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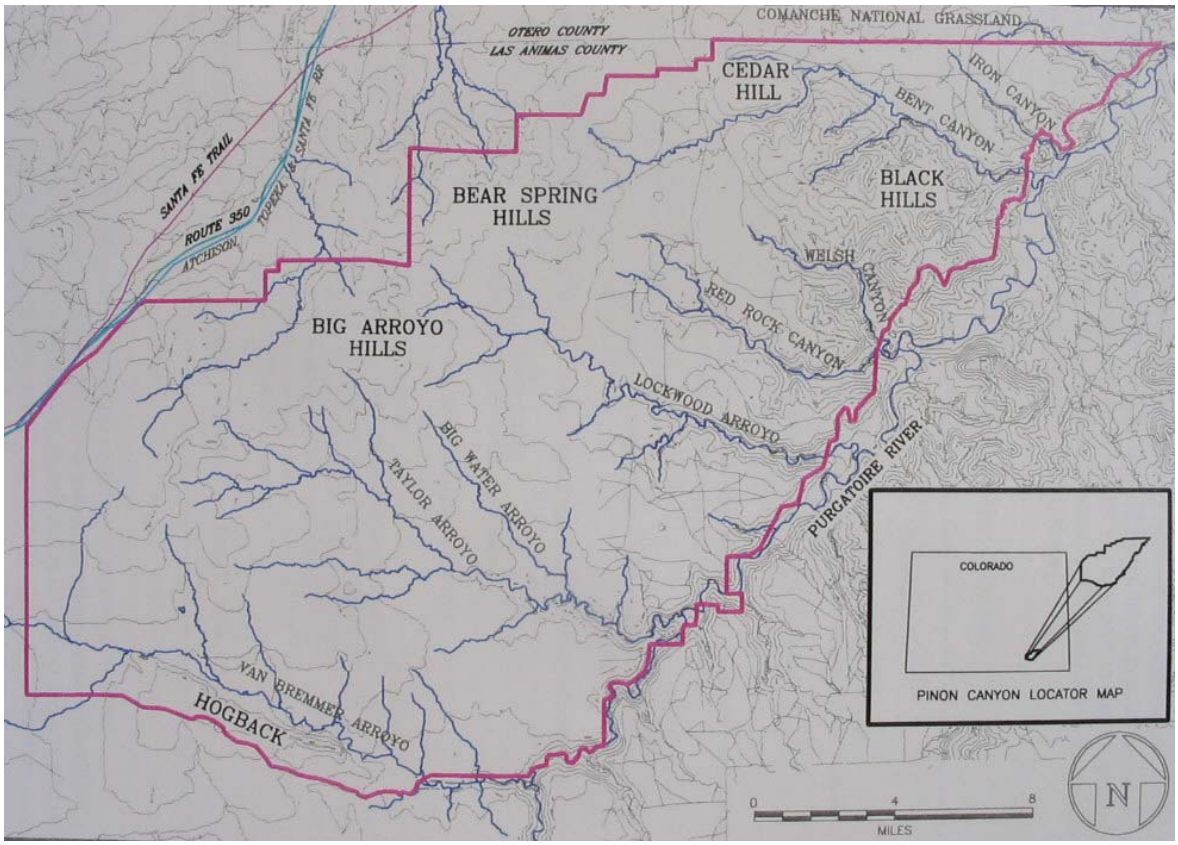
Peopling the 'Picketwire'

A History of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site

Robert A. McLain

July 2007



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Final Report

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Peopling the 'Picketwire'

A History of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site

Introduction:
The Burden of Historical Memory and the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site

When we refer to the 283,000 acres of United States Army land in Colorado's southeastern Las Animas County as the "Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site" (PCMS) we are using a deceptively simple and recent historical term. After all, the PCMS did not exist prior to 1983 when the Army, responding to the exigencies of the Cold War, assumed ownership of the land and began creating a large-scale combined arms training ground. As required by law, the Army sponsored a number of studies designed to locate significant historical and archaeological resources within the installation and determine which of these sites were eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

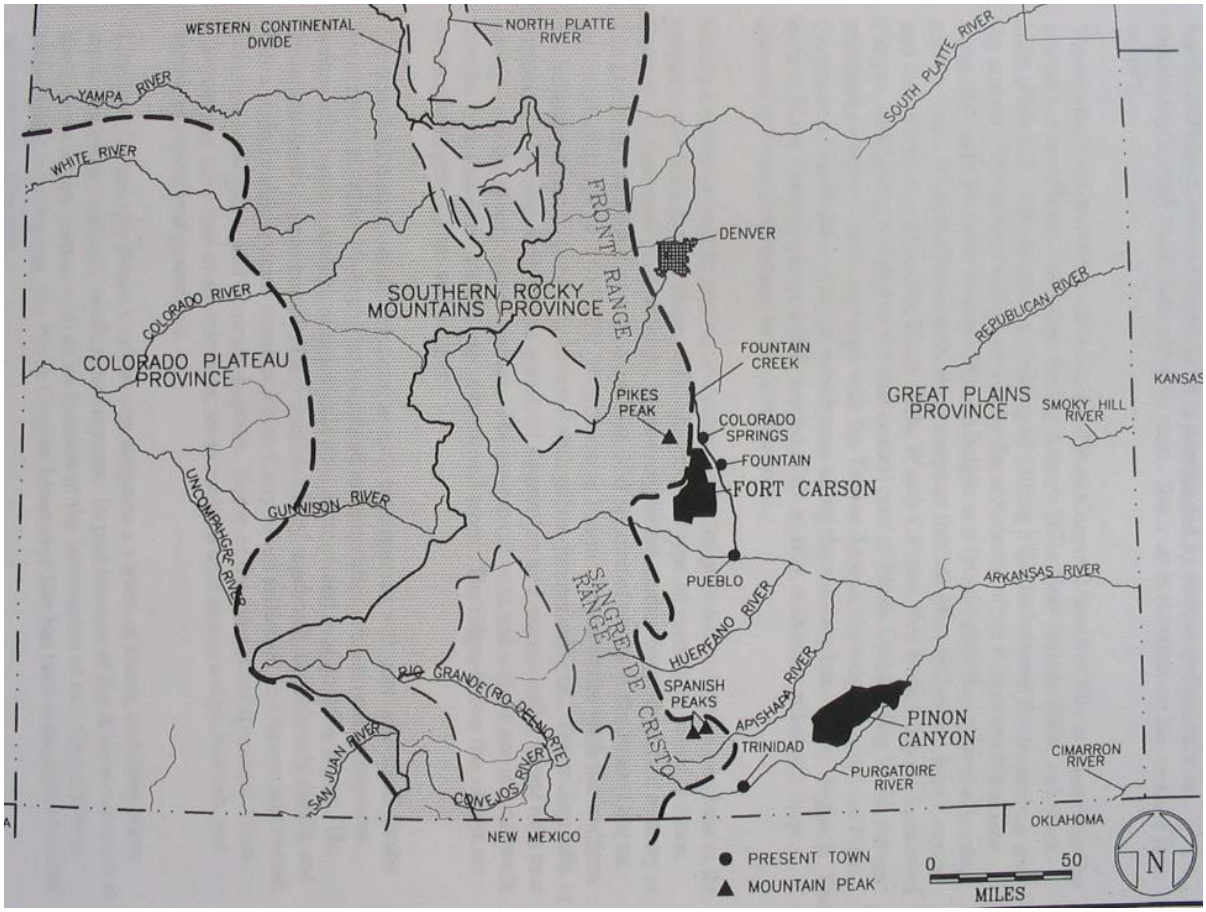

Figure 1. Location map of Fort Carson and the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site.

While these early efforts proved invaluable in bringing the story of the PCMS to light, the intervening years have produced significant methodological and interpretive changes within the discipline of history that strongly recommend a reconsideration of the installation and its environs. The main goal of this study is therefore to take the recent developments within the discipline and offer a reconfigured narrative of the PCMS, one that will build upon and recast existing historical, archaeological, and anthropological scholarship in favor of a multilayered synthesis. Secondly, and as a byproduct, this endeavor will necessarily shed new light on underappreciated histories by expanding the chronological and thematic parameters of prior studies. To cite just one example of the narrow parameters, most studies have hitherto glossed over the long Spanish period in the Southwest, despite the importance of Spanish landholding patterns to later settlement.

To be fair, the historical gaps of the Spanish period in earlier PCMS studies stem from a scarcity of sources such as periodicals, diaries, and official documents. Few of the Spanish inhabitants could read or write and thus left little record of themselves; rather, the task of day-to-day survival was their main concern. This evidentiary barrier, unfortunately, has only served to reinforce the persistent cultural biases that have prohibited a truly comprehensive understanding of the region. This point is important, for it hints that we should consider the PCMS as a microcosm of longer and more complex historical phenomena. Indeed, consider for a moment that the modern day soldiers who crisscross the installation's dry and sparsely populated high plains are by no means the first to do so. As previous cultural studies tell us, Native Americans have dwelled in the area for at least 3,000 to 5,000 years, possibly much longer.

By the mid-sixteenth century these indigenous peoples had to contend not only with rival tribes from the north, but also with Spanish incursions from the south. The Spanish era, roughly 1542 to 1821, profoundly altered the cultural landscape of what would become the American Southwest. The Spanish era was followed by a brief period of Mexican control (1821-1846), which was itself supplanted by Anglo-American ascendancy after the Mexican-American War (1844-1846). In theory then, one can find the relics of a proto-historic Indian camp, the detritus of an ill-fated sixteenth Spanish *entrada*,[1] and artifacts from Stephen Kearny's 1846 war campaign all within the confines of the PCMS.

These multiple presences make a compelling case for the construction of a more vibrant account of the PCMS than currently available. And while the scope of this work demands that we pay close attention to the local history, it is also crucial to realize that the area's geography and environment made it a crossroads for several distinct cultures. Furthermore, the arid landscape, where high plains meet mountains, dictated historical and economic patterns that were themselves part of regional, national, and indeed global, exchanges. Seen from this perspective, it is eminently sensible to adopt a "landscape" approach, one that accounts for the mutually constitutive influence between the environment and successive Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo occupations. In other words, we should consider not only how various cultures adapted to and changed their environment, but also how the landscape changed them.

[1] For our purposes an *entrada* refers to the seventeenth and eighteenth century Spanish forays into the New Mexican frontier, a vaguely defined area that included southeastern Colorado.

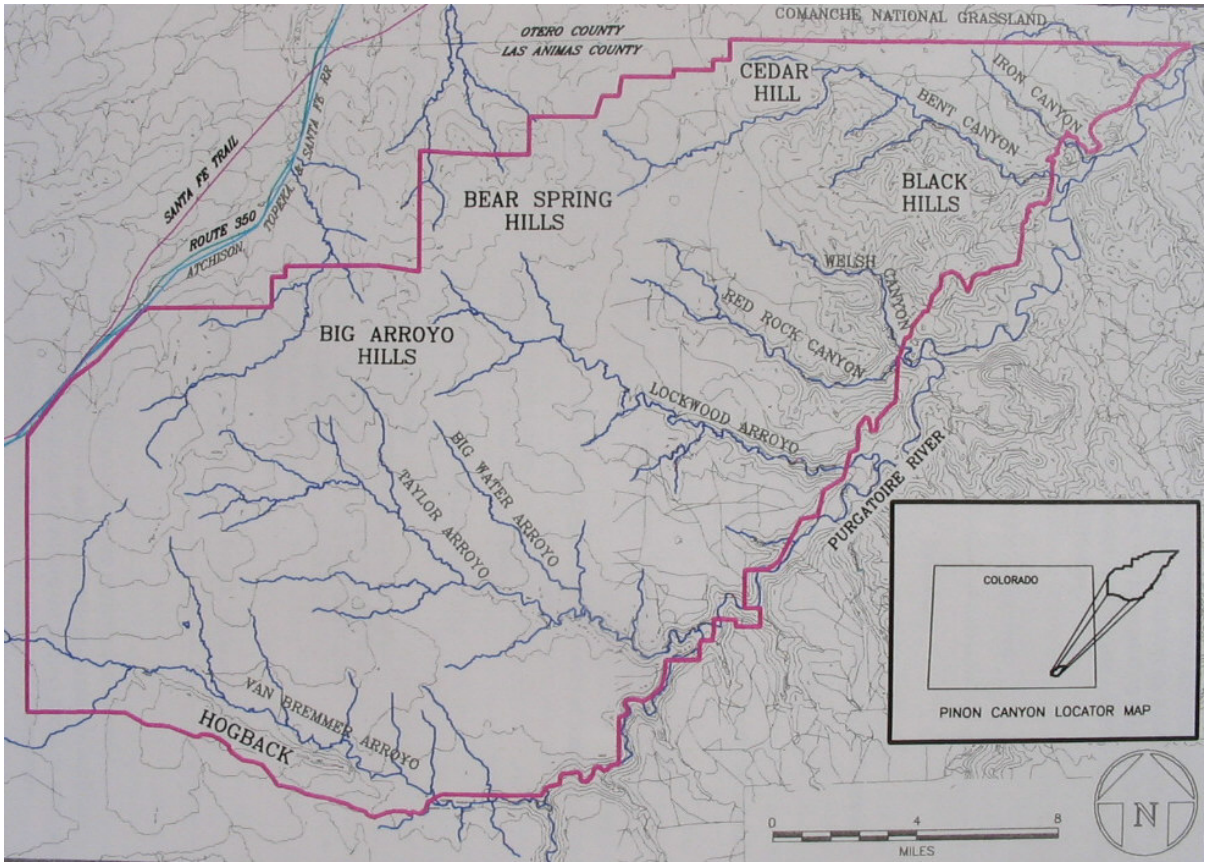

Figure 2. The PCMS.

There are a number of tasks that require attention in the Introduction. I will begin by briefly sketching the contours of the literature on the Spanish and Mexican periods before turning to the historical developments that have occurred in the field of U.S. Western history in the past decade or so. This latter emphasis is especially germane inasmuch as most studies of the PCMS focus on the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — a time that laid the foundation of a Western mythology that is at times at odds with historical reality. In the same vein, it will be necessary to quickly survey available histories of the installation and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Last, I want relay to the reader the basic tenets of the aforementioned "landscape" approach and suggest how we might best apply it to our new history of the PCMS.

Reviewing the Literature

As noted above, one of the keys to reinterpreting the story of the PCMS is the placing of its localized cultural landscape within the framework of broader regional and national histories. This is particularly true of the Spanish era in the Southwest. Indeed, historian Howard Roberts Lamar argued as early as the 1960s that one cannot fully understand the "American period" in the region unless one first comes to terms with the cultural, economic,

and political conditions that prevailed in the highland Spanish-American frontier.[2] In Lamar's estimation, Spanish and Mexican folkways "set the pattern of the relations between the region and the United States" at least to the end of the nineteenth century.[3]

Lamar undoubtedly owed a great deal to the pioneering studies of Herbert E. Bolton. The latter's works on imperial New Spain and its northern province of New Mexico, *The Spanish Borderlands* (1921) and *Spanish Explorations in the Southwest, 1542–1706*, maintained that Spanish movement along a north-south axis from Latin America was as valuable to understanding Southwestern history as that of Anglo east-west migration. Bolton thus used a radically different historical compass — one that pointed him frequently to Spanish archives in Mexico City. There he gained a keen understanding of Spanish and Mexican policies and attitudes. Bolton later used this same research to challenge the already dominant American narrative of progress through the "winning" of the West. As he saw it, there existed a crying need for "a broader treatment of American history, to supplement the purely nationalistic presentation to which we are accustomed."[4] As Albert L. Hurtado noted in his introduction to a recent reissue of Bolton's *The Spanish Borderlands*:

> Bolton wanted to … emphasize lasting Hispanic influences while his editors [Allen Johnson and Constance Lindsay Skinner] saw Spain's presence in North America as a mere prelude to Britain's ultimate political and cultural mastery over the continent. The struggle of these three characters tells much about the cultural prejudices of historians in the early twentieth century and explains why the publication of *The Spanish Borderlands* provided an important amendment to conventional views of American history that were conventional in Bolton's day.[5]

Perhaps more striking, however, was Bolton's view of the Americas and the Western hemisphere as an interrelated economic and political system — hence his insistence on a comparative approach to Spanish and Anglo colonialism. In his estimation, the compartmentalization of national histories throughout North and South America had often fostered jingoistic behavior, whereas the better and more accurate methodology, maintained Bolton, was one that instead focused on the commonalities between various governmental and commercial systems in the colonial Americas. This methodology demanded a "synthetic" approach, one that would give more localized histories a "clearer meaning" and demonstrate that "national history is but a thread out of a larger strand."[6] As we shall see, one can apply Bolton's paradigm even to the PCMS itself.

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[2] Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 1846-1912 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 25.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Herbert E. Bolton's presidential address to the 1932 meeting of the American Historical Association, "The Epic of Greater America," *American Historical Review*, 38, 3 (April 1933): 448-474.
[5] Albert L. Hurtado, introduction to Bolton's *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), x-xi. From the electronic book version available thorough http://www.netlibrary.com.
[6] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 25. Bolton developed this concept through his popular "History of the Americas" courses at the University of California in Berkeley. After he retired in the 1940s, colleagues bluntly disposed of his courses and instituted a more nationalistic curriculum that downplayed the West's Hispanic aspects.

Contemporary works on the Southwest have incorporated Bolton's observations to varying degrees. David Lavender's invaluable entrée into the area's history, *The Southwest*, spends equal time on the Spanish and American periods, yet he takes pains to point out the less attractive aspects of Anglo ascendancy.[7] Recalling George I. Sanchez's 1940 book *The Forgotten People*, Lavender reminds the reader that whites initially derived their perceptions of Mexicans from the accounts of European trappers and traders, among whom the Texans had an especially "virulent anti-Mexican prejudice" born of the Mexican-American War, a belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority, and anti-Catholicism. The roughly 60-to-1 ratio of Hispanics to Anglos in the 1850s did little to alter how this history was later recounted.[8]

For a cultural geographer's view of the region one should consult D. W. Meinig's book *Southwest: Three Peoples in Geographical Change, 1600-1970*. Though far from comprehensive, Meinig's work takes a long view of the successive Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo occupations in New Mexico and Arizona from the 1600s to the late 1960s. The author maintains that the geographic quadrant formed by the aforementioned territories sheltered not three distinct cultures, as so often depicted via Native American, Spanish, and Anglo societies, but several distinct subcultures.[9] Meinig is especially perceptive on the Hispano colonization of southern Colorado that occurred in the wake of Indian clearances. The Hispanos, as New Mexican-born settlers, identified far more readily with older Spanish folkways rather than the Mexican culture of later immigrants. The Hispano migration forms an interesting subtext of the ensuing study, for the Hispanos pioneered the first homesteads on the PCMS in the late 1860s and early 1870s.[10]

Meinig also reveals one of the salient facts of Hispano life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: that their northward migration could not withstand the westward movement of more politically and economically powerful Anglo settlers. This latter group, composed mainly of cattlemen, gradually encircled and isolated Hispano *plazas* — a process that led to long-term economic and political marginalization. Equally valuable is Meinig's overview of the region since 1900. In this section, he points to the continued growth of Anglo power in the form of transportation infrastructures and corridors as a key cause of the area's shifting "social geographies."[11]

For a brief, but concise, overview of the early Spanish period in Southeastern Colorado itself, however, one should consult Frederic J. Athearn's *A Forgotten Kingdom: The Spanish Frontier in Colorado and New Mexico, 1540-1821*. Like Lamar, Athearn sees the Spanish movement as being much more than a footnote to Anglo-American involvement.[12] More recently, Phil Carson's *Across the Northern Frontier: Spanish Explorations in Colorado* has provided a highly readable and useful guide to the early

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[7] David Lavender, *The Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980).
[8] Ibid., 141.
[9] D. W. Meinig, *Southwest: Three Peoples in Geographical Change, 1600-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1971.
[10] Richard L. Nostrand, "The Hispano Homeland in 1900," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, 3 (September 1980): 382-396.
[11] Meinig, *Southwest*, 98-119.
[12] Frederic J. Athearn, *A Forgotten Kingdom: The Spanish Frontier in Colorado and New Mexico, 1540-1821* (Denver: Bureau of Land Management, 1989).

European incursions into southern Colorado, including those that followed the Purgatoire River along the eastern edge of the PCMS. As Carson relates, there were two main motives for Spaniards to make the dangerous trek northward: the possibility of encountering gold-filled cities like those encountered in Mexico and Peru, and attempts to chastise Indian tribes who raided along New Mexico's northern frontier. Carson's work is expansive, moving through time from the sixteenth century and concluding with the end of Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century. Importantly, Carson echoes Lamar and Athearn by asserting that the "tale of Spanish explorations across the land known today as Colorado forms a poignant chapter in the rise and fall of the Spanish empire over four centuries."[13]

Certainly the relations between the Plains Indians, the Spaniards, and their Mexicans heirs were critical in shaping the region's culture as well. The best available account on this topic is Charles L. Kenner's *History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*.[14] Kenner's study spans most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and pays special attention to the *comanchero* trade with the Plains tribes. Briefly, the *comancheros* were New Mexicans, mixed with a smattering of Pueblo Indians, who began trading with the Comanches in the late 1700s. This relationship eventually included other tribes and ended in the 1870s only after U.S. authorities, fed up with the *comancheros'* theft of cattle, suppressed the trade. As Kenner points out, the bartering between the comancheros and the Plains Indians had "profound economic, social and cultural effects" on both groups.[15]

The brief (1821-1846) Mexican phase of Southwestern history remains controversial, particularly in light of recent trends in Western scholarship. Historians who have hitherto studied the era rightly point to the dilemmas that faced Mexican authorities on their northern frontier. David J. Weber has cogently revealed how the financial and demographic needs of the New Mexican provincial government led them to cast aside strict Spanish trade controls and open their borders to merchants and trappers from the United States' western periphery. This led to a bustling trade along the Santa Fe Trail from its head in Independence, Missouri, to its terminus just north of Taos, New Mexico. Weber similarly argues that desperate Mexican administrators had little choice but to legalize this east-west traffic and allow foreign settlers to stake out land on the northern Mexican boundary. Ominously, this led officials to make massive land grants — what one researcher has called "grants of desperation" — in the hope that they could create a buffer zone against raiding Plains Indians, and ironically, encroaching Americans.[16]

Although the Mexican government did require that foreign settlers become naturalized citizens, they failed to appreciate the fact that the presence of even a handful of Americans would give the United States a foothold in the Southwest. The opening of the Mexican borders to trade and settlement may have provided consumer goods and cash for a

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[13] Phil Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier: Spanish Explorations in Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1998), 1.
[14] Charles L. Kenner, *History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).
[15] Ibid., v. See also Edward Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962).
[16] David J. Weber, ed., *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

strapped administration, but in the end it also helped lay the foundations for an American takeover in the 1840s that was triggered as much by commercial and social change as it was by military action.[17] Indeed, the most salient historical feature of the growing American involvement in New Mexico was the manner in which Anglo and French businessmen used their contacts with the Mexican government to negotiate the American occupation of the region.

No persons more clearly illustrate the phenomenon of American commercial and social penetration into New Mexico than the brothers William and Charles Bent. The Bents, along with their future trading partner, Ceran St. Vrain, had all come from Missouri to take advantage of the commercially vital fur trade and its westward push toward more productive streams. A chance encounter between these men in the 1820s led to the eventual formation of the firm of Bent, St. Vrain, & Company and in the 1830s to the construction of a massive fort on the Arkansas River north of the present-day PCMS.

Situated at the southward turn in the Santa Fe Trail and just across the boundary from Mexican territory, this "citadel on the plains" allowed its owners to form trade ties with the Cheyenne and to supply Mexican, European, and Native American trapping parties.[18] Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain would later use their close ties to pro-American elements in the Taos government to help facilitate the nearly bloodless conquest of the province during the Mexican-American War. Furthermore, they leveraged their influence to become part owners of two of the largest land grants in continental history, one of which embraced the land of the current PCMS.

One of the most entertaining studies on Bent's Fort comes from David Lavender. His book, simply titled *Bent's Fort*, provides a highly readable popular history of the stronghold and its role in area history. As Lavender confirms, the fort represents an integral aspect of both the Mexican-American War and the political machinations of the Mexican government in Taos. Like a number of authors, Lavender points to the internal political struggle between business-minded pro-American officials and the opposing clerical element of the provincial Catholic Church as being of particular importance.[19]

A more recent and theoretically minded anthropological study, Douglas C. Comer's *Ritual Ground: Bent's Old Fort, World Formation, and the Annexation of the American Southwest*, focuses on the site as a place for the enacting of important ritualized behaviors between Native Americans, Mexicans, and Anglos. Comer argues that the process of trading created important symbolic, semifamilial social ties for the disparate groups who frequented the stronghold. These links died with the waning of the fur trade at the end of the 1840s.[20] Comer further asserts that the site represented a place of important shared meaning between cultures, and that the abandonment of the fort led to a loss of understanding that contributed

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[17] Rebecca McDowell Craver expounds on social relations in her *The Impact of Intimacy: Mexican-Anglo Intermarriage in New Mexico, 1821-1846* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982).
[18] Lavender, *The Southwest*, 130-131.
[19] See for example Victor Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1983) 43-65, and Lamar *The Far Southwest*, 36-82.
[20] Douglas C. Comer, *Ritual Ground: Bent's Old Fort, World Formation, and the Annexation of the American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

to the tragic massacre of Indians by federal troops at the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864. While Comer sometimes relies too heavily on theory at the expense of history, his work is nonetheless highly original and deeply thought out.

All of the studies on the Bent and St. Vrain empire, however, have a common denominator insomuch as they recognize that social and economic factors drove the transition from Hispanic to Anglo rule in New Mexico and southern Colorado as much as military considerations. The corollary is that the intimate ties between prominent American and Mexican authorities led directly to both groups receiving huge land grants, including the 4-million-acre Vigil and St. Vrain grant that encompassed the PCMS. Most, if not all of the tracts handed out by New Mexican authorities exceeded the legal limits established by Mexican law.

Scholars have devoted significant attention to the history of these enormous parcels of land during the past decade and a half, primarily thorough the University of New Mexico's "Land Grant Series." Those studies have challenged the conventional historical wisdom that the United States dealt relatively fairly with land claims in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War (1844-1846). Rather, authors such as John Van Ness have charged that "both the United States and a host of individuals from the eastern states systematically violated the rights of individuals and communities to hold and use land and water that they had legally acquired through grants from Spain and Mexico."[21] Victor Westphall's *Mercedes Reales*, meanwhile, takes a similar tack in revealing the corruption involved in the settling of land grants by American authorities. Significantly, Westphall divulges that fast and lose land grant rules enriched both Anglos and prominent Hispano families at the expense of the small acreage land holder.[22]

Like Van Ness and Briggs, Westphall provides a helpful explanation of the Spanish land-holding traditions that made their way to the New World. As Westphall notes, grants in New Mexico often went to communities rather than individuals. Similarly, these bequests were based on Spanish and Castilian precepts that were themselves rooted in ancient Roman laws. Both traditions contrasted sharply with Anglo notions of property, which tended to shun community landholding in favor of a nearly sacred belief in private, individual ownership as established by English law. Westphall goes on to offer a valuable account of the influence that Anglo commercialism had on Mexican officials who desperately hoped to protect their northern frontier. As Westphall aptly relates, this need for security led authorities to make a series of grants that actually far exceeded Mexican law. The powerful Bent clan, for instance, laid claim to a portion of the 1.7-million-acre Maxwell Land Grant (also called the Beaubien and Miranda Grant), while Vigil and St. Vrain lent their name to the even larger tract.

