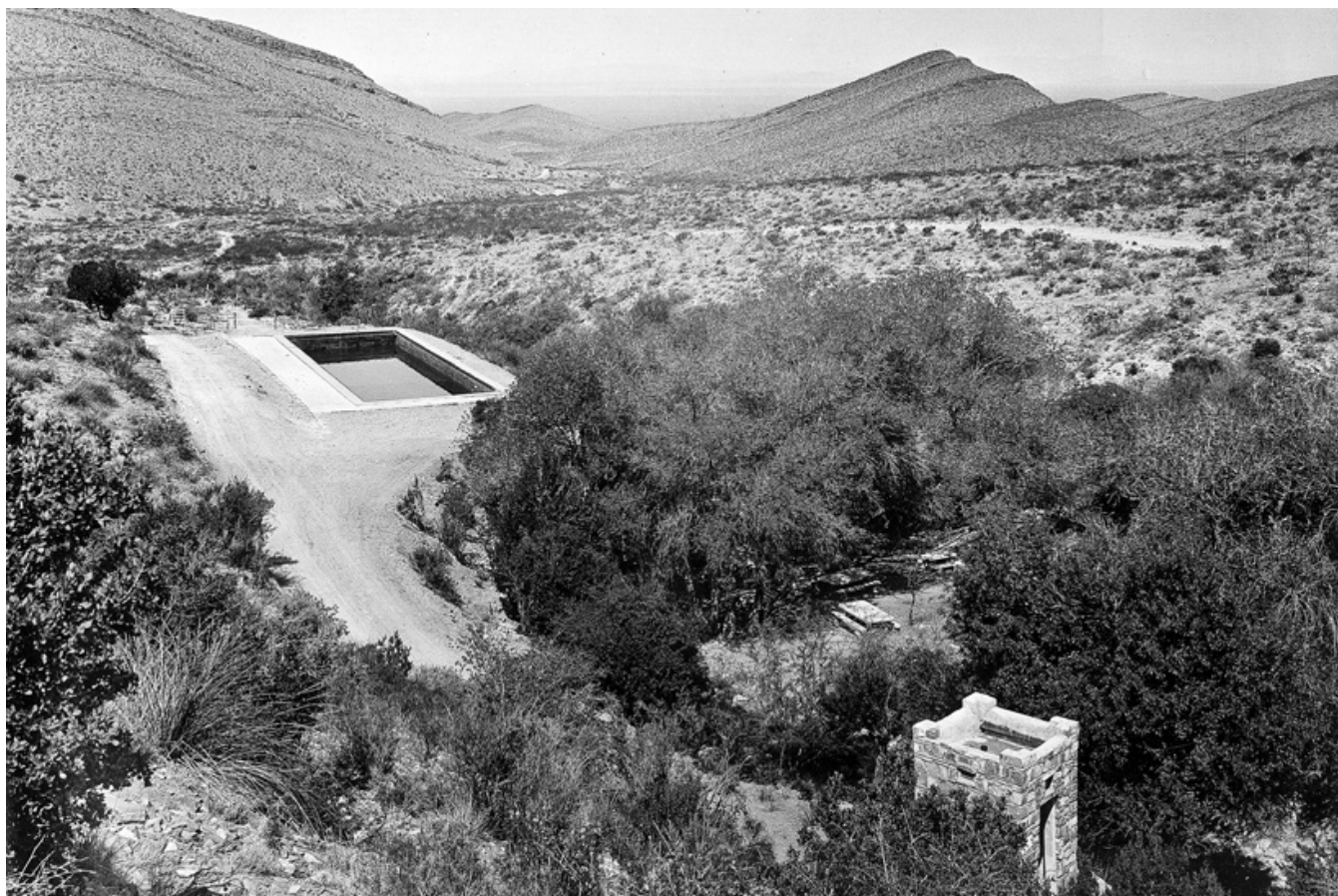
According to Christiansen, the scariest part of working on the peak and riding the tram was the lightning. He said the peak was a great lightning rod and sitting on top during a thunderstorm was an experience in helplessness.

Once a lightning strike blew out some of their equipment, but no one was ever injured.

Safety seems to be the main reason for closing the site in 1951. In addition, the inaccessibility of the place and number of man-hours required in getting the data made the site unattractive. The drive from White Sands to Ropes Spring was 50 miles—much of it on dirt roads.