As the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) demonstrated, the efforts of New Mexican officials to absorb immigrant *norteamericanos* clearly backfired in the long run. More to the point, the subsequent Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo resulted in the cession of

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[21] John R. Van Ness in the introduction to Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness, eds., *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).
[22] Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*.

most of the Southwest to the United States and cleared the way for a new wave of Anglo migration. In this sense then, 1848 can rightly be viewed as the beginning of what scholars term "Western" history, though the looming presence of the Civil War frequently gives short-shrift to the antebellum West.

The issues embodied in the Anglo-Mexican relationship continue to resonate in the field of Western studies, and in fact in many of the existing PCMS historical contexts. Bearing this in mind, it is important to briefly interrogate the discipline of western history itself. For instance, what has been the trajectory of scholarship on the American West since its inception in the early 1890s? How have scholars begun to challenge this narrative? Moreover, how does the historiography, past and present, impinge on our understanding of the PCMS?

For nearly a century, Western history's dominant paradigm rested on the work of Frederic Jackson Turner. It was Turner's paper at the 1893 American Historical Association meeting in Chicago, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," that established the West as a unique area of study. Turner's main argument pushed forward the notion that the settling of successive frontier lines had imbued Americans with their essential characteristics: optimism, a love of freedom and democracy, and a self-reliant individualism that resisted the imposition of constraints. The West, contended Turner, was to the Americans what the "Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bond of custom, offering new experiences, [and] calling out to new institutions and activities…"[23] This is, of course, a greatly simplified explanation of his work, yet one can see in its contours the account of progress and triumph so familiar to "traditional" historical approaches and the popular imagination.

Walter Prescott Webb made one of the earliest amendments to Turner's "frontier thesis" by positing a more environmentally deterministic model of Western development. According to Webb's enormously influential *The Great Plains* (1931), the most decisive factor in the region's settlement patterns was its aridity.[24] Westward bound settlers, maintained Webb, had to rely on their own ingenuity to survive. If nature would not provide adequate rainfall, settlers would extract it with wind-driven pumps. Barbed wire would hem in cattle and livestock, preventing them from trampling precious crops, and railroads would close the great distances of the plains by linking the east to the far west.[25] For Webb, the story of the West turned on innovation and adaptation to the environment.

Webb, though differentiating his work from Turner's on the basis of climate, nevertheless reached a similar conclusion in accepting the Western experience as constitutive agent of American "exceptionalism." Indeed, environmental historians such as William Cronin continue to emphasize the dry climate rather than the geographic presence of the frontier as the main catalyst for the formation of a peculiarly "American" character. As

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[23] See Brian Dippe's "American Wests: Historiographic Perspectives" in Limerick, Milner, and Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 114.
[24] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).
[25] William Cronin, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78, 4 (March 1992): 1355. See also Mark Malone, "Toward a New Approach to Western American History" in *Trails*, 142-143.

Cronin put it, "the people of the plains not only proved their inventiveness, but built a regional culture beautifully adapted to the challenges of their regional environment."[26]

One of the earliest retorts to the "progress" narrative came from Earl Pomeroy in the mid 1950s. His essay, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," declined to see the West as the mechanism of a uniquely Western persona. In contrast to Turner and Webb, Pomeroy argued that the region witnessed far more continuity than innovation, remaining firmly linked to and dependent upon the eastern portion of the country. The emerging cities that had been fostered by the late nineteenth century gold rushes and rail construction looked east for guidance in establishing their forms of government and their culture. As Michael Malone has reminded us, Pomeroy tended to see the West as a colonial region, "dominated by eastern values, eastern capital, eastern technology, and eastern politics."[27] The West was not really the West at all, but rather an extension of the East.

The 1960s and 1970s also witnessed changes in Western history, though one may fairly say that these shifts in interpretation continued to follow the well-trodden path of national improvement. Though one might see a small section or even an entire chapter of a book addressing the role of Native Americans, Mexicans, gender, or "New Social History" with its emphasis on urbanization or the poor, scholars generally stuck to their guns both literally and figuratively.

Since the late 1980s, however, the traditional narrative of a triumphant transcontinental Euro-American migration spreading "inexorable progress" in its wake has yielded, albeit grudgingly and incompletely, to a body of literature that examines the operation of power across social, political, and cultural terrains. In this type of analysis, previously unheeded phenomena such ethnicity, gender, and class are seen as key analytical categories.

While subtle strains of this revisionist "New West" history had been present in the literature since the 1920s, it had not posed a serious challenge to traditionalists. This changed in 1987 with the publication of Patricia Nelson Limerick's groundbreaking book *The Legacy of Conquest*.[28] As the title suggests, Limerick saw the West as a long story of human and environmental struggle in which "the contest for property and profit has been accompanied by a contest for cultural dominance; conquest also involved a struggle over languages, customs, and religions; the pursuit of legitimacy in property overlapped with the pursuit of legitimacy in way of life and point of view."[29] In Limerick's opinion, this "contest" continues to play itself out in a "semi-Hispanic" West in the form of debates over

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[26] Cronin, "A Place for Stories," 1355.
[27] Malone in *Trails*, 140-141. Pomeroy, as Malone further reminds us, was not alone in challenging or refining Turner's work. As early as the 1920s Herbert E. Bolton's address "Epic of Greater America" urged the adoption of a broader ethnographic perspective. Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950) similarly theorized that the frontier thesis had obscured the socio-cultural and environmental quilt-work that comprised the "West." Historian Marc Bloch, along with Lucien Febvre, was founder of the influential French journal A*nnales d'histoire economique at sociale.*
[28] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American Wes*t (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).
[29] Ibid., 27.

bilingualism and immigration.[30] Limerick followed on this theme in other chapters of the book, citing the presence of unconquered or partially conquered peoples: Indians, Hispanics, Mormons, and Asians. Limerick's view is of a multiplicitous West, or more fittingly, a story of several "Wests."

While Limerick's work garnered much praise, it also drew plenty of brickbats from critics who resented its tendency to strip away cherished regional mythologies. Indeed, the severity of the backlash surprised even Limerick herself, particularly in light of *The Legacy of Conquest*'s generally conciliatory tone. Moreover, many of her interpretations did not differ significantly from those of the field's pioneer, Frederick Jackson Turner. As early as 1910, Turner called for a flexible methodology that would study "the present and the recent past not only for themselves, but also as the source of new hypotheses, new lines of inquiry, new criteria of the influence of the remoter past."[31] By way of further example, he, like Limerick, emphasized the West's dependence on the federal government, not just on the rugged individuality of its settlers. Turner drew attention to the Indian removals as well, calling the treatment meted out to the Sioux nation a "betrayal." The upshot, as Limerick herself noted, is that Turner was more "New" than many of his successors. Indeed, one suspects that the two scholars would have found much to agree upon.

The controversy over *The Legacy of Conquest* grew even sharper in 1989, when the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored a conference provocatively entitled "Trails: Toward a New Western History" as a companion piece to the traveling exhibit "Trails Through Time." As Limerick relates, the meeting started out with its usual promise of virtually no press coverage — historians are notoriously boring to everyone but themselves — only to have the conference become a lightning rod for criticism after the media picked up a one-page response she had written to one of the participants asking what, exactly, "New Western History" meant. Limerick's simple statement laid out her position nicely:

> New Western Historians define "the West" primarily as a place — the trans-Mississippi region in the broadest terms … When clearly and precisely defined, the term "frontier" is nationalistic and often racist (in essence where white people get scarce); when cleared of its ethnocentrism, the term loses its definition.[32]

And perhaps more importantly:

> New Western Historians break free of the old model of progress and improvement and face up to the possibility that some roads of western development led directly to failure and to injury. This reappraisal is not meant to make white Americans "look bad." The intention is, on the contrary, simply to make clear that heroism and villainy, virtue and vice, and nobility

[30] See Clyde A. Milner II's review "A Reconquered Frontier," *Reviews in American History* 17, 1 (March, 1989), 91.
[31] Cited in Limerick's "The Trail to Santa Fe: The Unleashing of the Western Public Intellectual," in *Trails*, 62.
[32] Limerick, "What on Earth is the New Western History?" in *Trails*, 87-88.

> and shoddiness appear in roughly the same proportions as they appear in any other subject of human history… This is only disillusioning to those who have come to depend on illusions.[33]

Limerick and other "New Western Historians" thus attempted to uncouple Western scholarship from its traditionalist moorings by emphasizing elements of race, ethnicity, gender, and labor. The skies were not "not cloudy all day," but rather partly cloudy, and at times, downright dark. As Elliott West provocatively suggested in the title of an essay on trends in Western history, it was "A Longer, Grimmer, but More Interesting West."[34]

Despite these interventions, however, the dominant perception of the American West continues to be rooted in the mythology of national progress and "rugged individualism." This ethos of single-minded independence and exceptionalism has persisted, despite the fact that hardly anyone could have settled the area if not for the aid rendered by the federal government in the last 150 years, be it in the form of military protection, homestead programs, or more recent water development projects.

The obvious question, of course, is how the new Western history relates to existing historical contexts of the PCMS. Is there a longer and grimmer story to be told regarding the installation and its Native American-Spanish-Mexican-American evolution? The answer lies somewhere in between, for we can say with certainty that a reconsideration of the more localized studies that have hitherto emerged will allow us to reevaluate the cultural significance of the installation.

I base this assertion on what I see as two primary problems afflicting existing historical contexts. First, most simply rely too heavily on one another and the same dated texts, many of which contain built-in biases. Second, the very necessity of working across disciplines has tended to preclude the adoption of a holistic perspective. Indeed, these same disciplinary boundaries shielded nonhistorian writers of earlier studies, mainly archaeologists, from trends outside of their field. And just as most historians would be at pains to remain current in the latest archaeological methodologies, the reverse is also true. This is not to say that prior historical contexts did not include an impressive body of historical research and solid archaeological analysis, for they did. Rather, it simply means that they antedated more recent approaches to history, not to mention the body of literature that these new paradigms have produced, some of which bear directly on the PCMS.

Thus far the most extensive historical context available for the PCMS has been the 1985 report of the Powers Elevation Company Archaeology Division. The Powers Report, conducted with Paul D. Friedman as principal investigator, is thorough and commendable.[35] Yet, it is by now almost 20 years old, and suffers from, I think, an overreliance on statistical methodology — what historians call "cliometrics." This mode of analysis was popularized in

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[33] Ibid.
[34] West, Elliot. "A Longer, Grimmer, but more Interesting Story." in *Trials*.
[35] Friedman, Paul D. *Final Report of History and Oral History Studies of the Fort Carson Pinon Canyon Maneuver Area, Las Animas County, Colorado.* Denver: Powers Elevation, 1985; hereafter referred to as the *Powers Report*.

1974 when Stanley L. Engerman and Robert William Fogel released *Time on the Cross*,[36] a quantitative/economic study of plantation slavery's profitability. Friedman adeptly deploys a similar type of analysis through the use of property records and tax rolls for those who lived on the PCMS. In doing so he reveals the changes in landholding patterns as they occurred in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

My main quibble with the Powers Report, however, is due primarily to what I see as a lack of historical interpretation. Again, this is due more to the *type* of report it is rather than to any inherent fault. Still, the very essence of determining historical significance lies in the willingness to explain and interpret evidence on a deeper level. Pages 68-73 of the report, for example, address Indian removal with such dispassion that it seems as if the Indians' main problem was that they were in the way of settlers. The role of Hispanics, though given significant attention, still seems to be too embedded in larger narratives of Anglo settlement and narratives of "progress," whereas a more meaningful approach would explain, as Sarah Deutsch did in her study of the Southwestern Hispanic culture, how they attempted to adapt to rapidly shifting economic and social circumstances.[37] I would assert that this oversight is due to the study's overly narrow focus, for while Hispanos became a minority on the PCMS in the late nineteenth century, they nonetheless continued to constitute a solid majority in many areas of Las Animas County, the home of the installation.

Friedman's *Valley of Lost Soul: A History of the Pinon Canyon Region of Southeastern Colorado* based on his previous research for the Powers Report, proves an enjoyable and interesting read. The author does an admirable job of chronicling the early American incursions into the area as well as the first attempts at settlement. Moreover, he provides a very good overview of the cycles of boom and bust that concluded in the 1920s and 1930s, when depression and drought crippled the ranching industry and led to an exodus from the Purgatoire valley.[38]

Another useful historical context is provided in the *Cultural Resource Management Plan for Fort Carson Military Reservation* (vol. II).[39] This report is well written and provides a good overview of the region's development. Yet, as in the case of the Powers Report, it is primarily an archaeological endeavor. Deep historical analysis is beyond its intended scope, with physical site analysis being its primary goal. Frederic Athearn's *Land of Contrasts: A History of Southeastern Colorado*, completed for the Bureau of Land Management, also proves useful in its broad overview of the area just west of Fort Carson. In Athearn's historically based analysis one sees deeper contexts. He briefly examines, for

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[36] Stanley L. Engerman, and Robert William Fogel. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. New York: Norton, 1989.
[37] Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[38] Paul D. Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls: A History of the Pinon Canyon Region of Southeastern Colorado* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988). For an earlier history see Morris F. Taylor's *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 1964.
[39] Christian J. Zier, Kurt P. Schweigert, Mary W. Painter, et al., *Cultural Resource Management Plan for Fort Carson Military Reservation Colorado* (Denver: Centennial Archaeology, 1997).

example, Klan activity in the region, labor unrest in mining towns, and offers an open-eyed assessment of Indian removal.[40]

While all of the PCMS studies noted above contain valid historical approaches, the study that follows below will adopt as its main analytic a focus upon the *landscape*. Indeed, Webb's assertion that the environment and landscape played a crucial role in shaping the daily rhythms of life in the West still holds true today, though we can take issue with his celebratory tone. How, though, do we variously define the term *landscape* and best use it as a methodology?

The pioneering cultural geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer argued that landscape was what the inhabitants of a particular physical space did to alter the topography of that same space. As Steven Smith relates in his study of life in southern Pulaski County, Missouri, now the home of Fort Leonard Wood, Sauer saw landscape as "the result primarily of human activity, in which human works are inscribed on the earth's surface giving the land its characteristic expression."[41] In other words, as Sauer's "The Morphology of Landscape" argued, "The *cultural* landscape is fashioned from a *natural* landscape by a cultural group [italics mine]. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result."[42] As the author correctly notes, Sauer did not overly concern himself with understanding the folkways of an area's peoples, but rather how the people used and altered the land. In essence, the inhabitants used the land like a blank slate or palette on which to make their mark.

As Smith astutely notes, Sauer provided a starting point of sorts for landscape studies, but his approach was too limited in that it did not account for the *interaction* between culture and the environment. Indeed, it is precisely this limitation that Smith aimed to overcome in the study of the Fort Leonard Wood area, *Made in the Timber*. Smith's work is an ambitious attempt to synthesize cultural geography, archaeology and local history.

Made in the Timber not only adopts and expands the work of Sauer, but also that of recent archaeology. Above all, however, Smith uses what is in essentially a systemic approach in seeing:

> …landscape as the land's influence on the construct of human occupation, and vice-versa, the effect's of human exploitation on the land. As we occupy the land, we mark, scar and modify it in ways that reflect our culture. As our culture changes, the land is altered, creating new landscapes. Further, our culture is transformed by the challenges of living on the land.[43]

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[40] Frederic Athearn, *Land of Contrasts: A History of Southeastern Colorado* (Denver: Bureau of Land Management, 1985), 157, 139-140, 77-79. Athearn is the son of Robert G. Athearn, a respected scholar of the West. See for example the latter's *The Mythic West in Twentieth Century America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986).
[41] Steven D. Smith, *Made in the Timber: A Settlement History of the Fort Leonard Wood Region*, USA/CERL Special Report (SR) 03-5. July 2003. 3.
[42] Cited by Smith, 3; Carl Ortwin Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape" in *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, edited by John Leighly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963) 343.
[43] Smith, *Made in the Timber*, 4.

In this model, landscape and its inhabitants thus live in a constant pattern of interaction and adjustment. This is certainly true of the PCMS. We might ask, for instance, what impact mining, railroads, and the livestock industries had on the PCMS environs. Indeed, crews in Las Animas County coal mines contained a large percentage of southeastern Europeans, hence even "Anglo" settlers exhibited a surprising diversity, while Hispanos too left their more proximate homes to work in the coalfields and on railroad construction gangs. Moreover, the arid, at times devastating, environment meant that plainswomen could be as indispensable to the overall local and family economies as their male counterparts.

Seen from this perspective, Las Animas County's landscape becomes a place constantly remade by environmental factors, intercultural contact, and the increasing presence of large capital industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is a critical point, for if we accept the claims of Smith we must acknowledge that a new historical context has to account for a region's diversity and significances. It is partly a process of making visible what, or who, has been invisible or obscured in existing contexts. Similarly, it entails a willingness to evaluate the past, not just recount it.

Yet another work, William Wyckoff's *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape, 1860-1940*, suggests how we might best apply the "landscape" approach to the PCMS. Like Smith, Wyckoff sees landscape as a product of broad historical patterns. For example, Wyckoff examines how "global forces of natural resource based capitalism" and "powerful national impulses encouraging continental expansion" combined to create "new geographies" and landscapes in Colorado between 1860 and 1940. Landscape, concludes Wyckoff, is thus the resulting "signatures people leave upon the visible scene and what those imprints can tell us."[44]

Wyckoff further considers landscape to be interrelated with the phenomena of *location* and *place*. In Wyckoff's estimation, all three factors are essential elements in understanding the historical geography of Colorado. Location, for instance, "involves investigating how areas are organized spatially, how settlements are connected to systems of circulation that shape flows of people, goods, money, and information." Moreover, the book duly notes, location "focuses on Colorado's settlement nuclei as well as the links that tie them to the world beyond" insomuch as it examines "how and why such settlement systems originate and how they organize flows and movements within and between regions."[45]

Wyckoff's concept of "place" is more conceptually abstract, but most closely relates to one of this study's immediate goals — namely determining how one assigns *meaning* to a particular location. This is really a key point, for we can use the terms "place" and "significance" interchangeably. Equally germane is Wyckoff's observation that Colorado provides an especially rich source for the study of historical meaning, since it marked a frontier where Hispano, Anglo, Native American, and even southern European cultures all came into contact and where each culture produced unique "social geographies." In this

[44] William Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape, 1860-1940* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1999), 4.
[45] Ibid.

context, one has to consider the similarities, differences, and exchanges between these groups.[46]

Robert Zelnick's article "Military Posts as Cultural Landscapes,"[47] follows one of the same themes as Wyckoff in arguing that the researcher should adopt a holistic perspective in establishing historical significance. The key to understanding a locale, as Zelnick sees it, is ascertaining what is *usual* rather than unusual. In this model, the seemingly mundane "everyday scene" serves as the clearest and most "concrete indicator … of habits, technology, and the distributions of power and authority within society." Furthermore, the land's significance derives from everyday ways of life and is "a tangible manifestation of human actions and beliefs set against and within a natural landscape."

What then, are some of the key questions that we might address in taking a landscape approach? We might ask, for instance, if the Spanish presence, particularly their view of land tenureship, had a more lasting effect than previously supposed. How, exactly, did Spanish and later Mexican land-holding patterns affect the redistribution of land after the United States took control of the region in the 1840s? And what of intertribal Native American relations? What influence did the arrival of Anglo and European traders and fur-trappers have on the region during the Mexican period of the 1820s through the 1840s? Here, it is important to see the fur trade as part of a larger, national economic system in which eastern demand drove western exploration. One might also ask what effect, if any, did the differing styles of livestock ranching and the respective emphasis on cattle versus sheep had on Anglo-Hispano relations. Similarly, we might also consider what consequences the late nineteenth century growth in Las Animas County's coal mining industry might have had on the livestock industry. Was the produce of the PCMS homesteads sent to distant markets, or was it consumed locally?

The observations of Smith, Wyckoff, and Zelnick provide an excellent framework for our reconsideration of the PCMS and the manner in which those who lived in the locale perceived the land, and contrarily, how the land *dictated* the cultural life of its inhabitants. In this sense, we should understand that the high plains environment forced those who sought to exploit its resources to respond to its demands. Patterns of settlement, farming, livestock raising, and other forms of economic development did not represent, as Sauer might have maintained, the will of the inhabitants being imposed upon a particular physical space, but rather stood as an acknowledgement that simple day-to-day survival called for adaptability and sheer perseverance, both personally and in the ability to use new technologies to maximize scarce resources. The story of the PCMS is itself a microcosm of many histories, of global European exploration and rivalry, of indigenous peoples coming to terms with this encroachment, of the growing power of an embryonic nation, and of the legacies, both wretched and wonderful, that continue to permeate the American West.

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[46] Ibid., 5.
[47] Zelnick, Dr. Robert Z. "Military Posts as Cultural Landscapes." Robert Lyon, ed. *Settler Communities in the West: Historic Contexts for Cultural Resource Managers of Department of Defense Lands*. (Denver: National Park Service and Department of Defense, Legacy Resource Management Program, 1994).

1 First Encounters: The Prehistory of the PCMS and the Creation of Spain's New World Frontier

One of the most striking historical aspects of the PCMS region has been its role as a frontier — not just for late arriving Anglos, but for a number of peoples over several centuries. Nomadic Native American clans, for example, had begun making their way southward from the northern Plains and Canada toward the more settled southwestern Pueblo Indian cultures well before European arrival. And while the mobility of these tribes has resulted in spotty archaeological evidence, this does not mean that their past is somehow beyond recovery. In fact, the significant oral tradition of Plains cultures, when combined with three centuries of contact between Native American and Spaniard, suggests that one can construct at least a partial image of life in the PCMS as it existed prior to and during the Spanish period.

The story of Plains and Iberian cultures coming into contact along New Spain's northern border is a compelling, yet understudied aspect of the PCMS' history. Archival records make clear that the Spanish struggled for more than three centuries to draw the frontier lands in northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado closer into their imperial orbit by subduing hostile tribes and allying with others. If the frontier could be made safe, Spanish authorities reasoned, they could populate the region and develop its resources while at the same time blocking western movement by their main North American rivals, the French and British. Despite their at times strenuous efforts, the Spanish enjoyed only the most limited success in establishing control over the PCMS and its environs.

The apparently ephemeral nature of both the Native American and Spanish presences in southeastern Colorado begs the question: why should one reconsider their significance? There are two closely related ways to address this question. First, it would be shortsighted to equate impermanence with irrelevance; the inability of either group to leave a more lasting impression on the area does not mean that there was no effort to do so. This is noteworthy insomuch as the environmental factors that hampered settlement along the Purgatoire River speak naturally to this study's overall focus on the landscape as a determinant of life.

Second, and more importantly, it is essential to recall that prior historical contexts have tended to focus on the PCMS as it existed after Anglo encroachment and the accompanying technologies of High Plains environmental adaptation. This approach is somewhat problematic in that the study area's development as a nexus of nineteenth century American livestock raising and mining has generally served to diminish the historically vibrant Spanish era. As the historian Alfred B. Thomas pointedly remarked in the 1930s, Anglo explorers had merely:

> … entered area already crisscrossed and named by the successors of Coronado … [where] Every landmark, stream, and mountain range of importance honored Spanish saint[s] or deity long before Pike's dubious meanderings. Governor Anza had crossed the main range of the Rockies, explored Estes Park, and mounted Ute Pass in full view of the Peak a quarter of a century before Pike christened the pile.[1]

Thomas' comments are useful, for they remind one that the plains of southeastern Colorado marked the edge of Spanish ambitions for nearly 300 years. Iberian authorities in fact considered the area a first line of defense for their empire in the Southwest. It was there too that Spanish, Apachean, and Comanche peoples dueled for ascendancy in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.

Here one comes to the crux of the matter — "progress" as traditionally enshrined in Western mythology has generally been the measure of cultural importance. As Marwyn Samuels' essay on the "The Biography of Landscape" argues, fixating solely on the economic, social, and political constituents of a cultural geography renders the individuals who "live-in, pass through, or even make the landscape" *meaningless*. In other words, the inhabitants of the region, at least those who dwelt there before the advent of material "progress," disappear within an "all encompassing 'process' [of economic and social development] that alone makes meaningful whatever it happens to carry along."[2]

The relative invisibility of the study area's earlier inhabitants creates a historical imperative that demands a fuller account of the installation's environs prior to the formal end of the Spanish era in 1820. The following chapter will meet this challenge head-on by posing two main questions. We should ask, for example, how Native Americans in the PCMS region saw the land just before the arrival of the Spanish — what did the landscape mean to them? In the same vein, how did Spanish/Indian relations impact settlement patterns in the study area?

The Prehistory of the PCMS

The emphasis on landscape that Western historians and cultural geographers have employed in the past several years, so often applied to the introduction of environment-altering capital industries such as mining, can also provide valuable insights in evaluating Native American culture. The aridity of the region, for instance, meant that the PCMS served as more of a way-station between winter and summer grounds rather than as a site of permanent occupation for various tribes. The lack of established Indian settlements, however, by no means squares with a lack of activity. Archaeologists working on the installation have uncovered at least 1,965 sites relating to Native Americans, a number that indicates continuous utilization.

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[1] Alfred Barnaby Thomas, ed., *After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), 1.

[2] Marwyn S. Samuels, "The Biography of Landscape" in D.W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 52. Samuels is drawing as well on Hannah Arendt's *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Books, 1961), 64.

The earliest evidence remains tentative, yet it suggests that nomadic Paleo-Indian groups (10,500-5,000 B.C.E.) migrated through southeastern Colorado in conjunction with the bison herds. Still more sustained research shows signs of consistent usage for nearly 5,000 years.[3] Moreover, archaeologists working along the roughly twenty-five mile-long Van Bremer Arroyo on the installation's southern border have discovered several rock shelters, the oldest of which had been in use approximately 3,590 years ago.[4] Other excavations along the Van Bremer stream point to at least a semi-permanent occupation in the form of two pithouses. Indigenous peoples had built each of the structures by digging a funnel shape into the ground and finishing the above ground level with low stone walls. These 3,000- to 1,800-year-old remains were most likely not intended as living quarters. Rather, as Leon Loendorf relates, the more than 250 petroglyphs of "animals, plants, tools, and weapons like bows and arrows, the sun and moon" suggest an ongoing spiritual-ceremonial purpose.[5] Researchers have also found similar pithouses on the Purgatoire River just west of Trinidad, but outside of the PCMS boundaries. These latter structures resembled those on the Van Bremer Arroyo in that they were also dug partially below ground, yet their above-ground construction consisted of wooden posts with roofs of branches or logs.[6]

Although an exact date for the Van Bremer pithouses remains elusive, it is clear that the immediate area remained a favored spot for almost four millennia. Its shelters offered protection for generations of Native Americans as they drifted from summer to winter grounds. In addition, the fact that the long Hogback Ridge paralleled the arroyo made it an excellent place for observation as well as religious ceremonies — both comforting for groups of ever-moving peoples. The probability that the Van Bremer petroglyphs are religious in nature points to a question that we cannot precisely answer: what meaning did the landscape around what we now call the PCMS have for these early inhabitants? Here, the best we can hope for is to briefly examine later migrations by tribes who left a more distinct impression of their cosmologies and belief systems.

Most notable among the migrations was that of the Apachean peoples who responded to pressure from rival neighbors by moving southward from west-central Canada along the east range of the Rockies sometime between 1,000 and 1,500 A.D.[7] By the time of the first Spanish incursions in the late 1500s, a number of Athabascan-speaking Apachean clans — the Chiriacua, Kiowa-Apache, Navajo, the Jicarilla and related groups — had penetrated well into the central High Plains. The Shoshonean-speaking Comanches joined the exodus later, moving southward from Wyoming about 1550 in the wake of their Ute kin. By 1705 the first

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[3] See Donald G. Jones, Martha Williams, Kathy Stemmler, Michael H. McGrath, and Elizabeth Winstead's *Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Information Related to the Fort Carson Military Reservation and Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in Colorado* (Frederic, Maryland: R. Christopher Godwin and Associates, 1998), x.
[4] Lawrence Loendorf, *Tracks through Time: Prehistory and History of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site Southeastern Colorado* (Lincoln: National Park Service, 1996), 13. See also William Andrefsky Jr., Marilyn J. Bender, John D. Benko, and Judy K. Michaelsen, *Test Excavations in the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site*, *vol. I* (Laramie: Larson-Tibesar Associates, 1990), 415.
[5] Loendorf, *Tracks through Time*, 17.
[6] Ibid., 19.
[7] Albert H. Schroeder's work on the Apaches maintained that the lack of dendrological and oral evidence indicated that the tribe did not penetrate eastern Colorado until 1670, and possibly as late as 1732. There is a stronger case for an earlier presence. James and Delores Gunnerson, for example, argued that the Apaches had been in the region continuously since at least 1525. Cited in Jones et. al., *Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Information*, 59.

Comanches appeared at the Taos trading fair. It was an ominous sign, for as we shall see later in this chapter the threat posed by the horse-mounted Comanches thwarted both the Apache and the Spanish in their attempts to control the Plains in the eighteenth century. Indeed, by 1720 the Comanche had ended two centuries of Apache dominance and forced some Apache bands to seek Spanish protection.[8]

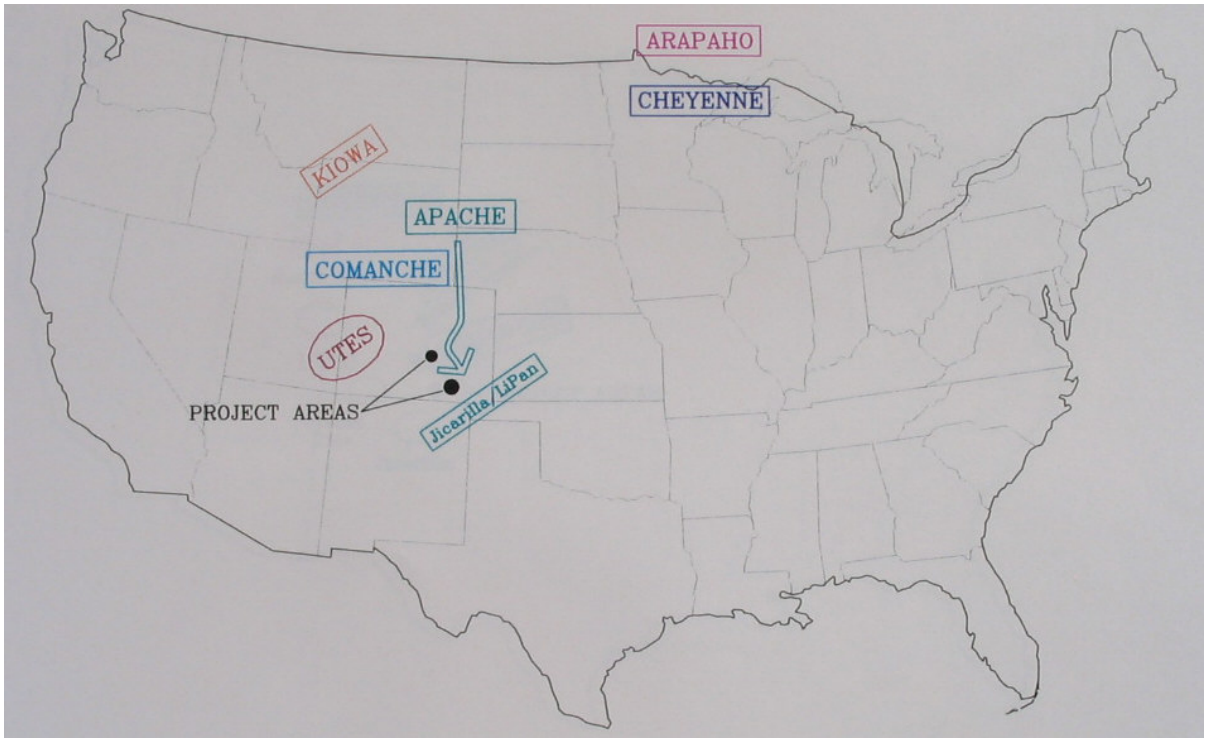

Figure 3. Tribal movement to 1700.

One such Apache tribe, and the one most closely linked to the PCMS, was the Jicarilla. Like many of their kinspeople who had drifted into the Southwest, they made contact with the more settled Pueblo tribes of Arizona and New Mexico, adopting a semi-sedentary lifestyle of small villages and subsistence farming in the process.[9] Hunting nonetheless remained crucial to the Jicarilla's welfare since the produce of bison — meat as well as hides for tents and robes — helped sustain the tribe during the winter months. For the Jicarilla then, the landscape was to be used as needed — they were not wedded entirely to farming, nor did they depend wholly upon the buffalo herds.

The Jicarilla also traded the surplus of their hunting trips with the Picuris, Pecos, Taos, and other Pueblo settlements.[10] The exchanges between the Apaches and Pueblo

[8] James H. Gunnerson and Dolores A. Gunnerson, *Ethnohistory of the High Plains* (Denver: Colorado State Office of Bureau of Land Management, 1988) 1, 29.
[9]For one of the earliest studies of Jicarilla folktales see Pliny Earle Goddard, *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. III: Jicarilla Apache Texts* (New York: 1911). Much of the material came from Casa Maria, a male Jicarilla approximately seventy years of age at the time. Reuben Springer, another Jicarilla, served as interpreter for Goddard and Maria.
[10] Gunnerson and Gunnerson, *Ethnohistory of the High Plains*, 29.

cultures is telling, for it demonstrates just how skillful the Jicarilla had been in adapting to a High Plains landscape that demanded flexibility of all its inhabitants. As Jicarilla scholar Veronica Tiller has revealed, once the Jicarilla had migrated into southern Colorado and northern New Mexico they adopted a "dual orientation" in which landscape determined the "basic social orientations" of the tribe by cleaving it into two separate bands.[11] The "Llaneros" branch, as the name implies, lived on the Plains, while the "Olleros" sought the shelter of the mountain valleys.[12]

As Tiller further relates, geography and landscape figured prominently into Jicarilla cosmology and the close ties the tribe maintained with the region prior to their forced migration to a federal reservation on the Chama River in northwestern New Mexico in the 1870s. Morris Opler's pioneering work offers some indication of the Jicarilla's view of the land as well, noting that they referred to their territory as *Nahkeyaa*, meaning "our footprints are there." Moreover, the landscape represented a living being, "mother earth," with major landmarks literally embodying the earth. A recent ethnographic study conducted for the Corps of Engineers, citing Opler, most clearly illustrates this point:

> Taos the heart of the world, the Rio Grande the backbone, the mountain ridge the neck, and Pike's Peak the head. The Sangre de Christo Mountains are one of the legs and the mountains on the western side of the river … the other leg. The Jicarilla were told by the Creator that they were to live in this area or they would perish.[13]

Within this assemblage lay the sacred rivers: the Arkansas, Rio Grande, Pecos, and Canadian. The first two assumed a male persona, the latter two female. Proper sanctification for the Jicarilla infants required water from at least one male and one female river.[14] This same area represented the point nearest the "center of the earth," the territory previously designated by the Supreme Deity as the tribal homeland.[15]

The most critical point to draw from Jicarilla cosmology is this: it gave the tribe a striking ability to acclimate "to changing circumstances without losing the hard core of their cultural integrity."[16] Indeed, their very intimacy with the landscape of Colorado and New Mexico lent them a degree of stability and a *sense of place*, despite the fact that they had probably arrived in the area no earlier than the sixteenth century. Correspondingly, the Jicarilla spiritual belief system allowed them to continually adapt to disruptions in their lives, particularly those brought on by pressure from rival bands of Apache as well later arriving Comanche, Spanish, and Anglos.

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[11] Veronica Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History, 1846-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 4.
[12] Ibid; The name "Olleros" has been interpreted alternately as "potters," or "sand people." See Dolores A. Gunnerson, *The Jicarilla Apaches: A Study in Survival* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 160-161. The landscape derivation, as Gunnerson points out, seems the most plausible.
[13] Opler as cited in Jones, et. al., *Ethnohistory and Ethnographic Information*, 66.
[14] Ibid.; see also Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 3.
[15] Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 3.
[16] Gunnerson, *The Jicarilla Apaches,* 165.

The Jicarilla *Hąąshch'ín* (or *Hactcin*), the supernatural spirits "existing in the underworld before emerging into the present world" and the most important figures in tribal cosmology, vividly demonstrate the tribe's adaptability. The *Hactcin* had created the universe and all its life, and were thus personified in every object of the natural world.[17] Moreover, they had, in "the origin of clay pots and pipes," told the "one old man" and "one old woman" of the future arrival of the Spanish.[18] The old couple, a Jicarilla analogue to Adam and Eve, had prayed to the *Hactcin* for "something to live by," i.e., a way to make a living. *Hactcin* responded by showing the couple a piece of gold and silver ore and explaining that although it was valuable, they lacked the skill and tools to work it. Rather, explained the spirit, he would send "people from cross the ocean, from the east." These interlopers, "with eyes like fish eyes, hair reddish, and skin white," would feed the Jicarilla and work the mines. It was therefore important not to fight them, since they would serve the tribe. In the meantime, the Jicarilla would learn to work with clay to fashion pots and pipes.[19]

This mythology may likewise reflect the friendly and mutually dependent nature of eighteenth century Jicarilla-Spanish relations. Furthermore, the ability of the Jicarilla mythology to contain multiple versions of the same story indicates a tendency to incorporate events after the fact. This explanation seems all the more viable when compared with that of the Mexican advent into Jicarilla territory as related in the story "The contest between Killer-of-Enemies and One-Who-Wins." The former, a key hero figure in tribal culture, tells the Jicarilla that another people would come from the south, in addition to those from the east. The southerners would not be white but would have black hair with half-black faces — beards. If they were friendly, Killer-of-Enemies would be "pleased," if not, he would "turn their guns and equipment to water."[20] In this latter case the tale plainly came as a result of contact rather than in anticipation of it. At the very least, however, both myths reflect an attempt by the tribe to come to terms with the strangers that came into their midst — European and indigenous, that would so profoundly challenge Jicarilla existence.

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[17] See Scott Rushforth's introduction to Morris Opler's *Myths and Tales of the Jicarilla Apache Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), ix. Reprint of 1938 edition.
[18] Opler, *Myths and Tales*, 238. The myths often come in more than one version, as does the Jicarilla Creation story.
[19] Ibid., 239.
[20] Ibid., 134.

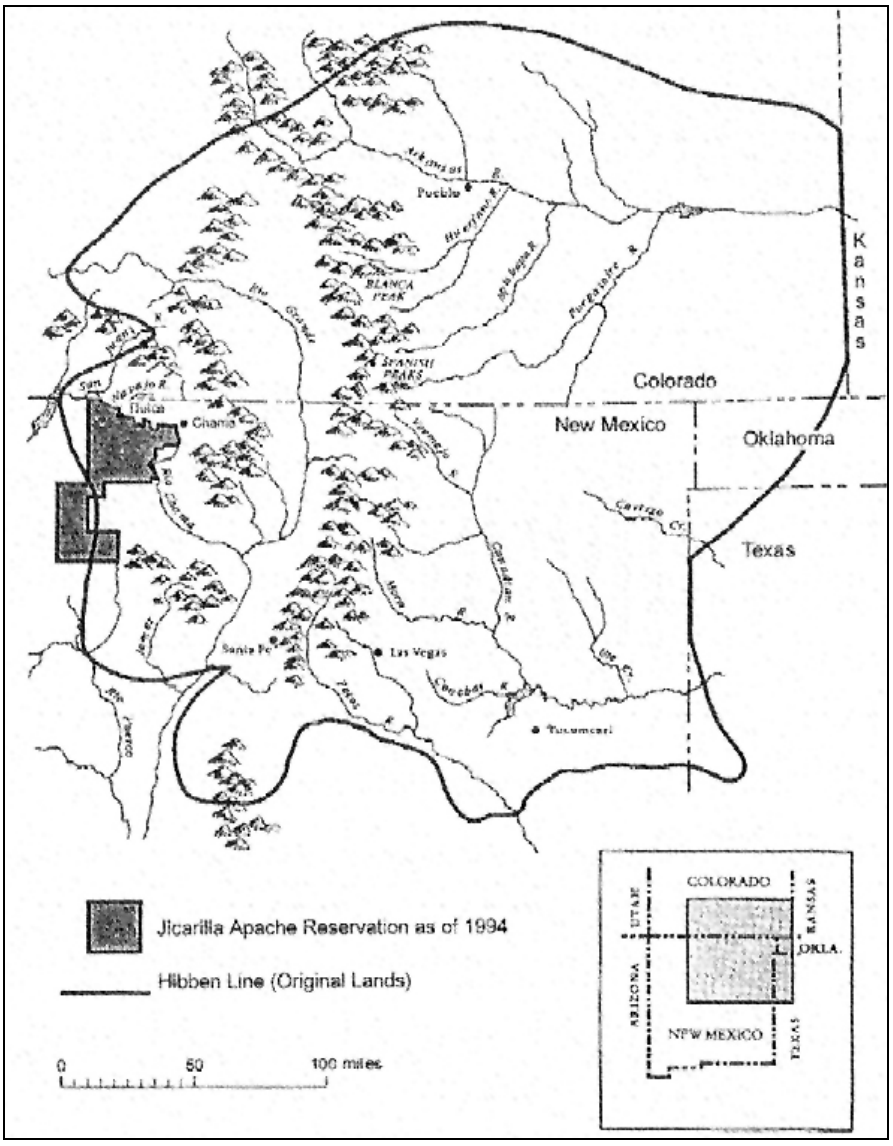

Figure 4. The Jicarilla World.
Excerpted from Robert Nordhaus, *Tipi Rings, A Chronicle of the Jicarilla Apache Land Claims*.

Old Worlds Become New: The Impact of Spain on the PCMS

The story of Europe's initial exploration and contact with the indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere, though familiar, bears repeating as a prelude to our consideration of the Southwest's intriguing Spanish period (1540 to 1821). As noted in the Introduction, its temporal boundaries mark a "Forgotten Kingdom," bookended between the prehistoric past and the beginning of Anglo-American involvement.[21] More importantly, it would be difficult to understand the trajectory of the American West without juxtaposing it against Spain's lingering cultural legacies in the region.

[21] Historically the term "New Southwest" is contrasted with the "Old Southwest," with the latter denoting the West Floridas and Gulf south associated with Spanish and French occupation.

The scope of this study precludes an exhaustive discussion of the Spanish era, yet there remain a number of questions that we should ask regarding this period vis-à-vis the PCMS itself. First, which of the numerous Spanish expeditions in the West crossed in or near the PCMS? What was their purpose, and how did they fit in with the broader patterns of Spanish rule? Second, how did the Spanish *understand and rule* the region during its extended reign? More specifically, how did their culture influence their perceptions of the land?

Spain's accumulation of territory and wealth, like European expansion and colonization in general, was by no means preordained. As Paul Kennedy noted in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, powerful Chinese fleets had made contact with Ceylon, east Africa, and penetrated as far as the mouth of the Red Sea in the early fifteenth century before the innate conservatism of the Ming dynasty, combined with Mongol pressure on China's northern frontiers, led authorities to gut a previously robust naval building program.[22] This created a void that the Europeans, particularly the Portuguese and the Spaniards, readily filled. As the maritime superpowers of sixteenth century Europe, both Portugal and Spain were able to extend their reach southward, as in the case of Portugal's search for precious metals along the African coast, and westward, as Spain sought an alternate route to the East Indies spice trade. Ironically, Portugal, who had as its main goal the locating of gold fields in the area of Guinea, instead stumbled upon a new source for the spices, while the Spanish effort to find an alternate spice route to the East Indies instead led to them to vast deposits of precious metals in Central America.

Perhaps the most salient feature of these initial voyages is that both Portuguese and Spanish explorers had only a vague notion of the world's geography. Indeed, Christopher Columbus stubbornly refused to acknowledge that his 1492 ocean crossing had failed to find the rumored western passage to the spice routes. As far as he was concerned, he had made landfall somewhere on Asia's eastern coast, and therefore had accomplished his mission. Still other navigators understood that Columbus had erred and that he had found an entirely new region, one which had to be bypassed to reach the eastern spice markets.[23]

The realization that Columbus had at least found a "New World," and that this might still lead to the discovery of shorter trade routes and gold, meant that the major European powers would waste little time in sending out further expeditions. For Spain, the greatest gains came after the swift and rather brutal takeover of the Americas. Spain had laid the foundation for its empire in the Americas within a mere thirty years of Columbus' first contact with the Caribbean islands. Hernando Cortes, for example, made his way first to Cuba, and had by 1532 destroyed the Aztec empire of Mexico. Concurrently, Francisco Pizzaro subjugated the Incas of Peru.

These expeditions were an unmitigated disaster not only for these complex Central and South American societies, but also for all of the indigenous societies who had the

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[22] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Press, 1987), 6-7.
[23] Eugene F. Rice Jr., *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 32-33. Columbus eventually made four voyages and reached the coasts of Central and South America.

misfortune of encountering the Europeans.[24] Only the indigenous people could provide the necessary labor for the new Spanish mines, and many were forced into virtual slavery. Worse, they possessed little or no immunity from European diseases. Within twenty years of Colombus' "discovery" of Hispaniola, for instance, 90% of the estimated one million Indians there had died of small pox.[25] In the span of a single generation Spain had brought under its sway most of the population of the "New World" not by the sword, but by the virus and the germ. Clearly there would be no diplomatic niceties in the drive to amass wealth and fill Spanish coffers. As one of Cortes' soldiers put it during the Mexican campaign, "we came here to serve God and king, and also to get rich."[26]

The need for wealth derived in no small part from the nearly constant European warfare. The ruling house of Spain (and Austria), the Hapsburgs, battled France's Valois regime for the first half of the sixteenth century as the two struggled for control of northern Italy's commercially developed city-states. And even though they reached an accord with one another in 1559, these overwhelmingly Catholic countries both would have to deal with Protestant insurrections in their territories. Moreover, Spain still had to contend with its enemy, Elizabethan England.[9]

For Spanish authorities the massive influx of gold and silver seemed a godsend — warfare during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries was no less expensive than it is in the twenty-first century, often more so when taken as a share of the total national wealth. The recently established empire of "New Spain" in the Americas would operate in the classic mercantilist fashion by serving the metropole and its enormous financial and military needs. The extent to which the Iberians exploited this new source of revenue is starkly demonstrated by these figures: between 1580 and 1620, Peruvian and Mexican mines sent more than 18,000 tons of bullion to Spain. This *tripled* the amount of metal specie available in Europe and led to an era of previously unparalleled inflation referred to by historians as the "price revolution."[28]

The insatiable desire for greater hoards of silver and gold, an increasingly hollow call to "christianize heathens," and the sheer ambition of a *conquistador* ethos honed during Spain's recapturing of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslim Moors, all contributed to the Spanish philosophy of *más allá* — "further on."[29] For those in New Spain's upper reaches, this meant always northward, into "Nuevo Mexico," itself a vaguely defined entity described by David J. Weber as a "sweep of the hand across the map" rather than a clearly delineated border.[30] The haziness of New Mexico's frontier did not result from a lack of effort. Spanish troops had long sought to give the region a more definite identity by trudging along the *Rio de Norte* (the Rio Grande) and establishing control over the Pueblo Indian settlements that lined the river, while Taos, the northernmost of these new outposts, provided the staging

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[24] Ibid., 34-35.
[25] Ibid., 32-33.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 3-7.
[28] Ibid., 111.
[29] Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier*, 7.
[30] Cited by Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier*, 26.

point for the initial Spanish forays into Colorado's southeastern corner and the initial contacts with the Jicarilla.

The image of New Spain's government financing costly expeditions across the edges of imperfect maps and into the empty spaces of the Plains sounds all too chimerical in the present day, yet one must bear in mind that the conquest of Central and South America's silver and gold fields was at that time still a part of living memory. The dream of becoming the next Pizarro or Cortes fueled a string of meanderings throughout the southern half of the present day United States, as well as northward probes along the Pacific coast. Also, the monopoly of good government positions by an oligarchy of powerful Spanish families compelled the young and ambitious to seek their fortunes in the Americas, which was still an open arena for serving God and King. Nor did the Spanish consider the desert landscape as intimidating as did their fellow Europeans. The Iberian Peninsula itself contained its own arid mountain regions, which bore a notable resemblance to sections of the Southwest.

Spain's struggle to extend control northward from New Mexico and into the PCMS region likewise reflected their concern that French rivals might encroach on their territory. Spanish authorities thought on a "continental level" indicative of the "international character" of the Southwestern borderlands. For Spain, the possibility that the French would cross the Mississippi River and move westward, remained a constant source of worry. Moreover, the discovery that a French expedition under La Salle had landed on the Texas coast in 1686 had "impelled a long northward thrust of Spanish power to block French plans for the occupation of the Mississippi."[31] Within this framework both the Spanish and French sought Indian allies. For the Franch, the Pawnees became trusted friends, while the Spanish worked to bring the Jicarilla, Carlanas, and Sierra Blanca Apaches into their camp.[32]

The fear of foreign encroachment, along with the ingrained notion of *más allá*, thus proved too intoxicating for hopeful *conquistadors*. The "New World" drew them like fervent gamblers waiting for the next roll of the dice. One could gain glory by meeting and thwarting the French threat on the Plains; the next Aztec/Inca city might be over the next mountain range; one more expedition might succeed where others had failed. The possibility of success overrode the enormous likelihood of failure and opportunity seemingly lay in places that later arriving Anglos initially considered a wasteland.

[31] Thomas, ed., *After Coronado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 3.
[32] Ibid.

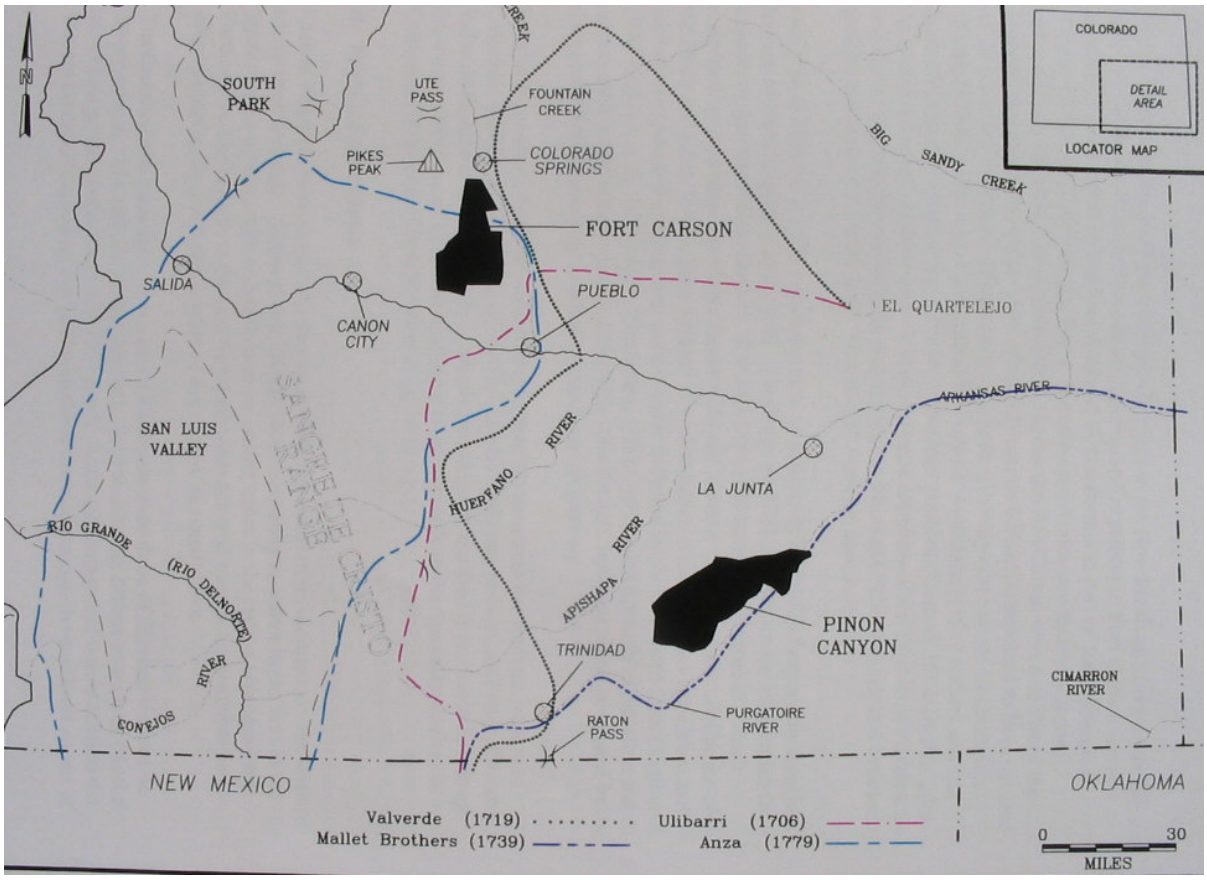

Figure 5. Spanish and French expeditions.

While Spanish *entradas* made their way northward on a fairly consistent basis, only those that are likely to have crossed the PCMS will be considered in this report. For many years, notes Phil Carson, historians of Colorado adhered to the mistaken notion that Coronado first crossed the state's southeastern tip during his 1540-1542 expedition while searching for "Quivira," the city of gold rumored to lie across the northern frontier.[33] In reality, "Quivira" represented a mirage born of desperation on the part of northern New Mexico's Pueblo Indians and the avarice of Coronado. The inhabitants at the Tiwa pueblo in particular wanted one thing — to get rid of the Spaniards who were consuming their precious winter food stores. Rather than face starvation, they persuaded their guests that the city did in fact exist, that it lay to the north, and that it rivaled the Aztecs and Incas in power and wealth. Unsurprisingly, the expedition resulted in abject failure. Coronado had his Indian guide strangled somewhere in central Kansas after he admitted that the Wichita Indians they encountered had no gold in their plain grass huts. A court of enquiry found Coronado guilty of dereliction of duty and forced him out of his government post.[34]

[33] Carson persuasively argues that Coronado probably took a more southerly route, cutting northeast across New Mexico and into Kansas.
[34] David Lavender, *The Southwest*, 40-45.

Still other inconclusive evidence places the 1593 foray of Captain Francisco Levya de Bonilla in southeastern Colorado. Like Coronado, Levya followed a northerly route in hopes of finding "Quivira." Levya and all of his men save one, a Mexican Indian named Jusepe, died.[35] According to Jusepe, the group had encountered huge herds of buffalo and well-established Indian settlements. The expedition, however, had fallen into a state of discord, and Levya was murdered by his second in command after a disagreement. Shortly thereafter, an unidentified Indian tribe fell upon and killed the remainder of the party.[36]

As Carson relates, the fact that none of the victims was able to receive the last sacraments led the Spanish to name the purported place of their demise the *El Rio de las Animas en Purgatorío* — the "River of Lost Souls." The French traders and trappers that filtered westward a hundred years later simply called it *Purgatoire*. Anglos came to refer to the stream as simple *Las Animas*, or in deference to the difficulty of pronouncing its French designation, the 'Picketwire.' Today it is simply the Purgatoire River, a name perhaps reflective of its own uncertain status as a river — in the summer months its flow often slows to a trickle. Nonetheless, the stream persists as the eastern boundary of the PCMS.[37]

Within two years of Levya's ill-fated journey, Don Juan de Oñate, a member of one of New Spain's wealthy silver mining families and husband to Hernan Cortes' granddaughter, received authorization from King Philip II (ruled Spain 1556-1598) to move northward along the *Rio del Norte* and establish a new colony. New Spain's viceroy also instructed Oñate to be on the lookout for the "Strait of Anián," a supposed water passage linking the Atlantic and the Pacific.[38] Oñate and his assemblage of two-hundred settlers, soldiers, and priests halted at the pueblo of Yanque-Yanque, just southwest of present day Taos, New Mexico. Per custom, they quickly gave the pueblo-*cum*-European village a Spanish name — San Gabriel.