The cinetheodolite and other equipment were removed. The building was left behind and has since lost its roof to the high winds that race across the top. Interestingly, that tiny structure was usually visible to the unaided eye from the Lake Lucero area in the Tularosa Basin during morning hours when the sun glinted off its white walls.

The towers, cables, and baskets are still on the side of the mountain. An equipment shed and the bottom frame, with its counterweight and gasoline engine, are also still there.



Looking west over the Civilian Conservation Corps recreation site at Ropes Spring ca. 1935. Visible is one of the stone privies and the swimming pool. Photo courtesy of Jornada Experimental Range.

The base of the tram sits just east of the old Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) recreation site at Ropes Spring. The area is named for Horace Ropes who developed a ranch at the base of the mountain in the late 19th century. According to John Smith, who worked at the Jornada Experimental Range, Ropes had 500 cows and 12 Durham bulls shipped to the site from Texas to start his ranch.

The subsequent owner, C.T. Turney, had a stone house constructed next to Ropes Spring in 1910 and developed a water collection system for people staying there. The house is still there and was modified over the years. The base of the tram sits just up the slope a few hundred yards from the house, which was last used by personnel from the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge.

When the CCC received permission to develop the site, they were depending on a good flow of water from the spring. Work was accomplished by men from the CCC camp located on the Jornada Experimental Range just a few miles away. According to John Smith, the spring was reportedly running at five gallons a minute in 1938, so there was a lot of water for the development.

This made it possible for the CCC workers to build a series of picnic tables and fire pits downstream from the spring and equip it with water spigots. Further downhill, they built a 30-foot by 70-foot swimming pool, which was quite a treat in the 1930s and early 40s. Of course, the pool served a second purpose as a water storage unit for cattle out on the bajada. This use of the pool allowed for water could to be piped further to the west. In addition, large cottonwood and willow trees provided shade for the picnic sites.

They also built two stone privies for visitors to use. This was in addition to the old wooden one up near the house that was a communal 4-holer. The stone outhouses were large enough to be split in half with a dividing wall and have a toilet on each side – one labeled “men” and the other “women.” They had some

fun with the construction: the constructed a small castle with small ramparts on the roof line.

Like the tram, the recreation site now lays in ruin with very few visitors. The area has a complicated ownership tree—the Jornada Experimental Range, the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge, and White Sands Missile Range all have a piece of the pie. No one enters now without permission.

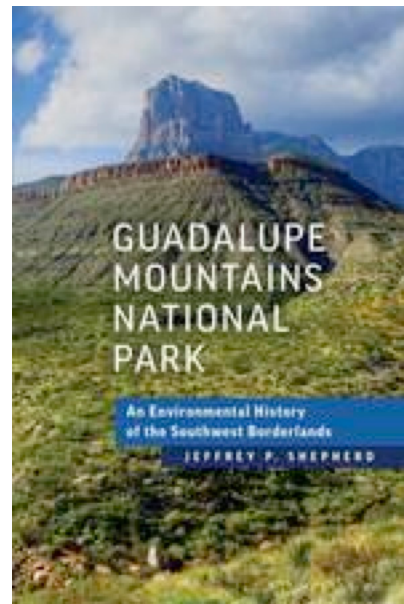
Former SNMHR editor and 2026 DACHS Hall of Fame inductee **Jim Eckles** retired from a 30-year career as public information specialist at White Sands Missile Range in 2007. He has written extensively about the history of the range, including his book *Pocketful of Rockets: The History and Stories Behind White Sands Missile Range* and *Trinity: The History of an Atomic Bomb National Historical Landmark*, in addition to numerous articles in the SNMHR and his book about the WWI-period Camp Cody near Deming. He was inducted into the WSMR Hall of Fame in 2023

Book Review

***Guadalupe Mountains National Park: An Environmental History of the Southwest Borderlands* by Jeffery P. Shepherd. Amherst, Massachusetts, University of Massachusetts Press, 2019 ISBN-13 978-1625344342. 280 pages, \$28.18**

In his work, Jeffery P. Shepherd presents the vast and longstanding history of Guadalupe Mountains National Park and the Texas-New Mexico Borderlands more broadly. Shepherd recounts a long-standing history that was influenced by several groups, from the Native Americans to the Spanish colonizers to the devoted few who saw the need to preserve the beauty of Guadalupe Mountains National Park for all future generations. Beginning 250 million years ago, Shepherd introduces us to the region that would one day become the Park and El Capitan, a stunning peak that swam above the primordial waters that covered the region. His introduction to the land is followed by the human history of the region. The Native Americans had occupied what would become the Guadalupe Mountains long before the Apache would encounter the Spanish or the Americans, and Shepherd briefly discusses the kind of life that the Native Americans would have led.

The second part of Shepherd's book looks at the southwest borderland's transformation following American annexation. He recounts that the U.S.-Mexican War would have a dramatic impact on the borderlands as the Apache, Comanche, Mexicans, and Americans all fought for a claim to the Guadalupe Mountains. Once fully annexed, the conflicts in the region were hardly over, and the United States struggled to assert dominance over the territory for years. After the war, the area encompassing Carlsbad Caverns, El Paso, and the Guadalupe Mountains became a major tran-



sit region for settlers making their way west in search of fortune. The resulting conflicts between Native Americans, Mexicans, and white settlers defined the Texas-New Mexico Borderlands until the 1880s, when the railroads would transform the region.

Once the conflicts with the Apache and Comanche ended, an era of attempted development ensued. Settlers struggled to live in the rugged region of the Guadalupe Mountains, but it was no easy feat. Shepherd addresses several of the difficulties that these settlers faced, which led to only a small number of people establishing themselves in the region. Shepherd's description of the land-

scape and the hardships it wrought paints a clear picture of how regions like Guadalupe Mountains National Park developed, and why only a small handful of people were able to establish themselves there. These landowners, recognizing the beauty of the mountains, became the catalysts for the creation of the park.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park was established on October 15, 1966, and was a massive effort by several parties, including landowners, community members, and politicians, going all the way up to the President himself. Sheperd recounts how all these key players laid the foundation for a National Park in Texas. However, the region's struggles did not end with the establishment of the park. Shepherd tells us that the history of the National Park Service and Guadalupe Mountains National Park is inexorably linked. When large changes happened to the Park Service, such as MISSION 66, large changes to Guadalupe Mountains National Park occurred alongside it.

Shepherd's work is a fantastic look at the history of the Southwest Borderlands. He shows how the Region was shaped by different influences. He recounts how the Native Americans, who were once the sole owners of the Texas-New Mexico Borderlands, were forced to leave and how the Americans, who came to occupy the area, saw the beauty of the Guadalupe Mountains and wished to preserve them. This desire is what led to the creation of the Guadalupe Mountains National Park and continues to fuel the drive to visit it today.

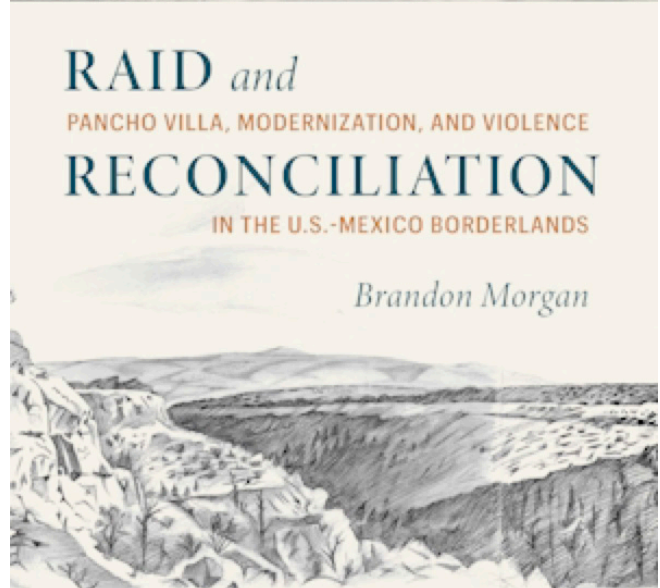
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Book Review

***Raid and Reconciliation: Pancho Villa, Modernization, and Violence in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* by Brandon Morgan. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2024. ISBN-13 978-1496237774, 294 pages, \$49.70 hardcover**

At first glance, Brandon Morgan's *Raid and Reconciliation: Pancho Villa, Modernization, and Violence in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* appears to focus on Pancho Villa's raid of Columbus, New Mexico on the eve of March 9, 1916. However, only about a fifth of the monograph focuses on the event itself and its place within the Mexican Revolution. The bulk of the analysis, as the subtitle to the book suggests, explores a half century of violence and modernization throughout the Lower Mimbres Valley. Morgan argues that colonizers pursued a capitalist commodification of the plentiful resources of the Lower Mimbres Valley. Viewed within this context, the raid of Columbus becomes yet another chapter of "progress" by means of modernized violence.