Oñate's "Kingdom and Province of New Mexico" proved to be an overly ambitious name for a botched project. By 1607 Oñate had resigned his post, only to be replaced by Pedro de Peralta, who in 1610 moved the capitol of the province from San Gabriel to a new location, *Villa Nueva de Santa Fe*. The new settlement succeeded, but only fitfully. As Robert Athearn tells us, the town had only 250 people by the 1630s, but had reached several thousand by the end of the century.[39]

A number of factors ensured that the province of New Mexico would remain a Spanish backwater, and hence that the Purgatoire River valley would remain unsettled. Church and government officials, for example, shared an abiding mutual dislike that hampered development. It was the church that controlled the caravans of New Mexico's wool, cattle, and salt that went to Chihuahua City to the south, and Church officials resented the government's lackadaisical attitude toward their program of christianizing the province's indigenous peoples. More ominous, perhaps, was the fact that the Pueblos saw this discord

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[35] Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier*, 11.
[36] For first hand accounts of early Spanish Expeditions see Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1956). For later efforts see Thomas' *After Coronado*.
[37] Ibid.; see also David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954), 14.
[38] Athearn, *A Forgotten Kingdom*, 3.
[39] Ibid., 3-4.

as an opportunity to recover their lost power. The friction came to a head in 1680, when a widespread revolt toppled the Spanish government in the province. Villages fell one after another as the Pueblo and their Apache allies vented years of frustration. The rebels killed more than four-hundred Spaniards while survivors fled toward Santa Fe and the shelter of the town's sturdy walls.[40] They remained there under siege until they struck a deal allowing them to leave the settlement. For all practical purposes, the "Kingdom and Province of New Mexico" had ceased to exist. It was not until 1693 that the Europeans would begin the long process of reestablishing their position in New Mexico. By 1706, Spain had once again brought many of the pueblos under its control through a *reconquista*. At least one of the expeditions associated with the campaign passed just east of the PCMS, when Spanish soldiers escorted remorseful Picuris Indians who had participated in the revolt back from their refuge in the *El Cuartelejo*, a section of Apache territory in western Kansas.[41]

The Picuris' desire for reconciliation derived largely from the fact that relative newcomers to the area, the Comanche, had been mauling rival tribes and raiding along the New Mexican frontier. The Comanche, more than any other tribe, had taken full advantage of the Plains trade in Spanish horses and adopted a Mongol-like ability to envelop and destroy enemies.[42] By the early 1700s, the horse had tipped the balance of military power on the Plains to the Comanches and away from the Spanish, who would have expanded the boundaries of their frontier had it been safe to do so, and the formerly dominant Apaches.[43]

It would be difficult to overestimate the fear that the horse-mounted Comanche inspired in the Spanish and Plains tribes. So powerful did the image of Comanche destruction become that it continues in popular literature today. Cormick McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian*, which recounts events on the Texas-Mexico border in the 1840s during an American filibustering expedition (raid) against the Mexicans, offers a harrowing account of an encounter between the invading Anglos and the Comanche:

> A legion of horribles, hundreds in number, half naked and clad in costumes attic or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of prior owners, coats of slain dragoons … a bloodstained wedding veil … and one in the armor of a Spanish conquistador, the breastplates and pauldrons deeply dented with old blows of mace or saber done in another country … [The Comanche rode down on] the unhorsed Saxons … spearing and clubbing them and leaping from their mounts with knives … stripping the clothes from the dead and seizing them up by the hair and passing their blades about the skulls of the living and the dead alike and snatching aloft bloody wigs …[44]

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[40] Ibid., 4; see also Charles L. Kenner, *History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 19.
[41] Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier*, 64-70. Thomas differs in placing El Cuartelejo in central Colorado, just to the east of the Rocky's frontrange.
[42] William Brandon, *Quivira: Europeans in the Region of the Santa Fe Trail, 1540-1820* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), 123-124.
[43] One has to use some caution in using the terms "Apache" and "Comanche" in their broadest sense, for what made the situation all the more confusing was that fact that some of the Comanche clans might make peace while others preferred to continue raiding along the frontier.
[44] Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 53-54.

The Comanche's reputation would have obviously seemed far more real to the terrified Picuris than to later readers of McCormick's highly stylized prose. The Picuris in fact had no real choice: they could beg the Spanish for forgiveness or be annihilated by a most disciplined and ruthless foe. The commander chosen to rescue the Picuris, Juan de Ulibarrí, had himself taken note of the potential threat the prior year, estimating that the Comanche's first appearance at the Taos trade fair in 1705 came from a desire to size up the pueblo's defenses rather than the need for barter.[45] Ulibarrí accordingly brought over one hundred and forty men, many of them Pueblo allies, when he left Santa Fe in July of 1706.[46] Arriving at the Taos pueblo two days later, he received a warning from the Indians of the settlement "that the Ute and Comanche tribe were about to come and make an attack."[47] Armed with this information, Ulibarrí spent several days gathering additional provisions and waiting out the danger before moving further southward. Ulibarrí's caution, along with the fact that he had marshaled what was at that time a fairly powerful force, bears witness to his experience as a veteran campaigner and his respect for the Comanches' fighting prowess.

Ulibarrí and his party crossed the Purgatoire River on July 25, shortly after having left Taos. Among the first groups he met was the Penxaye Apaches, who were themselves preparing to move south to avoid the Comanche juggernaut.[48] He noted with satisfaction that the inhabitants "have much land planted in corn, frijoles, and pumpkins."[49] Ulibarrí's description seems mundane, but it does reveal something of the cultural landscape around the PCMS as it existed in the early eighteenth century. First, the fact that the Apache had borrowed Pueblo agricultural techniques to "supplement their dependence on buffalo" shows that the Penxayes, like the Jicarilla, had become less nomadic and that various Apache bands were attempting to establish at least semi-permanent settlements in the Purgatoire River area.[50]

The adoption of a semi-sedentary lifestyle by the Jicarilla, Penxayes, and related Apaches may have allowed them to better use the landscape, but it also made them more vulnerable. Like later Hispanic settlers, they tended to coalesce in small groups and along stream courses — a natural response to the region's aridity. For the mobile Comanche, however, the isolated *rancherias* proved a tempting and easy target.[51] The Apaches likewise could never adequately answer the attacks. They refused to abandon the agricultural lifestyle for the most part, which in turn meant that they adapted far less effectively to horse-mounted warfare. In other words, they could not really meet the Comanche on equal terms. The other option, to live in larger, more defensible groups like the Pueblos, also escaped them.[52]

The real irony is that the Apache's inability to create permanent settlements in southeastern Colorado is significant precisely *because* it was determined by landscape. More

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[45] Kenner, *History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 28.
[46] Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier,* 64; Thomas, *After Coronado*, 16; Brandon, *Quivira*, 149.
[47] Ulibarrí's diary as cited in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 60.
[48] Thomas places this encounter in the vicinity of present day Trinidad, Colorado. See *After Coronado*, 18.
[49] Ulibarrí cited in Kenner, *History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 24-25; Thomas, *After Coronado*, 64.
[50] Thomas, *After Coronado*, 64.
[51] Charles L. Kenner, *The Comanchero Frontier* (University of Oklahoma Press) 32.
[52] Ibid.

to the point, the Apache's view of their environs placed them in a position of vulnerability not only in relation to the Comanche, but also to later scholars of the PCMS who associate their transience with diminished importance. On the contrary, one should recognize the influence that landscape had on their effort to find a "middle way," one that they hoped would allow them to survive and prosper along the geographic and cultural frontiers of a Southwest that was at once nomadic and settled, indigenous and Spanish. Likewise, the Apache experience serves as useful reminder that one should not rely solely on economic and social "progress" to evaluate historical importance.

As for Ulibarrí, he saw the Apache *rancherias* as a sign that the frontier, despite its lack of rainfall, could support settlement along watercourses like the Purgatoire. His account of the Picuris/Apache hamlets in the *El Cuartelejo* seemed to underscore the viability of agriculture in a region that later Anglo writers initially considered a "Great American desert." Ulibarrí carefully noted:

> …The second thing I noticed was the great fertility of the land and its good climate, for at the end of July they [the Apaches whom the Picuris lived with] had gathered crops of Indian corn, watermelons, pumpkins, and kidney beans. It was believed that the crops of wheat would be ready before the day of San Juan. So that, because of the fertility of the land, the docility of the people, and the abundance of herds of buffalo, and other game, the propagation of our holy Catholic faith could be advanced very much.[53]

Ulibarrí's main concern, however, was the presentation of a musket that the *El Cuartelejo* Apaches claimed to have taken from a French trapper and his pregnant wife that they had killed just days before. While the *Cuartelejos* may have exaggerated so as to gain Spanish aid against their French-allied Pawnees enemies, the presentation of the weapon nonetheless spurred eighteenth-century Spanish efforts to gain control of the area.[54] From the time of the Ulibarrí expedition onward, the Spanish in northern New Mexico focused on containing both real and imagined threats from the French (and later the British) to the east and the Comanches to the north.

The Spanish fear of the French had some foundation, for the latter were clearly attempting to feel their way westward. By 1714 French traders had filtered down the Arkansas, Platte, and Red Rivers, moving even closer to the Spanish frontier. Five years later Mexico's viceroy, the Marquis De Valero, ordered New Mexico's Governor Antonio Valverde y Cosío to meet the perceived threat by moving northeastward along the Purgatoire. Once there, he told Valverde, every effort should be made to "forge alliances with the Apaches, and inflict considerable damage on the French and block their designs."[55] In addition, he was to seek out and defeat Comanches who had been recently devastating the frontier.

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[53] Thomas, *After Coronado*, 73.
[54] Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 25.
[55] Carson, *Across the Northern Frontier*, 75.

This was a tall order, for Valverde could find neither the French nor the Comanches. Traveling just east of Taos, the New Mexican column encountered Jicarillas, who reported that they hid in the hills at night to avoid Comanche attacks. Continuing northward between the Raton Pass and Arkansas River, Valverde found further signs of carnage — the remains of the Carlana Apaches still reeling from assaults by the Comanches' on-and-off allies, the Utes. The enemy, however, had simply melted into the vast plains north of the Arkansas River.[56]

Authorities ordered another expedition the following year after hearing rumors that the French and their indigenous allies planned to use southern Colorado and Kansas as a staging area for attacks on New Mexico. A force under Don Pedro de Villasur left Santa Fe in mid-1720, intent on pacifying the frontier. The expedition initially moved up the Rio Grande and then tracked along the Purgatoire River on or near the future PCMS. By August they had worked eastward, along the South Platte River in Nebraska. No French were in the area, but there were large numbers of Pawnee Indians with French weapons. Taking advantage of tall grass for cover, the Pawnee ambushed and killed Villasur and most of his men.[57]

The Villasur massacre temporarily ended Spanish hopes of establishing a more powerful presence on the northern frontier and blocked whatever settlement that might have occurred along the Purgatoire and its northern terminus at the Arkansas River. There exists little evidence of what occurred in the region of southeastern Colorado over the next thirty years. Clearly though, the Comanches, armed by the French and made mobile by their skill in horse-mounted warfare, had simply made the northern reaches of New Mexico too dangerous.

The Spanish failure to stabilize the frontier and defeat the Comanches left an exposed flank in northeastern New Mexico, one that the French tentatively sought to exploit by sending their traders to make sporadic trips into the territory, often with inexpensive cloth and cutlery that far undercut the cost of similar products brought up from Chihuahua. As if to underscore the fear of French influence, the French brothers Peter and Paul Mallet turned up at Santa Fe in 1739. It is very likely that they crossed what is now the PCMS, since they represent the first Europeans known to have traveled the future "mountain branch" of the Santa Fe Trail. An alarmed Spanish viceroy forbade east-west trade. The Mallets and others like them circumvented the restriction by simply shifting their business to the annual fair at Taos, where the lure of cheap goods compelled Plains and Pueblo tribes to mix with Hispanos in a state of temporary peace. Even the Comanches made an appearance, frequently bringing in kidnapped Apaches for ransom as well as dried meat and buffalo hides for trade. Navajos too bartered Spanish prisoners and piñon nuts, while the French and traders from Chihuahua, who had taken over running the caravans around 1750, dealt in metals, calico, and riskier products such as whiskey, guns, and powder.[58]

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[56] Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 30.
[57] Ibid., 89-91.
[58] David Lavender, *The Southwest*, 74; see also Athearn, *Land of Contrast*, 17.

The French threat may have been more apparent than real, yet any possibility that they would infiltrate along the Arkansas-Purgatoire corridor ended with the French and Indian War, fought in Europe as the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). The conflict drew French attention away from the trans-Mississippi region and to the English in the eastern portion of the continent. Spain, who had no love for the English either, adopted the principal that their enemy's enemy was their friend and forged an alliance with the French against the English. By 1762, France clearly perceived that they were losing their foothold south of Canada. Spain took advantage of the situation by successfully pressing their allies to sign a secret treaty ceding control of the immense Louisiana Territory.[59]

The acquisition of such a large swath of land put the Spanish in a dilemma — if they could not control New Mexico's frontier, how could they possibly secure Louisiana, especially with the Comanches serving as a barrier to the north? In truth, the Spanish had blundered by underestimating the power of the Comanches when they first began appearing on the frontier around 1700. At that time they fully recognized that the Comanches were severely punishing the Apaches, but imperial authorities welcomed the chastisement of particular Apache clans who had been raiding New Mexican homesteads. Even worse, they had passed on the opportunity to establish a *presidio* among the friendly Jicarilla in the 1720s, leaving a clear path from southern Colorado into New Mexico.[60] Still, the years following the massacre of the Villasur expedition did not mean constant warfare with the Comanche, but rather alternating periods of fighting and uneasy peace. The Taos trade fairs in particular seemed to put hostilities into a state of suspension as the parties on all sides sought out desperately needed goods. As Charles Kenner has revealed, the New Mexicans, Comanche, and remaining Plains tribes managed to carry out a fairly active trade in the 1730s. A spate of Comanche attacks, however, occurred in the 1740s, while the period from 1750 to 1786 saw a "perplexing array" of "battles, treaties, trade fairs."[61]

The 1770s marked an unusually high level of fighting as Comanche raiding parties made their way southward — some of them undoubtedly thorough the Purgatoire valley. The hamlet of Ojo Caliente, forty miles north of Santa Fe, had in fact become a favored target as early as 1768.[62] Two years later the situation had grown so dire that settlers outside of Taos, about fifty miles south of present day Las Animas County, had to flee south to the pueblo to escape annihilation. And although the governor of New Mexico had haggled a short peace, full-scale warfare resumed in 1774 in a "massive and unceasing assault" against the Spanish and Apache.[63] Efforts to prepare for raids failed with distressing regularity as Comanche parties captured horses that the Spanish had earmarked for the impending campaign. The marauders acted insult to injury by trading some of the livestock they had captured for more firearms, while using the remainder as reserves for their highly mobile warriors.[64] Four years later, the most able of the Comanche leaders, Cuerno Verde, had heaped pathos on an already bleak state of affairs, raiding up and down the frontier and

[59] Ibid. The territory reverted to the French in 1800. At that time Spain and France also agreed on the Arkansas River as the northern border of New Mexico.
[60] Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 33.
[61], Ibid., 43.
[62] Ibid., 45.
[63] Ibid., 47.
[64] Ibid., 48.

capturing at least one-hundred and twenty-seven settlers while wrecking havoc on numerous pueblos.[65]

Even the government in Madrid, geographically a world away, had realized that northern New Spain faced grave danger. King Charles III hoped to staunch the onslaught and gain greater control of the region by reorganizing northern New Spain into the Interior Provinces, or *Provincas Internas*. This newly designated territory would no longer answer to the authorities in New Spain, but would fall under control of a more local commandante-general who answered directly to the king and was invested with broad civil, military, and judiciary powers.[66]

By the summer of 1778, King Charles' appointee, Don Teodoro de Croix, had devised a plan to end the Comanche threat once and for all. First, he instructed the incoming governor of the province, Don Juan Bautisita de Anza, to seek an accord with the Comanches against hostile Apaches who had also carried out raids against Spanish settlements. De Anza, a grizzled campaigner who would command the expedition himself, quickly concluded that this would be impossible. He believed that only a decisive defeat of Cuerno Verde would bring peace, all the better if it were in Colorado, the latter's main stomping grounds.

De Anza's stratagem succeeded where so many others had failed. As Kenner notes, the commander knew that he could not approach the Cuerno Verde's camp along the eastern slope of the Rockies undetected. Instead, he moved crossed the ridges just the west of the Front Range, moving through the San Luis Valley. Moreover, he added approximately two-hundred Jicarilla and Utes to his party along the way, all of whom wanted to return the misery that the Comanches had visited upon them on so many occasions.[67] The showdown came in September 1779. De Anza had already captured the women and children in Cuerno Verde's village, most of whom had been left unprotected while the chief and his warriors carried out raids. The commander then crossed back to the east near present-day Colorado Springs before moving southward. Somewhere just east of the Purgatoire, along the Huerfano River, Cuerno Verde, already aware that his village had fallen, stumbled into a trap. He and all of his warriors were killed.[68]

The remaining Comanche finally came to terms with de Anza in February 1786, after considerable inter-tribal debate. Euceracapa, the leader of the Comanches in favor of peace with the Spanish, gained the upper hand after having his rival murdered. Euceracapa then agreed to move his band closer to New Mexico and refrain from attacking friendly Apaches while at the same time helping to subdue other, hostile Apaches. In return, he received trade concessions and official recognition from the Spanish.[69] As Charles Kenner has pointed out, the treaty inaugurated a peace between the Spanish and the Comanche that lasted until it was upset by the Mexican-American War of the 1840s.

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Odie B. Faulk, "The Presidio: Fortress or Farce," in David J. Weber ed., *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 71.
[67] Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 50-51.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 52.

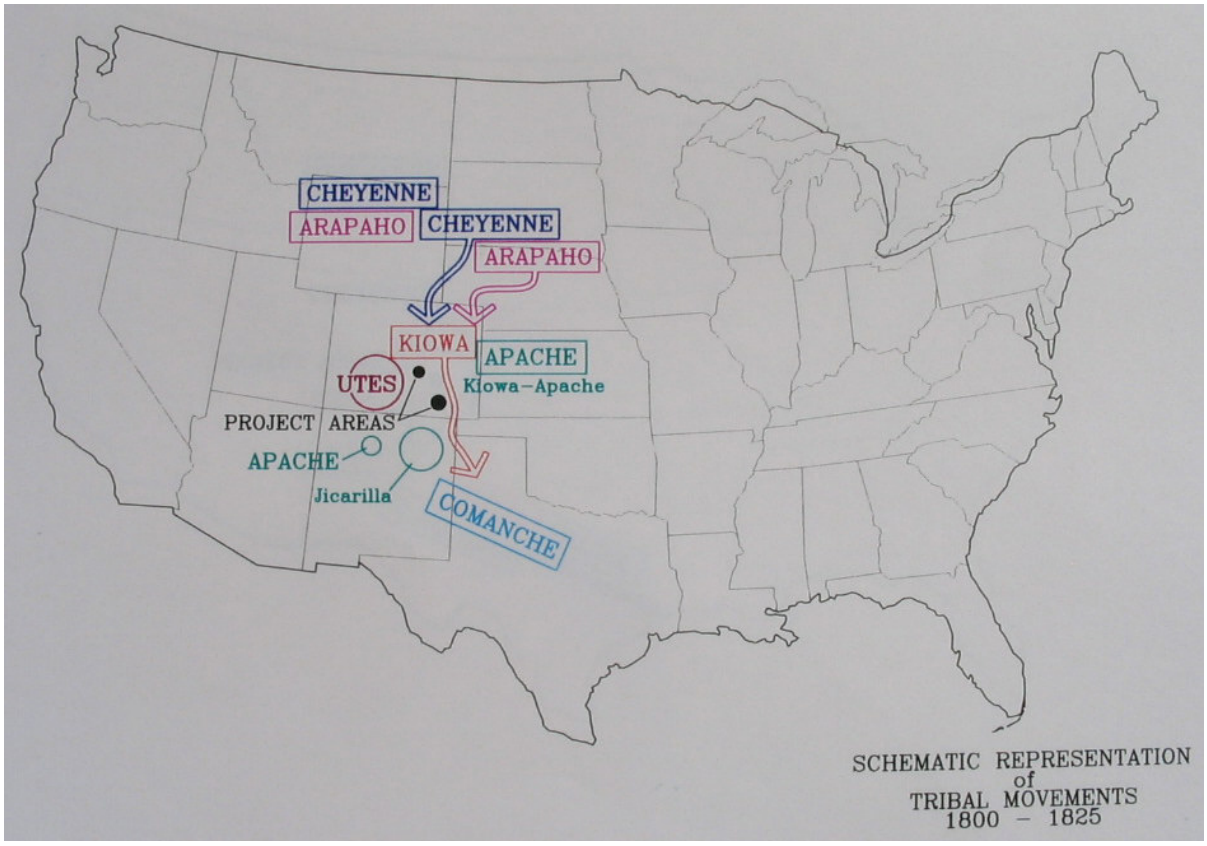

Figure 6. Tribal movement 1800 to 1825.

It would seem that the defeat of Cuerno Verde would have opened the way for the settlement of southeastern Colorado, but this was not the case. Pioneers instead tended to move to the east and slightly north, along the Pecos and Mora River valleys, rather than into the farther reaches of the frontier. The hostile Apache bands, though chastised frequently by the Spanish-Comanche alliance, still posed enough of a threat to hinder migration into the PCMS region. Mexican authorities had pressed for a string of *presidios* to protect and settle the New Mexican frontier, yet these plans fell by the wayside in the face of inadequate military funding and a lack of population for colonization.[70]

New Mexico's military and demographic weakness reflected its profound economic frailty. Indeed, the best sources of early nineteenth century conditions in the region, The *Exposición* of Don Pedro Bautista Pino (1812), and the *Ojeadao* by Licenciado Don Antonio Berreiro, (1832) paint an exceedingly bleak picture.[71] Pino had traveled to Spain in 1812 to serve as a New Mexico's representative to the Spanish parliament, the *Cortes*. At that time Spain faced one of the most severe crises in its history — the threat of Napoleon. French armies had already invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 1808, severely disrupting the

[70] Faulk, "Presidio," 73-74.
[71] H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard, trans., *Three New Mexico Chronicles* (Albuquerque: The Quivira Society, 1942). The *Chronicles*, as the name implies, is actually a collection of three separate accounts, the first two by Pino and Barreiro, and a final addendum of notes and explanatory material added in 1849 by Don José Augustín de Escudero.

government and installing a Napoleonic puppet. Spanish resistance had temporarily ended the occupation, yet the danger remained, as did the utter desperation that had led the *Cortes* to seek advice from throughout the empire.

Pino's report could not have inspired confidence — he in fact sharply criticized the "neglect" of Spain at every opportunity. On agriculture he noted that "the neglect and isolation of the province, along with the danger of wild Indians along the roads are the main reasons it is impossible to export even agricultural products." Pino further noted that while "agriculture, industry, and commerce" served as the basis for prosperity, New Mexico had "none of these" because of the "neglect that the government has looked upon it to the present time." The bulk of the inhabitants, he continued, had "never [even] seen money."[72]

Pino called for decisive action by suggesting a bold program to strengthen the territory and extend Spanish power in the Southwest. As he saw it, they had to develop the local fur trade, the resource that "nature as placed at the province's disposal," and begin exporting from ports on the Gulf of California that were far closer than Vera Cruz or Acapulco. Pino believed that this move would double the province's consumption and increase the number of Spanish traders to a point that would allow them to "overpower" the "wild Indian tribes." Even more so, these same tribes would become trusted friends, much like the Comanche, and serve as *new defenders of Spanish territory* [italics Pino] against aggressions of the United States … in brief, the possible results are inconceivable for one who is unfamiliar with the potential wealth of the province of New Mexico."[73] Pino could not have been more right, nor his pleading more useless. A Spain wracked by Napoleon, not to mention domestic infighting, was simply too weak to offer any aid for New Mexico and its frontier. The Americans had in fact begun to pry the eastern Comanche away from New Mexico not long after the Lewis and Clark expedition. During his 1806 foray into Colorado, Zebulon Pike hoped to drive a wedge between the Spanish and Comanche, but failed because his intended intermediaries, the Pawnee, were at war with the latter.[74]

It was against this backdrop that Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821. Mexican-born Spaniards, or Creoles, had already begun to think of themselves as a separate nationality, not unlike the American revolutionaries who had recently left the British Empire. Even Pino, presenting his case before the *Cortes* in 1812, showed a clear frustration with what he saw as a lack of support from the homeland. The fact that the Spanish had formally established the Arkansas River as the northern boundary with American territory meant they had technically encompassed the present day PCMS into their realm, but it did not mean that they could control the area any more than in the past. Ambitious Americans, following on the heels of Pike, slowly but steadily worked their way west and established commercial relationships along the Mexican-American frontier. American caravans of goods also began to make an increasing number of forays toward New Mexico, oftentimes traveling through or on the edge of what would become the PCMS. Within less than thirty years, the United States would control the entire Southwest.

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[72] Ibid., 35, 36.
[73] Ibid., 37.
[74] Kenner, *Comanchero Frontier*, 66-67.

2 From Province to Territory: Mexico and the Early American Period: 1820-1865

When New Spain rebelled against the old country and gained its independence in 1821, its new leader, Don Agustín Iturbide, envisioned that his newly declared Mexican Empire would at last have the freedom it needed to develop its own economic resources. No longer would they have to pay heed to an imperial system that tended to ignore the colony's needs while allowing Madrid to siphon off Mexico's wealth. Iturbide's optimism, as it turned out, proved ill-placed. Within three years he would be overthrown and executed, ushering in the short-lived Mexican Republic.

The shedding of Spanish rule likewise did little to alter the situation in the New Mexico territory and its northern reaches along the Purgatoire River. The province continued to bask in its own special misery, suffering as it always had from the pressure of Indian raids and a lack of money for defense. The economy too struggled as in the past, the bulk of its trade emanating not from the Mexican metropole, but from the usual bartering with the Plains Indians that occurred during lulls in the fighting. There were signs of potential, however, for one of the first steps the newly independent Republic took was to lift the Spanish laws that had sought to prevent incursions by French-Canadian and Anglo trappers and traders along the east-west corridor of the Missouri River. This was a critical move, for it began an era of Euro-American[1] infiltration into the PCMS area and the evolution of that same landscape from a Hispanic frontier into a nexus for American commerce.

This chapter will follow upon this point in showing how the decision by Mexican authorities to legalize the previously forbidden foreign trade in 1821 drew New Mexico and southern Colorado, then part of the former's territory, into the American sphere via the trafficking of furs and finished goods. Similarly, this chapter will reveal how the Republic's relaxed posture allowed a French-Canadian and Anglo vanguard to penetrate New Mexico's frontier society and establish commercial, political, and matrimonial alliances with both Mexicans and Plains tribes. Last, and most importantly, one must consider how this quickening of contact between Euro-Americans and New Mexican society led to the granting of immense parcels of land to a small coterie of influential American and Mexican traders and officials, and similarly, how the uncertainty surrounding the ownership of the grants impeded settlement in the PCMS region.