The first half of the book, roughly, contextualizes the colonization of the Lower Mimbres Valley in the fifty years leading up to the Mexican Revolution. In Chapter 1, Morgan describes how both the U.S. and Mexican military dispossessed the Apache tribes of their lands and autonomy in the 1870s and 1880s. The next chapter of violence is the raid on the Palomas Customs House in November 1893, which became a precursor to the alliance between Chihuahuan rebel groups and the northern front of the Mexican Revolution. The raid on the Customs House epitomized the brewing conflicts over land possession on the Border after the Apaches had been forced out. Morgan uses these periods of violence in the late nineteenth century as emblematic of the persistent ethnic, racial, national, and cultural conflicts of



the Lower Mimbres Valley throughout its colonial history.

In Chapters 2, 4 and 5, Morgan describes the cultural, economic, and racial attitudes of white settlers in southern New Mexico, with a particular emphasis on Mormon settlers such as the Hullers and the history of the Bailey family as "founders" of Columbus. In particular, the author highlights the attempted efforts to build a railroad line between Deming and La Ascensión, as well as the general campaign to entice increased white settlement in the area. After setting the stage with several violent episodes, Morgan analyzes the raid

itself in Chapters 6 and 7. Throughout the Mexican Revolution, Pancho Villa forged an uneasy relationship with the residents of Columbus and La Ascención—at times creating a friendly transactional dynamic, and at times exacerbating the cycle of Borderland violence. In his epilogue, Morgan further characterizes how this complicated relationship (including a repeated pattern of violence and reconciliation) persists to this day in the Lower Mimbres Valley.

Morgan's research on the Columbus raid provides one of several definitive histories on the Mexican Revolution in southern New Mexico. His contribution to southwestern/Border history is enhanced, however, by the panoramic look at several decades of the region's history. The connecting thread of violence in the name of progress is born out through several different examples, all of which are fleshed out in well-researched detail.

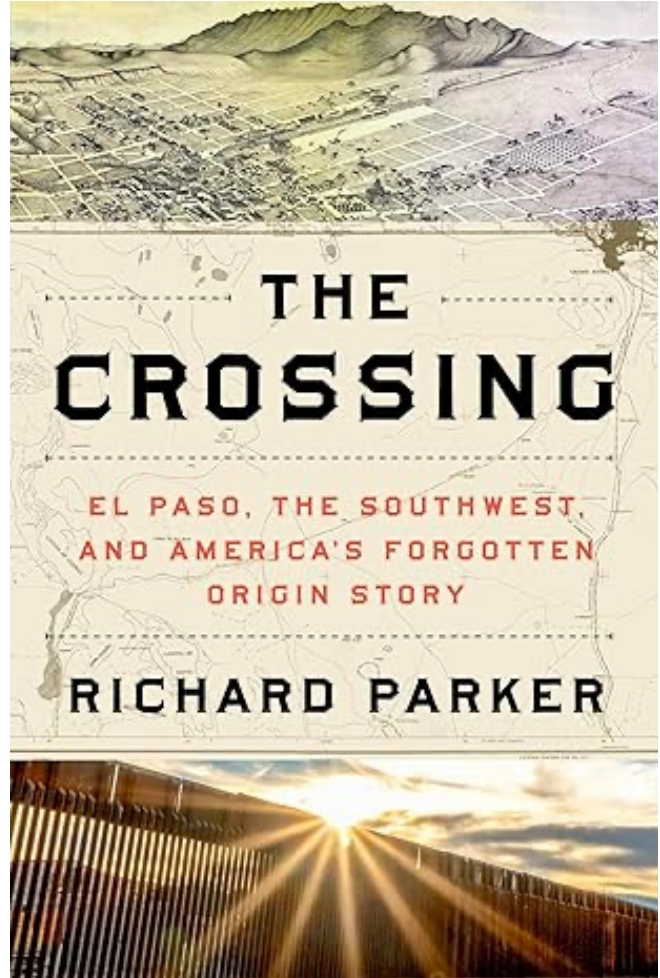
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Book Review

The Crossing: El Paso, The Southwest, and America's Forgotten Origin Story by Richard Parker. New York City, NY: Mariner Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0-0631-6191-7, 439 pages, \$35.00, hardcover

The August 3, 2019, racially motivated attack on innocent shoppers at El Paso's Cielo Vista Walmart, a mass-shooting that took 23 lives and wounded 22 more, horrified the country. Journalist and El Pasoan Richard Parker described the attack as a "stab in the heart" in his New York Times article published the following day. The event prompted Parker to delve into the history of his hometown and the surrounding region as he continued to report on the tragedy. Emboldened by his new historical knowledge, he wrote *The Crossing*, a work that argues the beginning of the United States starts in the Southwest, not the Northeast. Parker contends that El Paso del Norte should be at the epicenter of our country's origin story, as the city served as the geographic portal for people, goods, and ideas traveling via all points of the compass. The traditional narrative of east to west white settlement enabled through Manifest Destiny and Ellis Island ignores the colonial settlement decades earlier of an often-contested landscape along the Rio Grande where indigenous and European, and later Mexican and American, people vied for control. Parker's work hopes to reclaim El Paso's place as a key hub of American democracy and diversity through three central themes – the country has always been geographically western, non-white, and began at a crossing of the River of the North (10).

Over twenty-two chapters divided into five parts, Parker recounts El Paso and regional history, starting with Juan de Oñate's conquest and ending with Patrick Crusius' white nationalist attack. Most of this modern revision will be



familiar to readers. Parker relies primarily on secondary sources, especially the works of C.L. Sonnichsen, Leon Metz, and David Romo, to recast the story; what may be new to some readers is the conclusions he emphasizes. The author repeatedly makes it clear that the mixing of cultures through intermarriage on the frontera, something to be celebrated in a democracy, differed greatly from American settlement patterns and became an issue in the city only after the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and changes in governance. Parker also notes the many historical firsts that took place in the El Paso region as

evidence for granting the city larger importance in the American story – examples cited include El Paso del Norte as the foremost fought over city in the U.S.; the city serving as host to the first meeting of U.S. and Mexican presidents; the first schools in Texas to desegregate; and the first Hispanic mayor elected in a major U.S. city. As the narrative moves into the modern period, Parker inserts his own family’s story of coming to El Paso and concludes the book with several adapted chapters from previously published reporting on the border and the Walmart massacre. He completes his history by crowning El Paso as the “model multiethnic society” (381) and a locale that should secede from Texas to join New Mexico with whom its history and view of constitutional rights are more aligned (382). Tragically, Parker passed away within days of his book being published, and thus he was unable to see if his book prompted a reexamination of El Paso in U.S. history.

While I find Parker’s scholarly goal admirable, the book suffers from issues so numerous as to make his clarion call doubtful. First, Parker is clearly a journalist and not a historian. A review of the book’s notes shows too few primary sources and too many Wikipedia page citations. This, coupled with the absence of a bibliography, tells readers that there is little in the way of recent scholarship within the work. Parker makes claims regarding Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico, that are not solidly sourced (221-229). Second, the selection of certain historical events and characters to the exclusion of others, especially ones that could have made his case stronger, shows a lack of historiographical training. While Parker goes into detail about the Battles of Val-

verde and Glorieta Pass during the Civil War, he briefly mentions the First Battle of Mesilla and the abandonment of Fort Fillmore, skirmishes much closer to El Paso.

The book rarely discusses the history of the border as a physical construct and how it was policed, missing that chance to talk about the impact of the U.S. Border Patrol and the International Boundary and Water Commission on the region, agencies greatly shaped by their efforts in El Paso. Third, the geographic bounds of what the author considers to be within El Paso’s political, cultural, and economic reach is never formally defined and a cause for concern. One can argue that some of the history recounted is more distinct to Santa Fe or Chihuahua than El Paso. Additionally, without a readable and contextualizing map found within the work to help readers better understand the region’s geography, it makes it difficult to draw a conclusion. Finally, multiple editing errors jump off the pages making for a distraction – mistaking the Santa Fe Trail with the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (98), referencing the “Numbers River” when Mimbres was the likely name; and odd choices in descriptive language – “revolutionary forces of revolution” (294) – to name just a few.

I recommend readers turn to 2018’s *Coast-to-Coast Empire: Manifest Destiny and the New Mexico Borderlands* by William S. Kiser as a successful scholarly work that accurately places the region within U.S. history.