The most significant concessions of land came between 1840 and 1847 when the territorial governor, Manuel Armijo, issued some twenty-three land grants totaling over nine

1 I use the term Euro-Americans to denote a mutual French-Canadian and Anglo influence.

million acres.[2] Under Mexico's 1823 "Colonization Law of Iturbide," promoters known as *empresarios* could acquire up to eleven square leagues of earth — "one [league] of irrigable land, four 'dependant on the seasons,' and six for cattle grazing."[3] In theory the *empresario* would settle at least 200 hundred families on the tract within 12 years, or the land would revert back to the government. Armijo technically handed out few, if any *empresario* grants, since none of them received the required approval of the central government in Mexico City. Nonetheless, the language of the petitions invariably alluded to the settling and colonizing of territory as a primary goal. Every tract went against the letter of the law in another, more crucial aspect as well, in that they far exceeded the limit of eleven square leagues. To put this into perspective, one must consider that a "league" consisted of roughly 4,800 square acres.[4] This means that the largest of the parcels, the huge four-million-acre Vigil & St. Vrain Grant (also called the Las Animas Grant) that encompassed the present day the PCMS surpassed the limit by more than *eighty* times.

The Vigil and St. Vrain Grant played an especially important part in the era, not only in terms of its incredible size, but also because those who owned it became key players in the American takeover of New Mexico and southern Colorado. The original claimants to the grant, Cornelio Vigil and Ceran St. Vrain, vividly illustrate the tangled web of territorial politics and society. After they received approval for the behest, they proceeded to dispense one-sixth interests to Charles Bent, Governor Armijo, and Donacio Vigil, the territorial secretary and a relative of Cornelio's. The fact that Bent had never obtained naturalized Mexican citizenship supposedly disqualified him from holding such property. The prominent Santa Fe merchant Eugene Leitensdorfer and Carlos Beaubien, a French Canadian trader who also owned a large portion of the Maxwell Grant, likewise obtained one-sixth interests. Together, the men controlled over *eight million* acres of "some of the finest agricultural, grazing, and mineral lands in the territory," much of it sitting on or near major trade routes like the Santa Fe Trial.[5] Just a few years later Charles Bent and his brother William would use their post on the Arkansas River to provide Stephen Kearney's "Army of the West" with supplies, reinforcements, and intelligence during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), greatly aiding in the nearly bloodless conquest of New Mexico and southern Colorado.

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[2] Howard R. Lamar, "Land Policy on the Southwest, 1846-1891: A Study in Contrasts," *Journal of Economic History* 22, 4 (December 1962), 500. The amount of land that constituted a "league" varied. In Texas it was approximately 4,428 square acres.

[3] Marianne Stoller, "Grants of Desperation, Lands of Speculation: Mexican Period Land Grants in Colorado," in John R. and Christine M. Van Ness, eds., *Spanish and Mexican Lang Grants* (Manhattan, Kansas, 1980), 24. Stoller relates that one could also gain an individual grant called an *ayuntamiento*, usually given for personal merit or service, or as a formal recognition that one already occupied a particular parcel of land.

[4] Herbert O. Brayer, *William Blackmore: The Spanish-Mexican Land Grants* (Denver: Bradford Robinson, 1948), 133.

[5] Ibid., 130-131.

Table 1. Major Mexican Land Grants 1832-1843[6]

Name of Grant	Approximate Total Acres
Vigil and St Vrain (Las Animas Grant)	4,000,000
Maxwell (Beaubien and Miranda)	1,700,000
Sangre de Christo	1,000,000
Conejos (Guadalupe)	2,500,000
Gervacio Nolan	300,000 to 1,000,000

A detailed account of the fighting between Mexico and the United States goes beyond the scope of this study, yet it will be necessary to touch upon the conflict to provide a backdrop for how the differing Hispanic and Anglo views of the landscape affected the PCMS region. For example, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) ended the war while promising to protect the rights of Mexican citizens who had been scooped up by the incorporation of the Southwest into the United States. Nevertheless, the difference between word and deed proved significant — newly arriving American bureaucrats brought with them radically different conceptions of land ownership and usage that placed the existing populace at a grave disadvantage. All too often Mexico's informal rules of land exchange, when combined with the lack of legal and financial resources at the disposal of formerly Mexican citizens, made proving claims in American courts exceedingly difficult and time-consuming. An unsettled title meant an unsettled land, and the territory around the PCMS sat in a legal limbo for years.

Economies of Conquest: Euro-Americans and New Mexico

The Mexican Republic's dual policy of open borders and malleable land grants, intended to solidify control over the frontier, instead sowed disaster in the 1840s. This begs the question: Why would Mexican officials chose to adopt such a risky policy? The Spanish had, after all, long perceived a danger in allowing the French and English to penetrate their territory, particularly along the sparsely populated northeastern frontier where the Arkansas and Purgatoire valleys created a natural conduit into Spanish lands. In 1807, authorities arrested Zebulon Pike in south-central Colorado's San Luis Valley and jailed him in Santa Fe. Merchants and trappers from St. Louis who had the temerity to venture into Spanish territory faced a similar fate. The more fortunate faced only confiscation of their goods; others spent years in jail.[7]

[6] Table extracted from Stoller's "Grants of Desperation," 26. The Vigil and St. Vrain and Nolán Grants were solely in Colorado while the Maxwell, Conejos, and Sangre de Christo Grants contained acreage in both Colorado and New Mexico.

[7] Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982), 35.

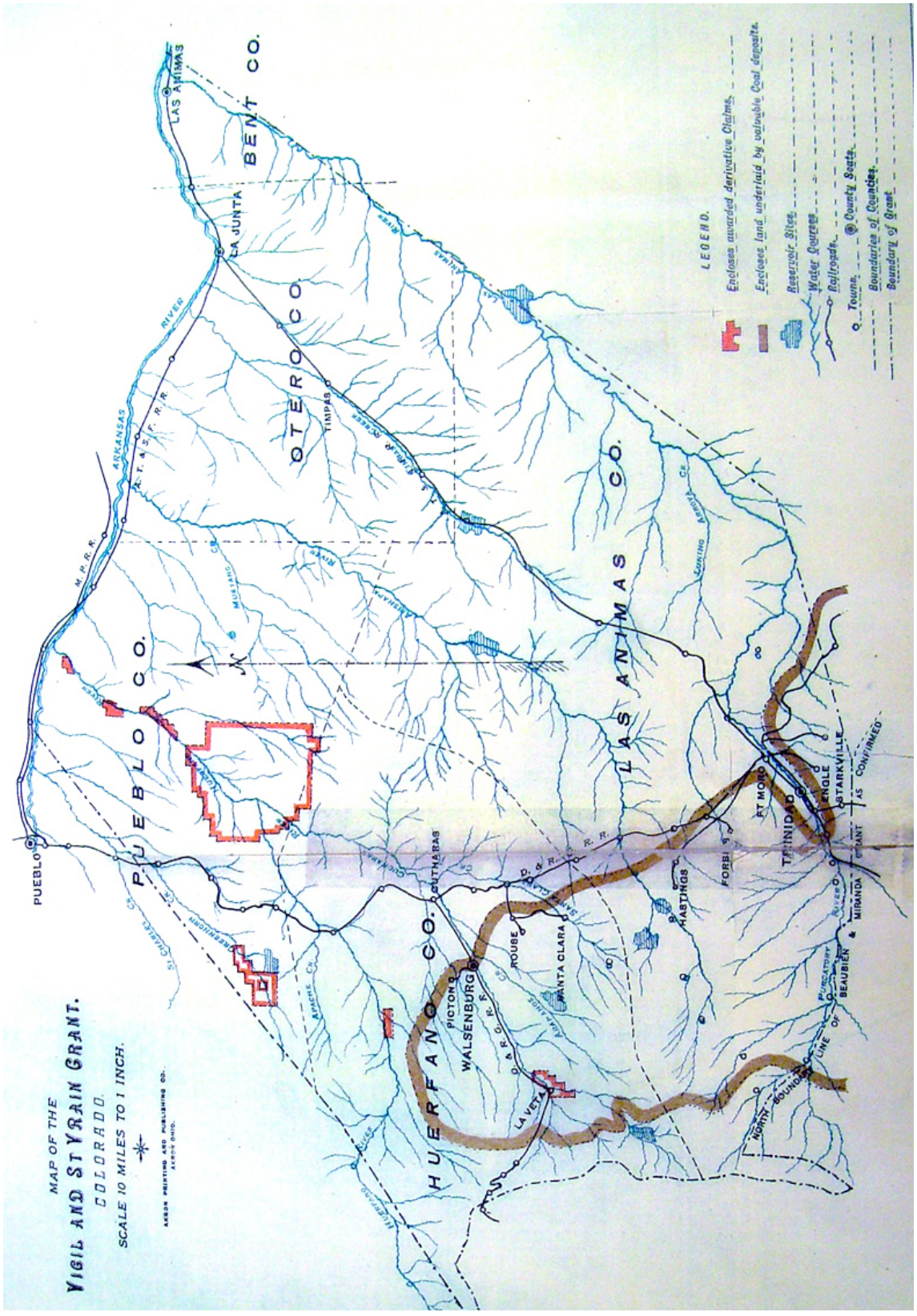

Figure 7. Vigil and St. Vrain Grant.

Map courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History/Genealogy Department.

Still, there existed sound reasons to relax trade restrictions. As early as 1803 the Spanish had lifted prohibitions on traffic with the Utes, Cheyenne, Pawnees, and Arapahos, forming a "cautious alliance" in the hope that they could develop a Spanish-Indian fur trade that would effectively buffer the northern territory against foreign usurpers.[8] The attempt to develop this market never fully materialized, despite rendezvous between Spaniards and Plains tribes near the confluence of the Purgatory and Arkansas Rivers in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Seen in light of this earlier Spanish effort, the decision by Mexican officials to shift their commercial efforts to the Arkansas River valley makes more sense. Authorities also recognized that the economy had scarcely changed since the imposition of Spanish rule, and the distance between Chihuahua and its northern province made shipping prohibitively expensive in comparison to products sent from the United States. Moreover, Mexican territory still contained beaver-rich streams, and there remained enough pelts on the paw to provide a ready currency of exchange for American goods. Lastly, Mexico had struggled for years to halt smuggling along their under populated and porous frontier — why not open the border and try to benefit from a trade that would probably occur regardless of the home government's wishes?

Yet authorities in Mexico failed to realize that every wagon, trapper, and trader brought them closer to ruin as the locus of economic and political power gradually rotated from a southern to an eastern axis. Indeed, the burgeoning fur trade of the Mexican period wove the region into an American, if not a global, trading web. Hides taken in the waterways of Colorado and neighboring areas made their way east only to be turned into hats and other accessories for trendy New Yorkers, Londoners, or Parisians. In return, scarce finished goods made their way west as long wagon trains snaked out of the Missouri cities of St. Louis and Independence.[9] More importantly in terms of this study, the heavily laden wagons skirted the edge of what would become the PCMS, moving along the Purgatory River after making the turn south from the Arkansas River — the "mountain branch" of the Santa Fe Trail.[10]

It was no mere coincidence that the nexus of commercial power in the region eventually developed at this southward bend in the trail, for it was there, on the northern bank of the Arkansas near the confluence with the Purgatoire, that Charles Bent and his brother William, along with Ceran St. Vrain, built Bent's Fort, the nearly impregnable adobe fortress on the Plains. As the headquarters of Bent, St. Vrain & Company, the citadel "filled the vacuum of the central plains" and "irrevocably tied the Southwest to St. Louis …"[11] The exact date that the partners began work on the trading post is open to some speculation. Some archaeological studies locate a stockade (a product of the Bent brothers) at the site of the fort as early as 1828. As for the fort itself, Douglas Comer's work argues for 1831 as the

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[8] Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 13.
[9] Driving the current route from the PCMS, leaving the now-dead town of Thatcher, Colorado, towards Taos, one would basically parallel the track taken by the traders and trappers that made their way into Mexican territory along the Santa Fe Trail. Parties beginning at the Santa Fe's trailhead in extreme western Missouri would have made their way halfway across Kansas before arriving at the Arkansas River. From there they would usually follow the Arkansas' north bank before turning south towards New Mexico — a route that now parallels the western boundary of the PCMS and U.S. route 350.
[10] Paul C. Phillips, *The Fur Trade, I* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 474.
[11] Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 105.

date of origin, while Janet LeCompte maintains that construction began no earlier than 1833. Comer further notes that an 1847 letter from St. Vrain to the U.S. Army states that the fort was "established in 1834," but that even may be slightly inaccurate given the span of the intervening years.[12]

Regardless, Bent's Fort, or Bent's Old Fort as it would become known after it was abandoned in 1849, dominated the fur and buffalo robe trade on the Central Plains during the 1830s and early 1840s, making it the seat of commercial and political power in the region. Both the Bents and St. Vrain had begun modestly enough, arriving in New Mexico during the mid-1820s with the intent of trading finished goods from back east for beaver belts that would bring a good price back in St. Louis. The men had initially met during that time; their friendship cemented more so in 1829 when Ceran and fifty-five trappers raced from Taos to the Cimarron River to lift a Comanche siege on one of Bent's Missouri-bound caravans.[13] The following year the Bents and St. Vrain decided to form a partnership, with the latter taking leave of his duties from the fur company of Bernard Pratte.[14] It was a shrewd business move, for a trading post along the Santa Fe Trail would allow them to "vertically" integrate their business. Ceran, for example, would market goods to the Mexicans in Taos. Toward this end he obtained Mexican citizenship in 1831 and began strengthening his ties to officials in northern New Mexico.[15] By the time of the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant he had become a fixture in the territory's society. For their part, Charles and William would alternate between running the caravans out of Missouri and managing day-to-day affairs at the fort, such as outfitting trappers and buying and selling hides.[16]

The Bents and St. Vrain made a number of moves to further undergird their business interests and eliminate potential rivals like John Gantt, who had tried to establish a similar operation near the junction between the Purgatoire and Arkansas.[17] First, by building a permanent post on the Arkansas they could store their goods and wait out seasonal price fluctuations in the hide market. By contrast, Gantt and his colleagues had wintered in 1832-1833 in a log fort on the Arkansas, but still had "marketed their furs in Taos like other mountain men."[18] The location of the fort, on the north bank of the Arkansas River just inside United States territory, similarly meant that the company could operate with a remarkably free hand, just outside the jurisdiction of Mexican authorities. The fort was also ideally located in that it allowed the Bents to forge close friendships with Plains Tribes, particularly the Cheyenne, with whom William Bent intermarried. In 1837 the Bents and St. Vrain further insulated their commercial position by coming to terms with the John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. The latter's Western Department would control trapping

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[12] Douglas C. Comer, *Bent's Old Fort 1976 Archaeological Investigations: Trash Dump Excavations, Area Surveys, and Monitoring of Fort Construction and Landscaping* (Denver: National Park Service, 1985), 174; Janet LeCompte, "Grant's Fort and Bent's Picket Post," *Colorado Magazine* 41, 2 (1964): 117. Cited in Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 92.
[13] The war party threatening the caravan has also been described as possibly Kiowa.
[14] Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 202.
[15] According to Comer, the earliest indication of the partnership was a letter dated January 6, 1831. The actual agreement probably preceded this date slightly.
[16] Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 126-127.
[17] Abbott, Leonard and McComb, *Colorado*, 37.
[18] Lavender, *Bent's For*t, 126-127.

and trading north of the Wyoming/Colorado border, while the Bents and St. Vrain would effectively monopolize the south.[19]

There it was; "it" being the creation of a trading web linking Missouri, Bent's Fort, New Mexico, and the Mexican interior. The Bents, officials like Armijo, and the powerful yet waning Plains Tribes, though inextricably linked, maintained a precarious relationship in the 1830s and 1840s. Eventually, all of them would fall prey to political, economic, and environmental forces that lay beyond their control. The Bents could not trap tapped-out streams nor summon new buffalo herds; and neither the Mexicans nor the Plains Tribes could stop the steady onslaught of Anglos armed with plows, guns, and viruses.

Euro-American Infiltration and War with the United States

Economically, the Euro-Americans forged close relationships with the few wealthy Mexicans in the area — the *ricos*. These ties, as Rebecca Craver has argued, brought into New Mexican society a significant amount of intermarriage between French- and Anglo-descended merchants and Hispano families of varying ranks and wealth. As Craver further maintains, these liaisons provide a far more complicated picture of inter-ethnic relations.[20] Craver's work also suggests that one take a more nuanced view of the Mexican period than has emerged from previous scholarship. For instance, it is important to remember that just prior to the Mexican-American War a number of propagandists in the United States created a highly negative image of Mexican treatment toward *norteamericanos*; one that either embellished or blatantly lied about Mexican policies towards foreigners. Unfortunately, this depiction has had a longer life than one might presume. Secondly, and from a more contemporary perspective, the tendency of some scholars to overemphasize the "resistance" of the Hispanic New Mexicans to French and Anglo encroachment may have skewed their historical perspective and led them to project contemporary debates onto a period characterized initially by cooperation rather than combat.[21]

Indeed, Craver shows that New Mexican *ricos* at first welcomed the encroaching Anglos into their territory and absorbed them into Hispanic culture. The numbers seem to bear this out, particularly in north-central New Mexico's Rio Arriba region. Situated south and west of the PCMS, the Rio Arriba demarcated a string of settlements along the Rio Grande from Santa Fe north to Taos. The latter town was especially notable in that its role as a port of entry for furs and other goods arriving from the continental interior also made it an important zone of contact between Mexicans and Europeans.

The Rio Arriba was thus geographically well placed to serve as a crossroad of cultures. As Craver further reveals, there was in fact a generation-long "process of racial and

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[19] Abbot, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 38.
[20] Rebecca McDowell Craver, *The Impact of Intimacy*, 2. See also Sandra L. Myres, "Westering Americans and Westering Anglos: A Feminine Perspective," and Darliss L. Miller, "Cross-Cultural Contact in the Southwest: The New Mexico Experience, 1846-1900," both articles are in the *New Mexico Historical Review* 57, 4 (October 1982), pp. 319-333 and 335-359, respectively.
[21] While "resistance" has become a valuable analytical tool for studies of marginalized groups, Craver's work suggests that it may need to be applied with less generalization and a more careful eye toward particular historical circumstances.

cultural assimilation" in the area. Between 1821 and 1848, for example, the roughly 120-square-mile region witnessed no fewer than 122 Anglo-Mexican unions, both civil and common law. This number excludes those who lived far from the main centers of Mexican settlement and who never bothered to record their living arrangements.[22] In the early years approximately one-fourth of the non-Hispanics who took Mexican spouses described themselves as French-Canadian, whereas by the 1840s Anglo surnames dominated the records, constituting an increasingly a higher percentage of unions as the decade wore on.

Most of these unions occurred on the lower strata of the populace — but certainly not all. A quick survey of the major players in New Mexican society reveals that most of the region's prominent Americans married into Hispanic families. In southern Colorado, fifty crow-miles northeast of where the PCMS now sits, J. B. Doyle and his partner George Simpson, along with their Mexican wives, formed a trading post at Pueblo.[23] The powerful Charles Bent operated the Taos side of his family's business with the assistance of his wife Ignacia Jaramillo. Ignacia's mother drew on her heritage as a member of the Vigil clan, one of the most powerful in New Mexico. The well-known scout and trapper, Christopher "Kit" Carson, likewise marryied her sister, Josefa. The French-Canadian merchant Charles Beaubien arrived in the area in the 1820s, in the process taking María Paula Lobato as his spouse. What makes these inter-ethnic ties all the more compelling, as alluded to above, is their link to the enormous grants of land that occurred in the years just prior to the Mexican-American War. It is no coincidence that the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant went to Cornelio Vigil, the uncle of Charles Bent's wife, and Ceran St. Vrain.[24]

These European-Mexican liaisons figured decisively in the run-up to the Mexican-American War. Though he could never prove it, Governor Armijo thought he saw the hand of Charles Bent guiding the more harebrained Texas schemes against New Mexico.[25] An aggressive Texas had already begun blustering against Mexico in the mid-1830s by claiming the Grande River as a boundary. Obviously, this would split New Mexico in half. In 1841 more than three hundred Texans moved on the territory with the expectation that they would be welcomed. Armijo quickly disabused them of this notion and responded by placing them under arrest and confiscating their goods and weapons, a move celebrated in Mexico as a victory akin to the Alamo.[26]

The Texan incursions only added complexity to the already treacherous terrain of Plains diplomacy. Besides balancing their own rocky relationship, Armijo and the Bents both had to factor various Plains Tribes into the equation. Charles Bent solved this problem, in part, by shrewdly married into the Cheyenne and developing a close and active trading relationship with them.[27] But this also meant that he became party to the ongoing conflict

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[22] Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 4.
[23] Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 212.
[24] Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 10-11, 21-23.
[25] Armijo had definite proof, however, that Charles had armed Arapahos who had been angered by the refusal of Taos citizens to return kinspeople that the Utes had sold into slavery. Indeed, Bent dealt guns and powder to the Arapaho even as he noted one of their war parties camped on the Purgatoire with "8 Spanish scelpes [sic], 10 horses, 2 guns, etc." See Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 196.
[26] Janet Lecompte, "Manuel Armijo and the Americans," 55.
[27] Ibid., 175-176.

between the Cheyenne and Arapaho on the one side and the Comanche and Kiowa on the other.[28] Charles and William clearly feared that such intertribal warfare would cripple the development of their fur and merchandise trade and worked hard to forestall what they perceived to be a potential financial disaster. Consequently, the Bent's underwrote a massive tribal council at the fort in the summer of 1840 where they successfully brokered a Cheyenne/Comanche treaty.[29] Not only had they ensured at least a few more years' survival for their business empire, they had also made themselves the arbiters of peace and war on the Plains.

The tenuous balance among the Plains Tribes had a corollary within New Mexican Society, for the intertwining ties of marriage and commerce did not present cut-and-dried choices. For many Mexican observers the persistent inability of the province to develop its economy, to meet Indian threats, or to garner what they believed to be adequate support from Mexico proper made closer ties to the United States seem like a viable, if not attractive, alternative. This so-called "American Party," many of them from the ranks of the wealthy Taos *ricos*, was opposed by a strongly anti-Anglo group under the leadership of Antonio José Martinez, a persuasive and energetically anti-American Taos priest.[30] Martinez, the scion of a powerful family from the Rio Arriba area, did not hesitate to wield his influence in either the spiritual or political spheres.

Predictably, the Martinez and Bent families developed an abiding mutual hatred. In 1842 Bent ran against the former's candidate for justice of the peace — a critical office in terms of land grants. Even worse, Martinez, like Armijo, believed the Bents had a hand in raids from Texas into New Mexico in 1841 and 1843; the first incursion resulted in the arrest of Charles and his jailing in Santa Fe. The second filibuster ended in the deaths of innocent Mexicans at the town of Mora — Charles wisely fled back across the Arkansas River until the tensions eased. Another Texas incursion ended in the deaths of over twenty Mexicans during a fight on the Cimarron cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail. More than a few of the dead came from Taos.[31]

As the head of the anti-American element in northern New Mexico, Martinez advocated resistance to the inroads that the Anglos had made in the area. Early in 1844 he went so far as to travel to Durango, where he successfully lobbied for the repeal of the Beaubien and Miranda Grant. Much to his disappointment, Armijo had the bequest reinstated on appeal.[32] The land grant question drove Martinez to fits, as it eroded the power of his own family while simultaneously depriving the landless poor of the opportunity for property ownership. Similarly, the fact that Armijo made many of the grants to a linked group of *ricos* and Euro-American merchants only rankled Martinez more. Here, it worth quoting Howard R. Lamar's assessment of the tensions that developed in Taos both before and after the war with the United States:

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[28] Ibid., 186.
[29] Ibid., 188. There were limits, however, in that Comanches killed Charles Bent's son, Robert, in the fall of 1841.
[30] Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 205.
[31] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*), 45.
[32] Ibid., 44.

> Some years before the conquest … the Americans in New Mexico passed beyond furs and trade and to that third frontier big business: land speculation. Thus one of the major issues in Mexican New Mexico was the question of land grants, for it was inevitable that the land schemes would overlap and that factions would develop. In Taos, where no less than fifteen grants had been made in six years, the issue caused a deep split between the "American Party" (of Beaubien, Bent, Luis Lee, Cornelio Vigil, and St. Vrain) and the Martinez family and their allies. A friendly justice of the peace, prefect, or governor meant the difference between a confirmed grant and a rejected one. Consequently, political office became an important means to economic ends for the two parties. Peace and trade with the raiding Indians meant the difference between colonizing and letting the grant lie fallow and uninhabited. Thus Indian relations became part and parcel of the history of the grants. In such a struggle religion and cultural differences were heightened, and hate blossomed in the small village of San Fernandez de Taos. Faced with these conditions, Charles Bent, Ceran St. Vrain, Carlos Beaubien, and Kit Carson made a fatal decision: they would fight the "Big Family" and particularly padre Martinez and his brother Pasqual, who were its leaders.[33]

Martinez's animus reached its zenith in 1847, four months after the United States gained control of New Mexico. In January of that year Martinez helped foment a rebellion that ended in the deaths of Charles Bent and a number of prominent Americans and their Mexican allies.

The End of an Era: The Mexican-American War and Rebellion

The United States' annexation of the Lone Star Republic in 1845 made war seem likely if not inevitable, particularly given the animus between the Bents, Armijo, and the Martinez families. The Americans had in fact been pressing Armijo for years through their envoy in Santa Fe, a Spaniard named Manuel Alvarez. Alvarez hectored the governor on a regular basis, claiming that the five-hundred dollar per wagon tax on American caravans crossing into New Mexico along the Santa Fe Trail was grossly unfair, even though it served as the only source of income for Armijo's strapped government.[34]

The undermining of Armijo's authority in the region received an even more powerful sanction from the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny," the belief that the United States should occupy the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Yet as Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher so astutely pointed out, Manifest Destiny "was not, as historians so often imply, a deeply held folk belief," but a "self-conscious creation" by those "determined to uncouple the

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[33] Ibid., 44-45. Interestingly, Willa Cather based the corrupt priest in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* partly on Martinez. See Ibid., 36.

[34] Bent and St. Vrain caravans circumvented the tariff to some degree by repacking their wagons at the New Mexico border and pulling their loads with double teams of oxen.

politics of expansion from the growing sectional controversy over slavery."[35] The presidential election of 1844 in fact became a referendum of sorts on Manifest Destiny and westward expansion. James K. Polk's Democratic Party adopted it as a main plank in their platform.[36] Polk's declaration advocating "the *reannexation* [italics added] of Texas at the earliest practicable period," implying "that these territories had always been a part of the America's 'providential' domain …" contrasted sharply with Mexican president Santa Anna's 1843 avowal that the annexation would be tantamount to a declaration of war.[37]

The absorption of Texas brought with it the understanding that what had been the Lone Star Republic's problems were now those of the United States, including the ongoing boundary dispute over whether the new border lay on the Nueces River or the more southerly Rio Grande. Not surprisingly, both parties moved troops into the troubled boundary region. The tensions came to a head in 1846, after a clash along the Rio Grande River led to the deaths of several American soldiers. President Polk thundered that "American blood had been shed on American soil," thus inciting public support for a formal declaration of war on May 13, 1846. The outcome of the conflict was never really in doubt — the United States simply had too many resources and too much manpower for the Mexican Republic to effectively counter an invasion.

While General Zachary Taylor and his forces readied to strike Mexico proper, Stephen Watts Kearny and his "Army of the West" prepared to move along the Santa Fe Trail and take the New Mexico territory. He arrived at Bent's Fort on the last day of July, per instructions of President Polk. Kearny had to two main goals. First, he hoped to ensure that trade along the route from Missouri would not be disrupted, and second he wanted to occupy New Mexico without bloodshed if at all possible. Both objectives seemed feasible — the Purgatoire Valley lay open from Bent's Fort, where Kearny's forces coiled to strike, and northern New Mexico. Even more critically, he could count on the help of the American merchants who had previously entrenched themselves in New Mexican society. Eugene Leitensdorfer, one of the beneficiaries of the Vigil and St. Vrain grant, acted as Kearny's personal envoy to Armijo.[38] Leitensdorfer, in conjunction with Manuel Alvarez, urged Armijo to abandon violence in the face of an overwhelming United States force.[39] Armijo responded by issuing a face-saving call to arms, asking citizens to "add another brilliant page to the history of Mexico if possible" while noting that "no one can do the impossible" — hardly inspirational.[40] To the governor's chagrin four thousand absolutely poverty stricken and untrained New Mexicans assembled in Santa Fe, ready to defend their territory.