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Book Review

Nuclear Nuevo México: Colonialism and the Effects of the Nuclear Industrial Complex on Nuevomexicanos by Myrriah Gómez. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2022. ISBN-13 978-0816537105, 184 pages, \$32.00

In the 1940s during the Second World War, the military and scientific leaders of the ultra-secretive Manhattan Project chose the Pajarito plateau as the location for Site Y, or the location to build an atom bomb. This decision would mark a new age in the history of New Mexico - an age of Nuclear Colonialism. This is the crux of Myrriah Gómez's argument in her book *Nuclear Nuevo México: Colonialism and the Effects of the Nuclear Industrial Complex on Nuevomexicanos* (2022) The Nuclear Industrial Complex is a key part of the state's economy and plays a major role in many communities all across the state. This industry, however, continues to have an impact on New Mexicans, as the Nuclear Industrial Complex is rooted in displacement, environmental racism, exploitation and alienation. Along with expounding of the persistent effects of nuclear testing, Gómez proposes a call to action - namely, to tell the forgotten or erased stories of "Nuclear" New Mexico. Often working with or within advocacy groups, Gómez also delineates the legacy of struggle for recognition and compensation.

Gómez proffers this book as a telling of the story of her community and of the larger communities affected by the Nuclear Industrial Complex. Much of this work is dedicated to the creation and legacy of Los Alamos. The building of Los Alamos during WWII removed the farmers and ranchers located atop of the plateau. Then, the Los Alamos National Labs tapped into the local non-white labor pool to do the dangerous jobs of handling explosives and radioactive material. Many local laborers died due to workplace



accidents. Gómez also looks at popular media depictions of Los Alamos, mainly the 2014 television show *Manhattan*. These images evoked the traditional exceptionalism narrative and erased the contributions of indigenous women and of the larger community as a whole. The author shows the ways in which the racist and sexualized portrayal of the nuevomexicana women (who often served as maids at Los Alamos for the various scientists working and living there) erase their actual stories.

There has been an erasure of communities in Southern New Mexico affected by the Trinity

Test in July 1945, which sent radioactive material all over the surrounding areas, poisoned the land, and caused cancer in many residents. Gómez focuses on the generational struggle for recognition and compensation from the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium and its fight for compensation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. The author highlights the ways in which some whiter communities in other states were covered under RECA, whereas the “browner” New Mexican communities continued to fight for compensation and justice. With the passage of the Big Beautiful Bill in 2025, Tularosa downwinders are finally eligible for compensation via RECA.

One chapter in this book is dedicated to the issue of nuclear waste and how waste management plants affect communities located in the so-called Nuclear Corridor of Southeastern New Mexico. Nuclear waste plants like the WIPP plant in Roswell or the Holtec plant constitute Gómez’s case studies. She describes the ways in which the Nuevomexicanos majority is left out of the decision-making process, which perpetuates the erasure of their narratives and allows for “barren” land to be scooped up by the Nuclear industrial

Complex. In the case of the Holtec plant, advocacy groups such as No Nuclear Waste Aqui continue to fight against waste disposal, and this fight is ongoing as of the publication of this review.

Overall, Gómez aims to tell a different side of the nuclear story in New Mexico—one of the displacement, racism, alienation and exploitation of the people of New Mexico that continues to this day. This book frames the nuclear story through the lens of struggle. As an activist, Gómez weaves her personal stories into these narratives, which gives the book an intimate tone that pulls in the reader. As Gómez states in the conclusion, a book like this only scratches the surface of the legacy of the Manhattan project in New Mexico. More scholars and communities need to tell their stories if there is any hope for a more sustainable future for New Mexico’s nuclear industry.

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Memorial

J. Ronald McDonald, passed away October 24, 2025, at the age of 85. Born in Coffeyville, Kansas to John and Maxine McDonald, in the late 1950s Ron attended what was still called the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, studying engineering. It was here in Las Cruces at St. Genevieve's Catholic Church that he met his wife of 64 and half years, Olivia Lerma, with whom he raised a family. In addition to traveling the world, they were active in the Genealogical Society and DACHS, as well as Las Esperanzas, the Mesquite Street-Original Townsite Historic District community group that Olivia's mother Consuelo Lerma founded. The couple were partners in history. As described in Ron's obituary, in 2006 San Albino Pastor Msgr. Robert Getz enlisted Ron and Olivia to submit a petition seeking Minor Basilica designation for San Albino Church in Mesilla. They spent more than a year researching historical, architectural, pastoral and liturgical aspects of the old church, and on November 1, 2008 (All Saints Day), the church officially became the Basilica of San Albino, with Getz naming the McDonalds "Padrinos," of the Basilica of San Albino.

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