James Magoffin, a trader, and Captain Phillip St. George Cook of the Army of the West followed on the heels of Leitensdorfer and Alvarez, entering Santa Fe on August 12.

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[35] John Mack Faragher and Robert V. Hine, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 200-201.
[36] The young Whig candidate, Abraham Lincoln, countered that the country was best served by "keep[ing] our fences where they are and cultivating the present possession making a garden and improving the morals and education of the people." Cited in Ibid., 203.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 53.
[39] Lecompte, "Manuel Armijo and the Americans," 60.
[40] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 53.

The men jostled their way through a crowd in front of the governor's mansion, protected by a white flag of truce attached to the end of a saber. They followed a familiar tack, arguing that resistance would only result in unnecessary deaths. Furthermore, they added, the Americans only wanted half of New Mexico. According to Cooke, the governor seemed "in painful doubt and irresolution," and did not give a definite answer.[41] Armijo met with his commanders on August 14; they wanted a fight. To this the governor replied that the ragtag of civilians who had answered his summons to defend the territory had neither arms nor the training to oppose the Americans.[42] Consequently, he ordered the crowds of volunteers who were milling about Santa Fe to return home. Within days Kearny's troops entered Taos and Santa Fe without firing a shot. The conquest proved so easy that he took *all* of New Mexico, rather than the half he had previously stipulated.[43]

The "conquest of merchants," as Howard Lamar has called it, brought with it the usual problems of occupation.[44] Kearny sought to forestall difficulties in reconciling American and Mexican law by adopting a legal system that drew on "Mexican, Texan, and Coahuila statutes," as well as protocols that had been used in Louisiana and Missouri.[45] In some instances the "Kearny Code" retained the trappings of New Mexican custom, but not the name. The *alcalde* position, a mayoral type office, simply became the justice of the peace. To this Kearny added a county sheriff and a county tax assessor. On the territorial level he created a legislative assembly, a body lacking under Mexican rule.[46] The position of governor continued as before, thus retaining the executive branch.

As Lamar notes, the tendency of scholars to hail the Kearny Code as a constitutional landmark in the region's history may be overly optimistic. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the new laws, though at first glance conciliatory, "violated both the spirit of the Code and Polk's order to retain, so far as possible, the existing native government."[47] Given the divisions between the pro and anti-American elements in New Mexican society and the rancor caused by the land grants, Kearny's political appointments seem remarkably short-sighted. Charles Bent became governor, Antonio Jose Otero, a merchant and part of the "American Party," assumed the position of chief justice with Carlos Beaubien serving as one of his aids. Eugene Leitensdorfer took over the auditor's duties while a host of foreigners, mostly merchants, filled other posts. Only one other New Mexican besides Otero, Donacio Vigil, would take a seat in the new government.[48]

These appointments seemed a positive insult to the Martinez family and the many New Mexicans who resented the American takeover. The behavior of Americans in Santa Fe only exacerbated the situation. One English traveler reported that the Americans there "were the dirtiest, rowdiest crew I have seen collected together. Crowds of drunken volunteers

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[41] Cited in LeCompte, "Armijo and the Americans," 60.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 56.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 57.
[48] Ibid.

filled the streets brawling and boasting but never fighting."[49] Worse still, many people believed that the new government planned to begin confiscating the lands of both Mexican and Pueblo citizens. Donacio Vigil's spies, meanwhile, had sniffed out rumors of an impending rebellion.[50] Charles Bent too had taken note, but believed that the threat had receded after he had issued reassurances of the government's good faith.

Bent's optimism proved sadly misplaced. On the morning of January 19, 1847, a band of angry Pueblo Indians and New Mexicans laid siege to Bent's home in Taos. Bent tried to treat with the rebels through his barred door. Bent's wife, Ignacia, along with the wives of Thomas Boggs and Kit Carson, frantically tried to dig through one of the walls with wooden spoons and a fire poker so as to facilitate and escape.[51] The attackers eventually breached the door, mortally wounding Bent with arrows and musket rounds. The attackers then scalped him and nailed the trophy to a board, parading it around the town. Similar crowds attacked other American residences, though William Bent had the good fortune to be away on business.

American authorities quickly suppressed the revolt and executed its leaders, but the death of Charles Bent removed a critical linchpin of Plains diplomacy and accelerated the decline of an already ailing business empire. Trappers had long since cleared the streams of the region of most of its beaver, and the buffalo robes that sustained local trade thereafter began to suffer a similar decline. The ongoing Comanche-Arapaho feud, along with a cholera epidemic among the Cheyenne, further eroded the vibrant life of the Plains.[52] One Indian Agent, writing in 1853, noted that local tribes were "in abject want of food half the years… Their women are pinched with want and their children constantly crying out with hunger."[53] By 1849 William Bent and St. Vrain had dissolved their relationship. Bent then placed powder kegs in the fort and blew it into rubble, marking very distinctly the end an era.

Historians have remembered the Bent's role in the turbulent world of Mexican/Indian/Anglo relations far more sympathetically than that of Manuel Armijo, with much of the scholarship simply reiterating prewar Anglo propaganda. An American captured during an unsuccessful 1841 Texan incursion into New Mexico, George Wilkins Kendall, helped establish a persistently unflattering portrayal of Armijo as an "assassin, murderer, blood-thirsty tyrant, and cowardly braggart."[54] Kendall's *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* claimed, among other things, that the Mexican governor hated and inflicted upon them frequent injustices and humiliations. Raising the bar of hate even more, Kendall charged that Armijo foisted indignations upon Anglo women that "would make Saxon hearts burn with … fire."[55] David Lavender, one of the best known historians of the region,

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[49] Cited by Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 59.
[50] Ibid., 60.
[51] Boggs and Carson's wives were staying with the Bents while their husbands were traveling.
[52] Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 40.
[53] Cited in Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 40.
[54] Ray Allen Billington, notes Janet LeCompte, criticized Armijo's "total lack of either principles or courage," while Harvey Fergusson labeled him "the unspeakable Armijo." See LeCompte's "Manuel Armijo and the Americans," 52.
[55] LeCompte, "Manuel Armijo and the Americans," 51.

followed this pattern in his work *Bent's Fort* even while acknowledging that the charge that Armijo made his initial fortune by stealing and reselling sheep was probably unfounded.

The most controversial aspect of Armijo's rule, however, turns on his motives in parceling out the tremendous land grants of the 1840s, the largest of which, as we recall, encompassed the PCMS. Scholars such as Marianne Stoller have also argued for a more nuanced assessment of Armijo's character, particularly in regard to the American takeover and the land grant schemes. As Stoller sees it, the governor had made "Grants of Desperation" in the effort to secure Mexico's frontier borders against Indian incursions, and ironically, the claims of encroaching Anglo settlers. The location of the 1.7-million-acre Beaubien and Miranda grant, for example, indicates its role in firming up the Mexican border and forestalling the specious claims of the Republic of Texas to the New Mexican territory.[56] As Stoller further notes, the governor, whether "a rogue, a *vendido* (sell-out), or a hero," clearly acted in response to outside threats, profit motive aside.[57] Perhaps Armijo would have been remembered differently if his plan had succeeded.

As it turned out, the Americans would prove no more successful in settling the southern Colorado/northern New Mexico periphery than the Mexicans. Indeed, the first pioneers would not put down roots in the isolated canyons and arroyos of southeastern Colorado until the mid-1860s, nearly twenty years after the war ended. Environmental factors played a part as always, as did the lingering and very real danger of Indian attack. William Bransford's testimony on behalf of a Congressional committee on land grants recalled that Bent and St. Vrain had attempted to establish ranches on the Purgatoire in 1847, but had to abandon them after local tribes chased off the livestock and threatened to kill anyone who did not leave. In the same deposition Bransford also recounted how Richard "Uncle Dick" Wooten and others had staked out homesteads near the Huerfano River after St. Vrain gave them parcels of land. The community continued in a "flourishing condition till about the spring or summer of 1854, when the Indians attacked … killed seven or eight of the settlers, and run off with most of the stock …"[58]

The threat of Indian attack, though a powerful deterrent, was usually overcome when land hunger became great enough. One could argue that the drive to settle the PCMS region had a still more important challenge that limited the pioneering impulse, namely the profound differences between Hispanic land-holding customs and the legalities of Anglo rule. The treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, while guaranteeing the property rights of Mexican citizens caught in the skein of Anglo rule, never adequately fulfilled its promise. The newly acquired Territory of New Mexico drew most of its higher-level officials, such as the Surveyor-General, from the ranks of Washington appointees who had no knowledge of local conditions and customs.[59] By the same token, the relative obscurity of the region made it a dumping ground for officials not wanted in Washington. Moreover, the shortage of personnel and scarcity of funding contributed significantly to corruption.[60] Taken together, these factors

[56] Stoller, "Grants of Desperation," 27.
[57] Ibid., 29.
[58] House Committee on Private Land Claims, Land Claims in New Mexico, 35th Congress, 1st Session, 1857.
[59] Van Ness, *Land, Water, and Culture*, 2.
[60] Ibid.

spelled disaster for Mexican settlers and communities who had sunk both figurative and literal roots into a plot of earth without the benefit of a clear title.

To these governmental shortcomings one can add the yawning cultural gap between Hispanic conceptions of land use and those of the growing numbers Anglo settlers moving into the area. In the informal world of early nineteenth century New Mexico, it was the folkways that guided the etiquette of land-holding. A simple verbal contract frequently sufficed to swap parcels of earth and the assumption that those who exchanged the land had an intimate knowledge of its local topography and resources undergirded the transactions.[61] Direct contact through ties of kinship, community, family, and "networks of cooperation in work" likewise guided business in a territory devoid of sufficient governmental structures to oversee land claims.[62]

Long-held custom also dictated the very manner in which settlers would use the landscape that they tried to make theirs. Spanish land-holding patterns derived from the Castilian concept of usufruct and reflected an organizational pattern with community/cultural constraints that differed sharply from Anglo notions of land as an individually held commodity. In this model, "no individual possessed the exclusive right to the resources of nature that were produced without man's intervention."[63] Maintaining one's hold of the land rested on the assumption that the occupant properly utilize its resources and preserve its usefulness, rather than simply holding of title.[64] Technically, one might be forced to concede one's right to a parcel of land if they failed to properly use and develop its resources.

These seemingly innate Hispanic customs clashed sharply with the American penchant for strict measurement and well-defined boundaries.[65] American officials in fact failed dismally in recognizing "the political and legal rights of the rural Hispanic corporate communities where the bulk of the population resided."[66] Even when the original Hispanic settlers had lived and worked their lands for a number of years, Anglo administrators tended to ignore their claims or view them as illegitimate attempts to squat and gain ownership. Moreover, these same officials never understood the nature of the Hispanic *plaza* and its collective, communal form of land-holding.

Congress's first effort to adjudicate New Mexican land claims came in 1854 when they created the office of the Surveyor-General for the territory. The office took as its goal the investigation of the validity of Mexican and Spanish land claims in the region.[67] In theory, the newly established office would review the claim and make its recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, who would then forwarded the information to Congress for approval. Successful claimants would then receive a patent on the property.[68] The reality proved more daunting, as the surveyor invariably lacked "the technical expertise, adequate

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[61] John R. Van Ness in introduction to John R. and Christine Van Ness, eds., *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in New Mexico and Colorado* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower Press, 1980), 9.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 12.
[64] Van Ness, introduction to *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 9.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Richard W. Bradfute, "The Las Animas Land Grant," *Colorado Magazine* 47 (Winter 1973), 27.
[68] Van Ness, introduction to *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 9.

manpower, or a large enough budget to carry out its charge satisfactorily."[69] Indeed, the first Surveyor General for New Mexico, William Pelham, left the East in the July of 1854 and did not reach his post at Santa Fe until December 28 of that year.[70] Once there, Pelham was instructed to conduct hearings on various land claims and then make recommendations to Congress, which would decide the final disposition of the cases.[71] Instead, they relied entirely on an under-staffed and under-funded surveyor's office.

Pelham himself issued frequent reports to Congress decrying New Mexico's pitiful situation and imploring them to appoint a committee to oversee private land-claim cases. He pointed out that in California, which had fewer land grants to reconcile and far better records, received $15,000 just for staff salaries alone, whereas New Mexico's far more vexing land claims had to be settled on a total budget of $12,000. In the same vein, costs in the latter territory generally exceeded those in California by 25 percent.[72] The problem proved so severe that many land claims remained undecided until the 1890s, when Congress finally established a five-person Court of Private Land Claims.[73]

One might well imagine the difficulties that 1850s New Mexicans had in proving the merits of their case. The community-based Hispanic plazas lacked clear physical title to the land, thus they had a difficult time establishing ownership in the various land courts established by the new territorial government. Also, the fact that Washington was half a continent away meant that relaying the merits of their case to Congress was practically impossible.[74] Similarly, the costs of proving one's claim ensured that even successful efforts might result in a significant reduction of one's holdings, since cash-poor claimants might have to deed as much as a third or more of their land to cover attorney's fees. In this environment, charges Van Ness, congressional confirmation became the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, some claims remained unresolved well into the later nineteenth century. Here, it is germane to quote Van Ness directly:

> In many instances where Hispanic communities or individuals won confirmation, the bulk of the land … went to pay attorney's fees. The Court of Private land Claims took no special notice of the rights of the corporate land-holding plazas, for few hand the legal documentation to press their claims successfully. Often land grants which were in fact community grants were treated as grants to private individuals. In all fewer than a dozen community grants were confirmed.[75]

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[69] Ibid, 10; Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 87-92.
[70] Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 86.
[71] Ibid., 87. Westphall has effectively argued that Congress should followed the precedents of the Louisiana and Florida settlements, where special committees and district courts assumed the burden of adjudicating the claims on newly acquired Spanish lands.
[72] Ibid., 90.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Van Ness, *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants*, 10.

The Vigil and St. Vrain grant provides a vivid example of the problems involved in settling the land grants. At more than 4,000,000 acres, the size of the parcel clearly exceeded the amount of land allowed under the Mexican colonization laws of 1824. In June of 1860, Judah P. Benjamin, chairman of the Senate Committee on Private land Claims, recommended that the Las Animas behest conform to Mexican law with each of the original grantees receiving eleven square leagues of land for a total of twenty-two square leagues. St. Vrain ignored Congress and continued to press his claim while issuing parcels in excess of the 97,000 acres allowed by Congress.[76] Considering the legal environment, St. Vrain felt secure in disposing of the land as he wished. Congress had in fact confirmed the Maxwell Grant, which lay just to the south of St. Vrain's parcel, at close to its original size. The reason for this leaves this researcher somewhat incredulous, for as a recent General Accounting Office report states "the Surveyor General of New Mexico was not originally authorized to survey land grant claims until after Congress confirmed them, the area of many land grant claims that the Surveyor General recommended for approval, and Congress confirmed, had never been measured."[77] What St Vrain did not account for, however, was the fact that the public outcry over the Maxwell case might force a different outcome.

Congress finally revisited the Maxwell Grant issue in 1867, when it surveyed the grant for twenty-two square leagues; squatters would theoretically be allowed to resettle anywhere within the original 4,000,000 acres, provided the land was unoccupied.[78] This by no means meant that the possibility of land fraud hand been eliminated though. Six years later, the surveyor's office, then under William Lessing, advertised the deadline for filing homestead claims on the grant. Robert E. Carr and David H. Moffat "founded" the town of West Las Animas in Bent County in hope of taking advantage of a proposed Kansas-Pacific rail line in the area. Squatters on the land who rushed to the land office to meet the deadline found their claims had been pre-empted by one D. W. Hughes. Officials at the Pueblo land office neglected to mention that Hughes had actually relinquished the land in May of 1873. This meant that squatters *could* have still filed claims. Instead, the land office recorder, as well as the receiver, proceeded to accept affidavits from a "group" of persons who mutually swore residing on the land for six months, and having made improvements. This legitimated their ownership, which they promptly signed over to Moffat — undoubtedly for a fee.[79] Worse, Jerome B. Chaffee, Moffat's partner at the First National Bank of Denver, was also implicated.[80] The ensuing scandal led to a Washington investigation and the resignation of the surveyor and officials at the Pueblo land office.

Still other land in the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant fell into the hands of the "Santa Fe Ring," a "group of lawyers and politicians at the center of New Mexico territorial politics." The "Ring," led by the attorney Thomas B. Catron, had extended their reach into southeastern Colorado by accepting portions of land claims as their fee for settling ownership

[76] Bradfute, "Las Animas Land Grant," 29.
[77] United States General Accounting Office [GAO], Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Findings and Possible Options Regarding Longstanding Community Land Grant Claims in New Mexico (Washington: June 2004), 70.
[78] Bradfute, "Las Animas Land Grant," 29.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 32.

of Mexican grants."[81] As Howard Lamar noted, over 80 percent of the grant titles found their way into the pockets of American attorneys and the well-connected.[82]

As a 2004 General Accounting Office Report reveals, the question of New Mexico and southern Colorado land grants still has the ability to generate heated debate. Indeed, the study notes that:

> Whether the United States has fulfilled its obligations under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, with respect to property rights held by traditional communities in New Mexico, has been a source of continuing controversy for over a century. The controversy has created a sense of distrust and bitterness among various communities and has led to confrontations with federal, state, and local authorities. Under the Treaty, which ended the Mexican-American War, the United States obtained vast territories in what is now the U.S. Southwest, from California to New Mexico. Much of this land was subject to pre-existing land grants to individuals, groups, and communities made by Spain and México from the 17th to the mid-19th centuries, and the Treaty provided for U.S. recognition and protection of the property rights created by these grants. Today, land grant heirs and legal scholars contend that the United States failed to fulfill its treaty obligations regarding community land grants within New Mexico. This contention is based in part on a belief that the percentage of community land-grant acreage recognized by the U.S. government in New Mexico was significantly lower than the percentage recognized in California, and a view that confirmation procedures followed in New Mexico were unfair and inequitable compared with the different procedures established for California. The effect of this alleged failure to implement the treaty properly, heirs contend, is that the United States either inappropriately acquired millions of acres of land for the public domain or else confirmed acreage to the wrong parties. According to some heirs, the resulting loss of land to grantees threatens the economic stability of small Mexican-American farms and the farmers' rural lifestyle.[83]

It appears unlikely that there will be any agreement on the issue in the near future, given the reaction to the report by anti-land-grant advocates. One can say, however, that the problem of land grants played significantly into the history of the PCMS region, and it continues to do so.

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[81] Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 237-238. Another significant portion, claimed by the brother of Eugene Leitensdorfer, remained in litigation until the 1891.
[82] Cited in Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 237. Lamar further noted that Catron himself either owned outright or had a share in at least thirty-four grants totaling more than *three million* acres.
[83] U.S. GAO, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 2.

3 Peopling the 'Picketwire': Early and Later Nineteenth Century American Settlement on the PCMS

Although Native Americans as well as Mexican and American trappers had all used the Purgatoire River valley as a conduit for trade, the area remained largely uninhabited well into the American period. This derived in part from the land's legally ambiguous status. Indeed, settlers had little incentive to put down either literal or figurative roots until the United States government could clearly establish ownership of the massive grants that Governor Armijo had made in 1840s.[1]

Nevertheless, some grant holders hoped to strengthen the legality of their claims by encouraging New Mexicans to migrate northward and establish permanent settlements along the Purgatoire. Scattering themselves along the river and creek courses of southeastern Colorado, these Spanish speaking pioneers constructed their own self-contained *plaza* communities — usually ten to fifteen adobe houses linked by ties of kinship and an economic dependence on the *patrón*, a respected male member of the community who served as the "local money lender, adviser, and leader."[2]

Most of the *plazas* in this patchwork of settlement did not prove particularly long-lived. More frequently than not they fell victim to economic pressures and environmental disasters. There were exceptions however, and a number of towns that began life as Hispano outposts later grew into trading centers. Coloradoans today thus recognize Apodaca as Aguilar, while Walsenburg traces it roots to La Plaza de los Leones. Perhaps none of the hamlets, however, proved as successful as that of Trinidad, established by Felipe Baca in 1860.

Trinidad clearly made a great deal of geographic sense. It lay along the Santa Fe Trail — a natural route for stagecoaches and rails as much as for the foot, horse, and wagon traffic that had for years snaked southward to the Raton Pass defile on the New Mexican border. Similarly, the town could serve as a hub for further migration to the north along the Purgatoire, as well as for Anglos who had followed the east-west axis of the Arkansas River before swinging southward. The town's development as a commercial center for southeastern Colorado too meant that it would become the nexus for the coalmining and livestock enterprises that dominated the regional economy in the latter nineteenth and early

[1] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 204-205.
[2] Ibid., 205. As we might recall from earlier in the study, the *Hispano* communities tended to associate themselves more closely with Spanish culture. Their relative isolation in New Mexico made them fairly static, hence their preservation of archaic Spanish words and folklore.

twentieth centuries. Indeed, as early as 1866 Colorado authorities had seen enough potential in the locale to formally recognize Trinidad as the seat of the newly formed Las Animas County, itself carved out of the county of Huerfano.[3]

While state authorities clearly anticipated that railroads, mining, and agriculture would affect the area, they probably could not have envisioned just how profound the "sweeping geographical changes that incorporated the region around Trinidad into the opportunities and vicissitudes of the industrial age" would be.[4] As William Wyckoff so beautifully put it:

> An elaborate new network of mines, settlements, and railroads, dramatically imposed by a corporate nexus of mineral and transport companies and oriented around the area's enormous coalfields, dominated this portion of the southern periphery in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Further twentieth century expansion of the coal operations, culminating in the fevered industrial activity of the World War I, fundamentally changed the economic and social geography of this once quiet corner of Colorado.[5]

This is the essence of a landscape oriented approach to the PCMS, one that builds on historian Howard Roberts Lamar's observation that Colorado's "mining, ranching, farming, and industrial frontier stages were rolled into one and functioned simultaneously."[6]

Wyckoff's work is useful too insomuch as it points to the main theme of this chapter: that of initial settlement and rapid growth as it occurred in the PCMS area from the 1860s to 1900. Indeed, southeastern Colorado's Hispanics, Anglos, and diminishing Native American populace met at a cultural crossroads that was itself intertwined with regional, national, and international systems of trade. While this economic "system," as it were, was not exactly a new phenomenon, its scope dwarfed that of the more simplified bartering exchanges of the Spanish and Mexican periods.

The presence of this system is key, for it suggests that we can fully grasp the historical intricacies of the changes wrought on the nineteenth century Purgatoire landscape only if we go beyond the local level and consider larger economic and environmental forces. We should thus first pay heed to the early New Mexican pioneers who arrived in the 1860s. What was their daily life like? How did women fit into this rapidly changing environment? What effect did the advent of mining, stagecoaches, railroads, and livestock ranching have on the landscape and the relations among an increasingly diverse population? What strategies did Hispanos, a dominant demographic for many years, adopt to adjust to their shifting

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[3] Ibid., 206. Some of the later settlers believed that the town had been named after Baca's daughter-a mistaken assumption since, as Paul Friedman has noted, Baca did not have a daughter. An interview from the DeBusk memorial collection at the Colorado Historical Society archives, however, indicates that one of the early settlers, J. I. Alires, or Aliriez, chose the name Santisma Trinidad for the new locale. See also Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 29; Interview with Teodora Abeyta by A. K. Richeson for the Civil Works Administration, De Busk Memorial Collection, Colorado Historical Society [hereafter CHS], 1933, I, 77.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 206.
[6] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 297.

circumstances? By answering these questions we can better comprehend the intriguing story of late-nineteenth century PCMS and its role as a microcosm of Western history.

The Early Years: Hispano Pioneers of the Purgatoire

Historians have frequently depicted the families that came to the PCMS in the late 1860s and early 1870s as "Hispanic" pioneers. True enough, but slightly off the mark. More specifically, they represented a unique subcultural phenomenon — that of the New Mexican Hispano. The Hispanos, as Richard L. Nostrand has noted, colonized New Mexico in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, bringing with them a strong affiliation for Spanish culture.[7] Their isolation led them to cling to "indigenous institutions such as folk plays and songs …" and preserve archaic word and verb usages. On yellowed census forms and scratchy microfilm reels they stand out too, having often marked themselves as "W," for white.

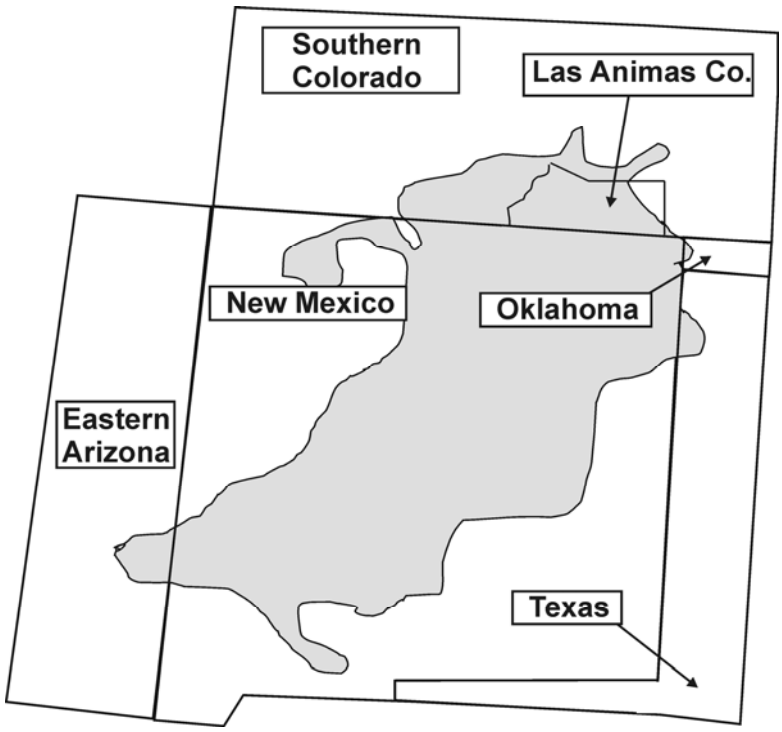

Figure 8. Hispano areas in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Texas (1900).[8]

[7] Nostrand, "The *Hispano* Homeland," 382. Nostrand identified some 220,000 residents in the "Homeland" area, of whom 140,000 he classified as Hispano. Another 66,000 were Anglo, with approximately 10,100 classified as "Mexican-American" and 2,500 "Indian." See Table 1, p. 384.
[8] Map derived from Nostrand article, but drawn by author of this study.

In absolute numbers, Hispanos clearly predominated in Las Animas County for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One study on the variation of land use patterns between Anglo and Hispano on the lower Purgatoire River has revealed that as of 1870 Spanish surnamed individuals headed 381 of 427 households.[9] Similarly, 98% of Hispano homesteads were comprised of families, while single males ran thirty-four of the forty-six Anglo homes. Ten years later the census showed an obvious influx of Anglos, yet even then no fewer than 68% of the settlers who lived within the confines of the study site listed New Mexico as their birthplace.[10]

The strength of the Hispano demographic is further demonstrated by the fact that even as late as 1900 the community formed between 90 and 100% of the population in the "stronghold" zones of central New Mexico and southern Colorado with the latter area including the southwestern corner of Las Animas County. Their presence in the rest of the county was strong as well, ranging between 50% and 90%. The exceptions to the Hispano demographic tended to be in the mining areas, which contained large numbers southeastern European coal workers, and the urban centers along the line from Walsenburg to Trinidad where Anglos and a coterie of privileged Hispanos exercised a disproportionate share of political and economic power.[11]

The first intrepid Hispano settlers of the Purgatoire, however, faced one overwhelming need: that of day-to-day survival. A glance at the 1870 census mortality table for Las Animas County confirms just how tenuous life could be on the fringes of settlement. Of thirty-three deaths recorded that year, no fewer than thirteen died of gastrointestinal illnesses, while two women died in childbirth.

"Consumption" (tuberculosis) hit at least three citizens, but the number was probably more based on the sometimes vaguely defined causes of death. Added to these natural maladies were three deaths attributed to an Indian attack, a gunshot wound, and a hanging. As might be expected, the majority of the unfortunate listed New Mexico as their birthplace, while the younger Hispano children on the census had all been born in Colorado. Only five of those listed had purely Anglo names, including the hanging victim.[12]

These stark numbers attest to the tremendous obstacles faced by families like that of Juan Cordova, who arrived in the PCMS area from New Mexico in 1867. Setting up camp at Red Rocks along the Chacuaco Creek near the eastern PCMS boundary, the Cordovas quickly established a *plaza* with Juan as their leader, or *patrón*.[13] From there, other members of the Cordova family could scatter their own homesteads about the canyon. Juan's brother Antonio, as Paul Friedman notes in *Valley of Lost Souls*, had effectively claimed his

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[9] Minette C. Church, "The Grant and the Grid: Homestead Landscapes in the Late Nineteenth Century Borderlands of Southern Colorado." *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2, 2 (2002): 224.
[10] Friedman, *Power's Report*, 197; Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 205.
[11] See Nostrand's map in "The *Hispano* Homeland," 391.
[12] 1870 U.S. Census Mortality Schedule, Las Animas County, Colorado.
[13] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 19. Just prior to the arrival of the Cordovas, an Anglo by the name of Climer had settled in the area, yet records on him are sketchy.

homestead by 1873. This indicates, when considered alongside the five years it took to "prove up" one's claim, that he had arrived in the area no later than 1868.[14]

Life on the Cordova homesteads proved arduous. The threat of Indian attack, though diminished, still remained, and the act of simply sustaining life required exhausting effort. Not only did the pioneers need to build defensible homes in case of hostilities with increasingly pressured Native American tribes, they also had to dig ditches for livestock and crop irrigation. Those who had iron shovels dug the hardest ground, while those with the wooden equivalents scooped away the loosened soil.[15] The types of crops and the amount planted similarly depended on available tools and labor. As Morris Taylor recounts, the plow often consisted of nothing more than a tree-fork with a piece of "sharpened iron on one of the prongs." A team of oxen pulled the plow through the soil. The settlers grew corn, beans, pumpkins, melons, and of course wheat, though the lack of surplus labor generally limited these plots to no more than 4 acres.[16]

Survival also demanded mutual cooperation from the entire household, including the women who helped to guarantee the success of the early PCMS habitations. Historians have too often portrayed women as tangential to the West. It would be more accurate to see them as essential to the overall efforts of the home and community. Further, when women have received their due it tends to fall on the "westering" Anglo women, themselves depicted as "gentle tamers" or "soiled doves."[17] What this viewpoint fails to account for, as Pamela Cowen's thesis on women in Boggsville reveals, is that the majority of the women in the Colorado's southeastern corner during the latter half of the nineteenth century were Native American and Hispano rather than white. Women of color thus filled an important role in the region's social and cultural milieu in the 1860s and 1870s, not just for families like the Cordovas, but also for the westering Americans with whom they continued to intermarry and form points of contact between the two cultures.[18]

The lack of documentation regarding seemingly mundane daily tasks makes the task of recovering women's experiences on the PCMS all the more challenging — this in spite of the fact that "woman's work" remained ever crucial to the health and well-being of the family. Nonetheless we can discern some of the activities that women on the PCMS would have undertaken by distilling indirect evidence from various recollections and histories. Morris Taylor's *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, for example, details the experiences of the family of Domacio Lopez, who arrived at Red Rocks with the Cordovas. In the same vein, it is possible to glean information from the oral histories of long-time PCMS inhabitants

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[14] Ibid; Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 30-31.
[15] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 19-20.
[16] Ibid., 20.
[17] Ibid., 4; Elizabeth Herr, "Women, Marital Status, and Work Opportunity in 1880 Colorado," *Journal of Economic History* 55, 2 (June 1995): 339. Herr focuses on Anglo women as opposed to women of color — a point which certainly underscores Cowen's call to fashion a more inclusive history of women in the West.
[18] Pamela Cowen, *Fantasy and Fallacy: Reconstructing the Images of Hispanic and Native American Women in Western History, A Study of the Women of Boggsville, Colorado*, MA thesis, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, 1999.

conducted in 1994 by Larry Loendorf and Dianna Clise. Although utilized in other contexts, these interviews demand further scrutiny from the standpoint of women's history.[19]

Taylor's study draws most directly on the initial permanent settlements. The author benefited from his long residency in the area as well as from his ability to have direct contact with some of the earlier, though by then aged, inhabitants. His *Pioneers of the Picketwire* recalled that "the women ground their blue corn on stone *metates* [grinding stones] — Indian style" and that "shoes were home-made moccasins … Thread was scarce, but the deficiency was overcome in part by pulling the threads from flour sacks and the like; the two or three threads were twisted together for sewing."[20]

Taylor's work is as important for what it does *not* say as for what it does. Clearly, women had a key role in running the household, including the hard work of grinding grain and providing clothing. But what else did they do? Simply put, in a world where labor remained scarce and an unforgiving environment demanded cooperation, they did everything. Harvest time required the attention of an entire community, women and children included.

Rebecca Richards, the offspring of an Anglo/Hispano liaison between William Richards and Manuelita Lujan, was born just north of the PCMS in one of the Purgatoire canyons. She recalled that she and her sisters, Lupe and Mary, had to work as hard as anyone in the community, particularly when conditions warranted that all contribute to the general welfare.[21] Interestingly, Rebecca later married the son of Domacio Lopez, Elfido, and gave birth to Elfido Jr. in 1905, the latter of whom conducted extensive interviews about life on the Purgatoire.

In her adulthood Rebecca Richards Lopez provided a service that extended well beyond the confines of the immediate family — she acted as a midwife for an area where doctors were nonexistent. As Elfido Jr. recalled in 1994:

> There was no doctors, it was 70 miles to a town to a doctor, and so she became a mid-wife and she really, I believe, enjoyed it. I'd get up at night many times, walked out into the pasture, drived [sic] in some saddle horses, so I could saddle her up a horse so that she could go out and deliver her babies. That's what the condition was.[22]

Rebecca Richards Lopez, so warmly remembered by her son a lifetime later, also set bones and tended to other illnesses. Surely her dual role as a homesteader and mid-wife drained her energy — but not all of it. In 1913, the resilient Rebecca made the seventy-five mile wagon ride to Trinidad and cajoled the superintendent of the Las Animas County school district, Elmer Floyd, into appropriating enough money to hire a teacher for the children in their isolated Las Animas outpost. Rebecca considered the education of the area's children

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[19] Larry Loendorf and Dianna Clise, *Interviews with Former Residents of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site*, 2 vols., (Fort Carson Colorado: Directorate of Environmental Compliance and Management, April 1997).
[20] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 23.
[21] Ibid., 32.
[22] Loendorf and Clise, "Interview with Elfido Lopez Jr." in *Interviews with Former Residents of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site*, I, 13.

so important that the Lopez family themselves provided board for the instructor — a woman that Elfido remembered as dreadfully lonely and more than a little difficult, particularly after he hurled spitballs at her in class.[23]

Bringing even the rudiments of education to Red Rock canyon was an impressive feat given the scattershot nature of rural southern Colorado schools at the time. Yet Rebecca Lopez, like many Hispano parents, realized that their children needed an education in order to survive in a rapidly changing world.[24] They considered it crucial to take direct action at a time when counties such as Las Animas might have little or no funding for instruction — particularly for students considered to be non-white. The schools that did exist often limited classes to two months out of the year and few alternatives — a few families could send their children to church-run Catholic schools or inexpensive, mostly Presbyterian, Protestant substitutes.[25]

The foresight of Rebecca Lopez bears witness to the coping strategies that the early Hispano pioneers adopted as they confronted a world that was at once becoming less secluded and more reliant upon the new modes of transportation and the economies that linked the PCMS to the outer world. Indeed, by the start of the 1880s, the Anglo immigration that had begun in earnest during the 1870s matched that of Hispano migrations from New Mexico to Colorado. Hispano society simply no longer had the capacity to absorb the Americans through intermarriage and business contacts as it had in the past, and the more recent and far more numerous Anglo immigration brought in its wake attitudes on property and economic development that differed sharply from the existing Hispano traditions. From the mid-1870s forward, the intermingling of Anglo and Hispanic cultures, the development of mining and the successive arrival of stagecoaches, trains, and ranching brought a flurry of activity that dramatically altered the cultural landscape of southeastern Colorado.

Mines, Wheels, and Rails: The Changing Landscape of the PCMS

For years it had been the promise of cheap land that lured Anglos westward. They came in significant, though not overwhelming numbers — at least not until 1849, the year after news of a gold strike at Sutter's Mill in California turned what had been a relative trickle into a horde of approximately 90,000 immigrant "49ers."

Historians have debated the overall economic impact of this initial rush, arguing that manufacturing in the northeastern United States had already established itself as a dominant and self-sustaining national business sector. Even so, within four years of the Sutter Mill discovery, the United States's gold-based money supply had increased four times, thus creating huge amounts of new capital for investment.[26] Moreover, invading prospectors arrived in the West in need of tons of supplies. Shantytowns grew around easily extracted

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[23] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 54.
[24] Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 27.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 240.

"placer" deposits only to disappear as the veins played out.[27] More sustained operations fostered new urban landscapes in which miner and merchandiser conducted mutual trade. Ancillary industries such as smelting and processing only added to the economic dynamism. Indeed, writing to his colleague Karl Marx, a stunned Friedrich Engels admitted that the *Communist Manifesto* has failed to account for mining's "creation of large markets out of nothing."[28]

In Colorado gold strikes had an equally dramatic effect on the landscape. Working on rumor and desperation, three Georgia brothers by the name of William, Oliver, and Levi Russell hit paydirt in 1858 while working Dry Creek near Denver.[29] The motherlode may have come a decade later than in California, but the pattern bore a strong resemblance in that the need to transfer human and material capital spurred further innovation.

The PCMS region lacked the precious reserves of Colorado's mountainous interior and hence its development came somewhat later. Most folks, even though they noted the potential of the Purgatoire watercourse or occasional Hispano sheep flocks, felt little compulsion to stop on their way to boom or bust. Nevertheless, the spread of large-scale capital businesses through the American West would ultimately enmesh the southeastern corner of Colorado through the creation of transportation lines, coal mining, and an open range cattle industry that was itself heavily dependent on foreign investment.

While the promise of prosperity had lured many immigrants West, the question of how, exactly, to get there remained a challenge. In California, the need to communicate with the East had led to the creation of the "Panama Route," a tenuous line that transferred people, goods, and mails from side-wheeled steamships to wagon and back to ship via the Gulf of Mexico, the Panamanian Isthmus, and the Pacific Ocean. Once docked in San Francisco, the boat would disgorge its passengers, or "Argonauts," unload its freight, and dispatch the mails to a local office where workers unceremoniously dumped it into piles with the understanding that prospectors themselves would eventually make their way in and do their own sorting.

The Plains region may have differed from the Pacific coast in that it was landlocked, but even so, it represented an ocean of sorts that had to be crossed. And as in California, the need to traverse vast spaces gave rise to a bustling mode of transportation — the stagecoach. Indeed, the stagecoach represented the vanguard of economic change, linking East and West until rail and telegraph lines could snake their way across the prairie and through mountain passes.

The stagecoach seemed a natural choice in that freighting companies had plied their way from Missouri to points west since the establishment of the Santa Fe Trail in the 1820s. It was not until immediately after the Civil War, however, that freight firms more fully developed the lines they had opened in the 1850s. One 1867 observer noted that he had seen no fewer than six-hundred and eighty wagons on his trip along the Santa Fe Trail from its

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[27] "Placers" often consisted of alluvial soils that could be washed away with hydraulic water hoses. Miners could then sift the runoff for metals. Its effect on the landscape could be devastating.
[28] Cited in Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 241.
[29] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 44.

head in Missouri. Most of the wagons carried goods bound for Denver, but they also bore human cargo filled with hope for a better life.

The largest of the freighting firms that linked the Plains to Colorado's freewheeling mining communities was that of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, headquartered at Leavenworth in the Kansas Territory. Just prior to the Civil War the company could boast 3,500 wagons, 40,000 oxen, 1,00 mules, and over 4,000 employees, and in 1865 alone the firm hauled over 21,000 wagon loads of goods into the territory. The most fortunate companies had an additional source of revenue — lucrative Federal mail contracts.[30] Just how valuable the government considered the first transcontinental mail shipment is reflected in the message President James Buchanan sent to John Butterfield, whose Southern Overland Mail Company made the first of many 2,800-mile runs from Tipton, Missouri, to San Francisco. "It is a glorious triumph for civilization and for the Union. Settlements will soon follow the course of the road, and East and West will be bound together by a chain of living Americans which can never be broken."[31]

While Buchanan's reference played all too obviously on the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, it also underscores two of our earlier points. First, the East and West were inextricably linked — the development of one depended heavily upon the other as the former's human and financial capital fed the latter's growth. Secondly, one should be reminded that the mail contract amounted to a virtual subsidy, one which helped ensure, for a time, the profitability of lucky bidders like Butterfield. As such, it provides yet another example of indispensability of federal intervention in the development of the West in direct contradiction to the mythology of "rugged individualism."

In the PCMS area, the initial beneficiary of the government's desire to keep in contact with the West was the Missouri Stage Company (MSC), which had purchased from one of its rivals the existing contracts to carry the mails from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe. The MSC initially hoped to use the Cimarron Cutoff, which ran southwest through Kansas, the tip of southeastern Colorado, and into Oklahoma, and New Mexico, but the threat of Kiowa and Comanche attack dictated that they instead follow the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. This route brought it immediately west of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, and it was there that the MSC built one of the first stops, the dismal Iron Springs station. To call Iron Springs a "station" is somewhat misleading, for as the son of the stop's manager recalled, it really amounted to nothing more than a tiny house surrounded by a barricade.[32]

By 1862, Cottrill, Vickroy and Company had outbid its competitors for the Santa Fe mail contract. Two of the managers, Bradley Barlow and Jared L. Sanderson, had by 1866 assumed control of the firm. Doing business as "Barlow & Sanderson Company," or alternately the "Southern Overland Mail and Express," the partners astutely recognized there was money to be made where the rails had not yet reached. Likewise, the financial Panic of

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[30] Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History* (Boulder: Pruett publishing, 1976), 79-81; Donald L. Hardesty, Richard F. Carillo, Steven F. Mehls, Jane L. Anderson, and Thomas J. Lennon, *Data Recovery Report of the Lockwood Stage Station at the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, Las Animas, Colorado* (Boulder: Western Cultural Resources Management, 1995), 86.
[31] Hardesty, et al., *Data Recovery Report of the Lockwood Stage Station*, 86.
[32] Friedman, *Power's Report*, 84.

1873, initiated by the failure of the Northern Pacific Railroad, led to a temporarily halt in rail construction and extended the company's lifespan by perhaps two years. The Barlow & Sanderson concern thus managed to maintain their most westerly routes up to the 1880s by taking advantage of this lapse and filling gaps in the rail network.

The managers of the Southern Overland saw precisely this type of opportunity in February 1871, when they announced service from Fort Lyon, on the Arkansas River, to Trinidad. The managers had previously suspended the run, only to reverse themselves when Santa Fe's big mercantile houses demonstrated a continued need to move freight between their warehouses in Kit Carson, Colorado, and northern New Mexico. Also, rather than simply following the old Santa Fe Mountain Branch they bowed the route eastward to take advantage of the increasing number of settlers arriving in the Bent and Red Rock Canyon areas. By April of 1871, Barlow & Sanderson route number 17032, with daily service to Santa Fe, had resumed.[33]

The company opened at least three stations within the confines of the current PCMS: the Stage Station, located at the head of Bent Canyon, and the stops at Lockwood Canyon and Hogback Ridge. Archaeological and archival records indicate that the managing partners preferred to place their operations at existing ranches rather than undergo the expense of building new structures. Eugene Rourke's ranch at Bent Canyon served as one stop, while the W. R. Burns ranch hosted the southernmost Hogback station. In the case of the Lockwood site, it is not clear whether or not there was an existing livestock operation in place.[34] General Land Office records, however, indicate that Lockwood did not come under private ownership until 1875, when Mortimer W. Slate received the land as a part of a military service patent. Nevertheless, these stops represented the main link between the Pinon and the outside world until 1876, when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad completed its line between La Junta and Trinidad.[35]

Traveling southward through the installation, one would have first stopped at the head of Bent Canyon before swinging westward to Lockwood Canyon. After a brief rest, the stage coach would turn back south to Hogback Station in the direction of the Raton Pass on the New Mexican border. The latter post had to be rebuilt, having burned around 1875. Like all stations, those on the PCMS had a particular purpose and offered varying levels of comfort. The Bent Canyon stop operated at the mid-level. There, passengers could stretch their legs and take in a quick meal, usually of dubious quality. Station staff would meanwhile change the team and new drivers would come aboard. Lockwood, on the other hand, served as a "swing station," that is one of the stops that came every ten to twenty miles where the coach paused only long enough to once again change its team.

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[33] Morris F. Taylor, *First Mail West: Stagecoach Lines on the Santa Fe Trail* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 151-152. Friedman has referred to the work of Trinidad doctor Michael Beshoar, who estimated 450 inhabitants in the Bent Canyon area in 1874. The number plummeted to 106 by 1900, with roughly 55% of these having Spanish surnames. See *Power's Report* , 306.

[34] Ibid., 153.

[35] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 21. Interview with Duane Finch, Honora de Busk Memorial Collection, Colorado Historical Society, 223; Interview with A. H. Taylor, de Busk Memorial Collection, CHS, 309. A. H. Taylor recollected that customers shipping freight had to pay seventy-five cents per pound, while passengers paid twenty-five cents per mile — a significant sum in nineteenth century currency. The price did drop over time, however.

The stagecoach might have been more convenient for those making their way west, but no one would have considered it a comfortable way to go. The route from West Las Animas township on the Arkansas River to Trinidad alone ran a grueling one-hundred and three miles. Morris Taylor's *First Mail West* recounts one traveler's description and the signs of change that appeared along the way:

The four mule Southern Overland Mail coach left West Las Animas on a pleasant August morning. Along the lower Purgatoire near Boggsville agriculture was flourishing because of the big new irrigation ditch. Shocks of grain and long rows of green corn were plentiful, and so were sheep and cattle. The first station was at Alkali, twenty miles out kept by "Boss" [Albert] Perry. There two horses were hitched in place of the four mules … Eleven miles from Alkali the coach came to the station in Vogel Canyon at the Sheep ranch of Fagin and Brown. Fifteen miles further it stopped at Bent Canyon (Benson's) where the passengers ate and acquired a new driver. At twelve miles was the Lockwood Canyon station … The chronicler of the trip said little more than that the driver told him when they reached the Hogback station after seventeen miles. After fifteen more miles they reached M. G. Frost's station at Hoehne. Another thirteen miles brought the coach to Trinidad at 3 a.m.[36]

In addition to the distance involved, most trails would have been rough and the coach's leather windows little protection against the August heat. Sleep too would have proved nearly impossible, since the interior of the coaches allowed only about fifteen inches of seating for each of its nine passengers (three to each seat). Unless one had mastered the art of sleeping upright, they were likely to be exhausted when they arrived at their destination.

Another account, written by a Jewish/German immigrant named Ernst Kohlberg, proves more vivid:

> We left Las Animas at 6 a.m. September 27 in a fairly comfortable stagecoach whose motive power was four mules. The coaches are as light and strong as they can be built. The sides are gray canvas and the body of the coach is carried by heavy leather straps as regular iron and steel springs would snap on the rough roads. On the first day's journey in the coach was over the prairie and the road being fair the trip was quite comfortable. We reached the Raton Mountains that night and our way led through these mountains clear to Santa Fe. I am sure that I will never forget this ride. We stopped three times a day for twenty minutes for our meals. We also had to stop at intervals for five minutes to change mules. We traveled day and night and always at a gallop whether the road was good and level or rough … Several times I was hurled from my seat and bumped the ceiling of the coach when we hit a bump real hard or went through an arroyo. Some ride! It was very hot during the day while at night it turned real cold. It didn't seem to bother the stage driver if he upset the coach which happened several times. Mr. and Mrs. Schutz and I

[36] Taylor *First Mail*, also cited in Friedman, *Powers Report*, 85-86, and also in Hardesty, et al., *Data Recovery Report*, 100.

> were turned upside down, but no one was hurt … We finally arrived at Santa Fe … and I was more happy to get there than I was to arrive in New York, just a month before.[37]

First-time passengers like Kohlberg learned the hard way the slang term for the coach's driver — "jehu," after the biblical king who drove his chariot "like a madman."[38]

For all its colorfulness, the PCMS' stagecoach era was bound to be short-lived. By 1876 both the Santa Fe and Kansas Pacific railroads had advanced to West Las Animas township. That same year the narrow-gauge Denver and Rio Grande finished its line to Trinidad from the north, in effect driving an iron stake through the heart of Barlow & Sanderson's Santa Fe mail route.

Still, the stations that stood on the PCMS are historically important, however brief their lifespan. First, they reflected the older economic patterns of the Mexican-era fur trade and the tendency of New Mexicans along Colorado's southeastern borderlands to look towards the United States rather than Mexico for commerce had begun well before the end of Spanish rule in 1821. Their eastward gaze merely became more focused, and more legitimate from a legal standpoint, once the incoming Mexican government eased restrictions on the east/west flow of goods. Second, the freighters and coaches of the Mexican and early- to mid-American periods also served as a critically important economic bridge, for they filled a gap in east/west commerce that rails, with their enormous capital and labor demands, could only gradually surmount. As the archeological data recovery study of Lockwood site aptly notes, the "development of the Barlow & Sanderson stage system in the early 1870s … foreshadows[ed] the incorporation of southeastern Colorado into the economic and political hegemony of the American world system."[39] The study's emphasis on a "world systems" approach rests on the correct assumption that the stations represented the forefront of an American economic system that was itself part of larger, global patterns of trade.[40]

Notwithstanding its importance, the stagecoach signified but one aspect of the area's interrelated economic development. Indeed, in terms of overall impact, mining and rails exerted a greater state and county-wide influence, while on the PCMS itself the cattle and sheep raising industries absorbed the energy of most inhabitants. By the early 1870s, Colorado's initial rush had begun to extend south and west through the central part of the state as hopeful searchers sought out new veins of gold and silver. The Lake County town of Leadville, for instance, alone accounted for two-thirds of a striking tenfold increase in the amount of silver and gold mined in the state between 1869 and 1882. During the same period towns such as Summit, Chaffee, Ouray, and Gunnison added to the ore tonnage

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[37] Ibid., 169.
[38] The citation is from 2 Kings, 9:20.
[39] Hardesty, et al., *Data Recovery Report*, 38.
[40] Ibid., 31. As the authors of the report note, this approach maintains that frontier areas mark the leading edge of world economic systems. The fur-trade is a prime example of this, with demand for beaver hats and other accessories in Europe driving trapping in the United States. For a more detailed explanation see Immanuel M. Wallerstein's well-known work *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

coming from Colorado seams. The result was an explosive growth of precious metal production.[41]

Much of this increase, however, relied on a far less romanticized type of mining — coal. The rail arteries that eventually permeated the West and linked it to the East needed "black gold" at every level. Locomotives could fire their boilers only if fed a steady diet of coal, while the rails they ran on required intense steel production, itself dependent on the purified carbon, or coke, for smelting. Precious metal ores too needed processing, further heightening the need for coke.[42] Coal, along with metals mining, thus served as the base of an industrial capital pyramid — the ultimate engine without which Colorado towns and machinery fell silent.

The southeastern corner of the state lacked the rich gold and silver reserves characteristic of the mountain regions, yet geology had blessed Las Animas and neighboring Huerfano County with some of the richest deposits of high quality, easily extractible carbon in the region. Trinidad became a coalmining center, with nearby company towns such as Starkville springing up to meet the needs of labor-intensive coal extraction. An influx of miners from eastern and southern Europe provided labor and contributed to an increase in demand for foodstuffs, including beef. The effects were obvious — the six-thousand souls Las Animas County counted in 1870 had grown to fifty-five thousand persons by 1920.[43]

The effect of mining on the Las Animas County landscape is not to be underestimated, particularly when considered alongside railroads. The fact that the viability of train travel depended on the availability of coal was not lost on rail magnates like General William Jackson Palmer, the head of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Under Palmer's auspices the D&RG built the company town of El Moro, just outside of Trinidad. Townspeople in the latter municipality saw the diversion of the commercial artery away from their community as a danger to their well-being, and responded by threatening the company's work parties who were desperately racing the Atchison and Santa Fe crews toward the Raton Pass.[44] As they saw it, ATSF had seen fit to build through Trinidad, whereas the D&RG had left them stranded.

By the end of the 1870s El Moro possessed hundreds of coking ovens, while at the same time Palmer bought coal-loaded public lands at bargain basement prices, incorporating them into his Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company. In the early 1880s Palmer consolidated his operations, forming the Colorado Coal and Iron Company. In the next decade it reincarnated itself as the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), itself later absorbed into the Rockefeller family conglomerate.[45]

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[41] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 44.
[42] Ibid., 207. Easily extracted coal, in fact, was similarly indispensable in fueling England's industrial revolution in the middle-eighteenth century.
[43] Ibid.
[44] See the http://www.atsfry.com/EasternArchive/Meades/mead108.htm, the website of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe historical and Modeling association. The site includes information from "Meade's Manual." Meade was a construction engineer on the line.
[45] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 208. See also Lee Scamehorn, *Mill and Mine: The CF&I in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 82-104. According to Scamehorn, the CF&I had

Palmer's genius lay in the fact that he saw opportunity in the peculiarities of Colorado's landscape. In his estimation, the territory represented a unique region, its mountain settlements separated from the eastern half of the United States by a "400 mile belt of semi-aridity." The state (as of 1876) would thus have to "develop its own food, service its rail lines with its own coal, and run a large number of local industries."[46] He further envisioned that the narrow gauge D&RG would have an advantage over rivals when it came to reaching mountainous mining communities — narrower rail lines meant easier construction and an ability to maneuver more effectively in tight gorges. Moreover, as we shall see below, his involvement with Spanish land grants meant that he would not have to rely on public lands to build his empire.[47] As Palmer himself put it: "I thought how fine it would be to have a little railroad a few hundred miles in length, all under one's own control and with one's friends …[48]

The influence of mining and transportation on Colorado seems so abundantly evident in retrospect that one almost takes it for granted. Yet there is a very important part of the equation that had an even more direct bearing on the PCMS than either of these industries — open range cattle operations.

Home on the Range: Livestock and Ranching on the PCMS

Westward bound pioneers initially saw the possibility of raising livestock on the dry plains as folly — ranching in the area resulted as much from accident as by design. As Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith relate in their history of Colorado, the freighters and miners who worked their way westward often turned footsore and exhausted teams of oxen loose on the open prairie, fully expecting that they would die. Instead, they

"partial or complete control" over sixty-two towns, most of them in Colorado with others in New Mexico and Wyoming (Scamehorn, 83).
[46] Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 279.
[47] Ibid., 282.
[48] Cited in Ibid., 279. Palmer also hoped that his towns and enterprises would become strike- and class-free environments, with the company and laborer enjoying mutual respect. This did not go as planned.

flourished on the sparse grassland, much as hundreds of thousands of buffalo had done for generations.[49]

Using earlier efforts in Texas as their example, open range cattle ranchers began driving herds northward just prior to the Civil War, with the Dawson Trail serving recently opened mining camps around Denver and Pueblo. The laying of rails likewise created an ever broadening eastern market for Colorado livestock in the 1870s as the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific companies snaked westward toward the front range of the Rockies. Closer to the PCMS, La Junta and Trinidad became known as cattle shipping hubs that bound Las Animas County even more tightly to eastern markets.[50] In between these northern and southern terminals lay Thatcher, the headquarters of the Bloom Cattle Company's Circle Diamond brand and a water stop for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad.

One of the most striking historical features of the open range cattle business in the West generally but also on the PCMS is its clear link to both American and international sources of capital. The largest and wealthiest cattle outfit on the PCMS area, the Prairie Land and Cattle Company (PLCC), was in fact formed in 1880 by the Scottish American Mortgage Company (SAMC) of Edinburgh. And the SAMC itself represented but one of the more than thirty-three British syndicates of the 1880s who listed American ranching as their primary business. Collectively, these corporations invested as much as thirty-seven million dollars in American livestock, with another seventeen million in capital held in Britain. Still other estimates place the figure as high as forty-five million dollars — a huge sum by nineteenth century standards.[51]

It seems odd that British concerns would invest so readily in American livestock, yet not as much as one might suppose. British Parliament had, after all, passed a series of corporation laws in the mid-nineteenth century that made it easy for even small investors to sink funds into foreign projects. As Lewis Atherton has pointed out, this led to a huge increase in the availability of capital from lower-level shareholders — the lawyers, accountants, merchants, and tradesmen of Britain's burgeoning middle-class. Scottish firms too had an awareness of their country's own tradition of animal husbandry, a facet that made them more comfortable with speculating in the American cattle industry.[52]

This system of finance would have made less of a difference had it not been for a technological innovation that many today take for granted: refrigeration. Prior to 1875 it would have proved extremely difficult to ship "dead" meat across the Atlantic without it spoiling. In 1875, a New York entrepreneur financed the first shipment of beef on refrigerated ships. His initial load of 36,000 pounds, sent in October of that year, had by April of 1876 grown to one million pounds.[53] The impact, as demonstrated in Table 1, was dramatic. And although exports declined briefly due to higher prices and increased demand from the United State's eastern markets, 90% of the exports in 1884, more than 120,000,000

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[49] Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, *A Colorado History,* 171-172.
[50] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 158.
[51] Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 190.
[52] Ibid., 190-191.
[53] W. G. Kerr, *Scottish Capital on the American Credit Frontier* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1976), 16.

pounds, went to Victorian Britain. Scottish money thus found its roundabout way to the Front Range of the Rockies, making loans to American cattle growers who would then ship their beef to expanding western markets, urban areas along the eastern seaboard, and across the Atlantic itself.[54]

Table 2. American beef exports to Britain.

Year	Million pounds[55]
1877	49,000,000
1880	84,000,000
1881	106,000,000

Companies like the PLCC usually ran multiple operations, scattering ranches across Oklahoma, New Mexico, the Texas panhandle, and of course Colorado, where its assets as of 1883 comprised nearly 3,500 square miles of land and almost 59,000 head of cattle. This number included those herds it had obtained in a buyout of the JJ ranch near Nine Mile Bottom just outside the north end PCMS.[56] By 1890, as Paul D. Friedman's examination of Las Animas tax rolls shows, the PLCC had no fewer than 7,000 head of cattle in the county.[57]

The ability to ship beef more effectively to the east and across the Atlantic thus fueled a western cattle boom that fostered a number of significant livestock operations in and around the study area besides that of the PLCC. Pennsylvania native Frank Bloom formed the Bloom Cattle Company in 1884. The company's namesake had originally arrived in Denver in 1866, where he began working at the Canyon City general store of Henry Thatcher. Bloom later formed the First National Bank of Trinidad with two of Henry's sons, one of whom had received a quitclaim in 1871 for land that became the Thatcher township on the western edge of the PCMS.[58] Bloom also entered into a partnership with O. T. Clark, a future Las Animas County sheriff with his own brand at Lockwood Arroyo. Together, they formed the Circle Diamond ranch at Thatcher in 1890.[59] The decision to create the town of Thatcher proved wise, since its location adjacent to the rail line made it a natural water stop for the AT&SF trains. The JJ brand, or "Double J", founded in 1869 at Higbee by James and Stephen Jones, worked the area just north of the PCMS. Although the JJ owned only about 18,000 acres in Las Animas and adjacent Bent counties, its ability to control water privileges effectively extended its empire to over 960,000 acres.[60]

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[54] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 190; Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 158.
[55] See Kerr, *Scottish Capital*, 16-17.
[56] Ora B. Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark, 1937), 16, 58.
[57] Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 53.
[58] Friedman, *Power's Report*, 93.
[59] Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 54.
[60] Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry* 65.

Seen from the standpoint of an interlocking system, the emergence of the livestock industry boom of the early 1880s, when considered alongside railroads and mining, could have a significant effect on the typical PCMS inhabitant. Elfido Lopez Jr.'s grandfather, for example, had never run large numbers of cattle — perhaps thirty or forty head. Thus, while the Lopez's never did amass large holdings of cattle, the younger son had learned enough as a boy to hire out to the PLCC.[61]

The growth of large livestock companies, however, brought with it inherent problems. The region's aridity meant that cattle would require access to reliable sources of water and enough acreage for grazing. These factors, when combined with the limitations of the Homestead Act of 1862, made land-grabbing an irresistible temptation. Under the provisions of the statute, each settler had rights to a 160-acre claim — far too little land to support a large ranching operation. Cowhands all too frequently filed on a claim only to turn it over to their employer for a nominal fee, sometimes within twenty-four hours.[62] Small time homesteaders too found that they could not raise sufficient crops on their claims, leading many of them to sell out to nearby ranchers.

The uncertainty of the early Mexican land grants likewise made it easier for speculators to continue the pattern of misappropriation that had begun even before the American takeover of Mexican territory in 1848-1849.[63] In the most well-known case, Charles Beaubien's heir and son-in-law, Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell, asked that the government resurvey his claims in 1869. Maxwell hoped that his political power would lend itself to an enlargement of his acreage, only to be disappointed when the new assessment concluded that his holdings amounted to 97,000 acres; roughly equal to the limit of twenty-two square leagues as established under Mexican law, rather than the 1.7 million of the original grant. Not to worry though — in Colorado a powerful consortium that included mine owner Jerome B. Chaffee, ex-governor William Gilpin, and the former state land register George Chilcott expressed an interest in the purchase, while in New Mexico an equally influential coterie containing the governor and key land officials also joined the scheme.

This same political/business syndicate bought the land in 1870 for $650,000 and quickly hired the malleable deputy surveyor of New Mexico to confirm the purchase at 2 million acres.[64] The members then formed the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company, bringing D&RG railroad owner William Jackson Palmer aboard as president. And although the claim of the Maxwell company remained the subject of court action until 1879, the court eventually confirmed the parcel at 1.7 million acres.[65]

The question of land abuse in Las Animas County and PCMS area is more complex in that courts eventually reduced the old Vigil and St. Vrain Grant to 97,000 acres from its initial claim of 4 million. This effectively restricted the grant to the twenty-two square

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[61] Taylor, *Pioneers of the Picketwire*, 32-33.
[62] Ibid., 68.
[63] See Lamar, "Land Policy in the Spanish Southwest," 498-515; See also Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Era of Good Stealings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[64] Ibid., 505.
[65] Ibid., 506.

league limit of prior Mexican law, much to the disappointment of investors who hoped to pull off another Maxwell coup.[66] Still, land irregularities became a fact of life in Colorado. One 1874 petition to Congress charged that government officials shared culpability in the "criminal conduct" that characterized the majority of the state's land deals, an assessment that M. B. Robinson, an investigator from the federal General Land Office concurred with. As Robinson saw it, "the largest proportion of all the land preemption in this territory is fraudulent, and, … has been going on for years."[67]

Given the widespread and multi-layered nature of western land schemes in Colorado, it should come as little surprise that Las Animas County was in the thick of the land debate. Growers from the PCMS region put their case forward in 1879, when several of the most prominent county citizens traveled to Washington to testify before the public lands commission as to what they believed would be a proper land policy for the arid plains. James C. Jones from the PCMS's Double J Ranch argued that environmental demands required a homestead of no less than three thousand acres. The physician Michael Beshoar, best remembered in existing historical studies as one of Trinidad's early boosters, argued that all of the area's public lands should be made available at a reduced price.[68]

Congress's subsequent refusal to enlarge the homesteading acreage limits led cattlemen to take action on their own through the fencing in of large swaths of land. Indeed, illegal fencing became endemic to Las Animas, Bent, Prowers, and the other cattle producing counties. Stockmen felt justified in enclosing land, regardless of its ownership status. Rather than seeing themselves as robber-barons, they envisioned that they were creating order out of chaos. No longer would herds of rival outfits denude the plain of forage that their own livestock would need in the winter. Genetically inferior animals likewise would not be able to mix with better breeds. The stockmen further reasoned that they were simply dealing sensibly with land laws that, though suitable to the comparatively lush East, simply crippled free enterprise in the West. Fencing would allow them to undertake expensive impounding projects and maintain control over the watershed these efforts created. After all, why should they incur the costs but not reap its benefits?[69]

Incoming homesteaders naturally resented the cattle grower's efforts as blatant land-grabbing. In their view land fraud and illegal fencing violated the spirit of the Homestead Act. In response to popular pressure, an 1884 federal investigation found that Colorado had at least 2.6 million acres of land that had been illegally enclosed. The problem was especially acute in the southeastern part of the state. The Prairie Land and Cattle Company, active in the PCMS area, had enclosed over 36,000 acres on its various ranches, with another 260,000 "awaiting investigation." Congress responded the next year by giving the district attorney the power to file civil suit against cattlemen who enclosed illegally, though just how much the authorities held them to the letter of the law is open to question.

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[66] Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 152.
[67] *Canyon City Times*, February 12, 1874, cited in Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry,* 68.
[68] Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry*, 66.
[69] Ibid., 69-70.

In reality, the homesteader stood a less than even chance against the powerful land rings and livestock associations. Officials at local land offices had far too much to gain by going along with land schemes, as did the surveyors who reworked the boundaries to the advantage of the livestock growers. As the *Cattlemen's Advertiser* put it in 1885, "Dead men tell no tales but the way they vote and homestead lands in Las Animas County beats the living."[70]

Land titles provided for this study by the Trinidad Abstract Company seem to confirm a pattern of irregularity within the confines of the installation, while at least one former PCMS resident recalled that wranglers filed on land only to sell it to their employer straight away. In record after record one sees "homesteaders" selling land *before* they had patented the parcel, only to have the sale legitimated after the fact. Probably few of the original patentees were present by that time, which means that the county land office simply recorded it as a *fait accompli*. To cite one example, Jose Samora sold a parcel to Eugene Rourke in November of 1885, yet the former is shown as receiving the patent on the land from the federal government on Christmas Eve in 1901. Most likely, Samora worked for the Rourke outfit on a long-term basis, hence the delay.[71] The interviews by Leondorf and Clise also indicate that ranchers like the Arnet family, who arrived in the region around 1910, encouraged their Hispano hands to file on claims as a means of enlarging their holdings — a deal that proved mutually beneficial.[72]

Yet, it was not just big ranchers that attempted to bridge the gap between the region's harsh environment and landholding limitations, for westering Anglos and Hispanos both sought loopholes so as to acquire sufficient acreage for their economic and cultural needs. Minette Church's intriguing study of landholding patterns in southern Colorado has amply demonstrated this point. As Church reveals, after settling at the installation's Red Rock Canyon in the 1870s, the Roybal family "had their neighbors witness for them and reciprocated for their neighbors" when filing on a claim, a practice more in keeping with "long-standing New Mexican tradition" than the spirit of "U.S. land law." The patent agent in charge of the area could not possibly visit every homestead, and thus had to accept the witness's statement at face value.[73]

The laxity of the homestead laws allowed Hispano families like the Roybals and the Cordovas to build blocks of contiguous or nearly contiguous claims. It was a wise move, for it played directly to their belief that the best way to survive in such a difficult landscape was by combining the efforts of the community and "varying their subsistence activities."[74] This meant sticking close to canyon watercourses and growing what crops they could, in addition to raising a smattering of livestock.

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[70] Ibid., 69.
[71] Records indicate that Rourke received the SE ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 1, Township 29, Range 58. There are many similar examples that would seem to discount the idea of typographical error. See Trinidad Abstract Company, *Fort Carson's Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, A Comprehensive Chain of Title Search, From Patent to April 30, 2003*.
[72] Leondorf and Clise, "Interview with Margaret Crowder," cited in Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*.
[73] Church, "The Grant and the Grid," 230.
[74] Ibid., 228.

What makes this strategy so fascinating, however, is its contrast with the landholding patterns of incoming Anglo homesteaders. Church's study, for example, compared the Roybals with Wilford Riley, who settled in nearly identical terrain. Like a host of other Anglo-Americans, Riley looked at the same landscape and envisioned instead a dairy/ranching operation due to the parcel's "want of water to irrigate." The Roybals, meanwhile, successfully cultivated ten acres of wheat, corn, and vegetables.[75] In many ways the Hispano system proved ideal for the environment inasmuch as the combination of plow agriculture and animal husbandry that characterized Hispano settlements permitted the "variable land forms, water, and other resources to be available for each family production unit."[76]

The differences between the settlers such as the Roybals and Rileys manifested itself in another, more ominous way in that the Hispanos had a long tradition of sheep herding sheep, which clashed with Anglo notions of cattle ranching. The ethnic enmity engendered by this cultural divide stands as one of the least attractive aspects of Western history, yet it is not entirely clear just how much of a factor the phenomenon was on the PCMS itself. Nonetheless, given the importance of both sheep and cattle growing to Las Animas County it seems likely that there had to be some animosity between the two factions. Indeed, as early as 1868 Pueblo's newspaper the *Colorado Chieftain* reported that Las Animas alone contained 87,500 head of sheep.[77]

A variety of assumptions led cattlemen to see sheep raisers as a threat to their economic well-being, despite the fact that Hispano sheep raising had predated the cattle industry.[78] Once again notions of land use came into play as early Hispano settlers of the Mexican land grants grazed their sheep on common lands around their villages. This would not stand in Anglo society, where the parcel fell under more stringent individual ownership rules. Stockmen too charged that sheep grazed the grasses so close as to destroy the root system and ruin the land. Moreover, they also claimed that sheep excreted oils and odors which tainted both water supplies and grazing areas. As one observer put it:

> A sheep just oozes out a stink
> That drives a cowman to plumb drink!
> Its hooves leave flavors on the grass
> That even make the old cows pass …
> Sheep ranges, cattle sure won't graze,
> But-cowboys hate sheep anyways.[79]

On the PCMS there is at least one known incident of violence between Hispano sheepherders and cattlemen. In 1878 two cowhands from the JJ outfit confronted Lorenzo Abeyta near Red Rocks Canyon. After a verbal confrontation, one of the wranglers fired at Abeyta, who was thrown to the ground by his frightened team of horses. The two fled,

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[75] Ibid.
[76] See John R. Van Ness, "Hispanic Land Grants: Ecology and Subsistence in the Uplands of Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado," in Briggs and Van Ness, eds., *Land, Water, and Culture*, 160.
[77] Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, *A Colorado History*, 179.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

believing they had killed him. Later, Abeyta heard that the Jones brothers had paid the assailants to kill him.[80] Needless to say, the fact that James C. Jones would travel to Washington to testify before a congressional committee illustrates all too clearly how seriously the Double J outfit took land issues.

We can also glean further evidence of Anglo-Hispano antagonism from John Lawrence, an American who had taken a Mexican wife and assumed the role of *patrón* in nearby Saguache County. Lawrence recalled with distaste the acquittal of an Anglo who had murdered a Hispanic citizen:

> This was expected by me, as it was race prejudice, for in the nearly 36 years of the county … there has never been a case where … the American committed a crime against a Mexican but what the American has gone clear, and for the same time, there has been only one case where an American has accused an American of a crime …but what the Mexican has been found guilty and sent to the penitentiary.[81]

Lawrence made his disgust perfectly evident. Indeed, most of the Mexican inhabitants of Saguache saw the killing as part of a campaign on the part of cattlemen to terrorize the mostly Hispanic sheepherders.[82]

Nonetheless, there are countervailing factors that may have ameliorated antagonism between Hispano sheep ranchers and Anglo cattlemen, the Abeyta case excepted. First, not all sheepmen in the area were Hispano. Isaac Van Bremer, for instance, arrived on the southern end of the PCMS in 1868 and had no fewer than 2,000 head assessed in 1880. Samuel T. Brown bought the old Hogback stagecoach station in 1882. By 1900 Brown had 6,000 sheep under his control. Contrarily, the Cordovas later shifted more toward cattle when it seemed like a more profitable path.[83]

In a similar vein, A. H. Taylor, who worked for the Barlow and Sanderson stageline that ran through the PCMS, recalled:

> As for the Mexican people they are the biggest hearted people I ever knew. They were always my friends and today there are no people I love to meet more than the Mexicans I met 20 to 25 years ago.[84]

Taylor, who had served in public office on more than one occasion, similarly recalled that he always won the Hispano vote. Yet, Duane Finch, another employee of the Barlow and Sanderson line, recalled that Lucien Maxwell harbored an abiding dislike towards

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[80] Interview with Teodora Abeyta, De Busk Memorial Collection, cited in Friedman, *Powers Report*, 92.
[81] Cited in Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 24. Quote is from *Frontier Witness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908*, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.
[82] William B. Taylor and Elliott West, "Patrón Leadership at the Crossroads: Southern Colorado in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Pacific Historical Review* XLII, 3 (August, 1973), 345-346.
[83] Friedman, *Powers Report*, 90.
[84] Interview with A. H. Taylor, De Busk Memorial Collection, CHS, 307-309.

Mexicans.[85] The contrast is interesting, for it indicates a scenario in which racial harmony waxed and waned depending on historically specific moments.

Perhaps the more important question in dealing with the Hispano population of the study area, however, turns on their modes of adaptation as they came to grips with changing landscapes and social geographies. This is a complex question, for as Sarah Deutsch's wonderfully nuanced study of the *fin de siècle* Anglo-Hispanic frontier reveals, the transformations wrought by the influx of Anglo immigrants, along with new business enterprises, did not fully impact Hispanic culture until after 1880.[86] Moreover, for many Hispanos the creation of new businesses seemed to offer economic opportunity rather than danger. The Baca family, for example, drove over a thousand New Mexican sheep to nearby mining operations in 1864. By 1873, they were driving over 5,000 head to Denver, a move that linked them to markets far beyond their village.[87] In another instance, Domacio Lopez left his homestead at Red Rocks in 1876 so that he could work briefly on the construction gangs that were laying rail near Las Animas township. His son Elfido meanwhile tended cows for a dollar a head per month in Trinidad. By 1878, the year that the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe completed the eighty-one miles of line between La Junta and Trinidad, the senior Lopez had taken his grubstake and returned to Red Rocks, where he ran thirty to forty head of cattle and opened a small store.[88]

Nevertheless, Hispano families could not adapt to the changing economic circumstances in light of the rising tide of Anglo immigrants. By the 1880s Anglo migration from Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois began to exceed that of Hispanics from northern New Mexico. The successive waves of Anglos inundated Mexican communities and overwhelmed their capacity for culturally assimilating incoming Americans through either superior numbers or intermarriage.[89]

This Anglo influx also imposed new trade barriers on Hispanos. They rarely received the lucrative licenses needed to conduct commerce with the Indians, while railroads effectively ended the Hispanic tradition of freighting and trading. And as Deutsch trenchantly observed, the arrival of large-scale American capital set many Mexican-Americans back on their economic heels, guaranteeing that they would be locked into small-time farming and subsistence sheep herding, or worse, cast into the role of day laborers.[90]

The points that Deutsch makes are born out in the statistics of the *Power's Report* study conducted on the PCMS in the mid-1980s. According to this historical context, there existed limited social mobility for the inhabitants of the late nineteenth century PCMS. While the social ladder may have been short for both Hispanics and Anglos, the latter more frequently climbed into the ranks of the region's economic power elite, particularly as 1800s neared their end. The *Power's Report*, for example, found that Hispanos comprised 64% of the landowners on the PCMS in 1880. Just ten years later this number had dropped to 18%.

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[85] Interview with Duane Finch, De Busk Memorial Collection, CHS, 223.
[86] Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 18.
[87] Cited in Friedman, *Power's Report*, 198.
[88] Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 19.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

One should, however, link the decline in Hispano land ownership to the general abandonment of the PCMS that occurred in the wake of disastrous blizzard of 1886. As one of the worst winter storms in the nation's history, it killed 60 to 90% of the cattle from North Dakota to the Texas panhandle. That same year, Nature added insult to injury by bringing a period of extended drought to the region.[91] Thus it was not just Hispanos who exited from the area, but Anglos as well.

Here we come to the crux of the matter — large capital investment and relatively good weather had created a business boom, but one ultimately built on an illusion. As Mike Davis so aptly demonstrates in his study *Late Victorian Holocausts*, the eight to ten years prior to 1886 had witnessed a rise in wheat production brought about by "well-distributed, plentiful rainfall and abundant harvests in both hemispheres."[92] Old timers in grain-producing areas of the West would remember it as the era of the "Great Dakota Boom," in which the Plains seemed to offer proof that "rain followed the plow" — the belief that cultivation would naturally increase moisture and levels of precipitation.[93] For southeastern Colorado, the era had likewise heralded production, if not in wheat, then in livestock.

Nature's cruel trick — the creation of a false sense of security in areas that could not sustain long-term agriculture — was abetted by a *La Nina* weather event in 1886 and a subsequent series of *El Nino* weather patterns that affected much of the globe, not just the American West. In the former case, a cooling trend in the eastern tropical Pacific leads to excessive flooding in an interlinked belt across the globe, causing devastation in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. *EL Nino* events, all too familiar in the American West in the 1980s, represent precisely the opposite — an abnormal warming in the eastern tropical Pacific and the disruption of usual patterns of rainfall.[94] Thus, southeastern Colorado, like much of the Plains faced a double blow — the destruction of most of its livestock by the blizzard of 1886 and then an extended and severe drought. As Davis relates, agriculture failed so miserably along the 100th meridian that families in areas of the Dakotas and western Kansas faced actual starvation.[95]

The results were predictable — a significant depopulation of large areas of the Plains, including Colorado, New Mexico, and certainly the PCMS, which lost 50 percent of its population (declining from 456 to 227 inhabitants) in the same period.[96] Baca County, just to the east of Las Animas, lost over 30 percent of its population between 1890 and 1900.[97] Historians did not need much hindsight to see the level of devastation — as early as 1902 Edwin Earl Sparks lamented that "Man has retired before hostile nature."[98]

The severe weather of the late 1880s and early 1890s, capricious as it was, at least proved egalitarian in crushing Anglo and Hispano hopes alike. The difference lay in how the

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[91] Friedman, *Power's Report*, 194.
[92] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts; El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso, 2000), 123.
[93] Ibid., 120-121.
[94] Ibid., 15.
[95] Ibid., 122.
[96] Freidman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 61.
[97] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 176.
[98] Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 131.

two groups would react to their respective plights. A significant number of Anglos had only recently migrated to the region; they could just as easily pull up stakes and head back east. For Hispanos, there remained fewer options insomuch as they were more closely tied to the area. One might recall that many of the early Hispano settlers of the PCMS area had come from just across the border, in northern New Mexico. And while they clearly maintained some mobility, they likewise tended to stay within the environs and a familiar landscape. There was no "East" to return to — they were in a sense already "home." Hispanos thus remained in the region, but more on the literal and figurative geographic and social margins.

Hispanos who lost their jobs and land did have some alternative, however, namely the relatively high income offered by coal mining in Las Animas County. A 1915 YMCA survey[99] of coal-producing areas in Huerfano and Las Animas counties found that "Mexicans" comprised 15.6% of the work force in the latter county, with one-third to one-half of that percentage employed directly in the coalfields. The remainder most likely worked in ancillary industries, such as at the coking ovens. The study's author, Dr. Peter Roberts, concluded that the "Mexican" workers were overwhelmingly born in the United States and spoke fluent English — a clear indicator that Roberts simply classified Hispanos as Mexican, thus placing them in a category that they themselves might not have used.[100] At any rate, the Hispanos added significantly to the potpourri of Italians and Slavs working Colorado coal seams.

The doubling of coal production in Colorado between 1900 and 1910, with Las Animas County as the leading state producer, further contributed to the number of Hispanos who left their dessicated plazas for more steady work. For many, mining provided a winter job — they would return to their homes in time for the first planting. Even so, no fewer than 11,000 Hispano men and women moved to coal areas permanently to "work in the mines, raise food for the miners, or both."[101]

The PCMS, meanwhile, would not recover until the second decade of the twentieth century, when amended homestead laws and a world war would fuel another boom in settlement. Much had changed *around* the PCMS, though life for those who remained along the Purgatoire River life went on — perhaps less prosperously — but onward all the same. The initial wave of "boomers" had come and gone, as had many of the early Hispano plazas. They would not be the last to do so.

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[99] Cited in Scamehorn, *Mill and Mine*, 86-87.
[100] Cited in Scamehorn, *Mill and Mine*, 86-87.
[101] Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 88.

4 The Illusion of Prosperity and the Twentieth Century PCMS

Writing in 1902, historian Edwin Earl Sparks noted that "Man has retired before hostile nature."[1] Sparks' woeful observation certainly held true for the PCMS region. Indeed, the blizzard of the 1886 had its counterpoint in a period of drought that spanned much of the 1890s, depopulating large areas of Colorado and New Mexico. Baca County, just to the east of Las Animas, lost over 30 percent of its population between 1890 and 1900.[2] The PCMS itself lost 50 percent of its population, declining from 456 to 227 inhabitants in the same period.[3]

As the devastating weather patterns of the late 1880s and 1890s so vividly demonstrates, one cannot interpret the landscape of the PCMS area without accounting for the aridity of the High Plains. Moreover, it is important to view later patterns of PCMS settlement within the context of governmental and private efforts to overcome the region's environmental limitations, both through water conservation projects and "scientific" farming. Indeed, after 1900 federal and state administrations wrote new land and water legislation in the hope that it would encourage irrigation and new homesteads. The various strata of government likewise sponsored experimental projects to demonstrate the feasibility of dry farming methods such as contour plowing and the adding layers of topsoil to prevent evaporation.[4] Large-scale capital concerns also contributed in that railroad and mining interests joined forces with government officials and prominent businessmen to finance interlinked irrigation and land schemes. Many of these endeavors had a highly dubious quality, yet the pioneer's faith in technology and "progress" mixed all too easily with the promise of abundant crops and hungry markets. The lessons of the previous decades had faded, not least because those who were best placed to give warning had already come and gone.

Two laws in particular provided an impetus for new settlement in the Purgatoire Valley — the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, and the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916. The former statute reflected Congress' realization that the original law of the 1860s was ill-suited to the West. As a result, they declared that one could claim 320 acres rather than the 120 acres of the past. In addition, they expanded the time allowed to "prove up" one's claim from three years to five.[5] The 1916 law also addressed the unique nature of the

[1] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 131.
[2] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 176.
[3] Freidman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 61.
[4] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 176.
[5] Ibid., 177.

Plains landscape by providing plots of up to 640 acres for cattle and sheep ranching. The livestock homesteads did have some limitation in that they were to draw on marginal lands that would not to subtract from the total irrigable acreage. Ultimately, ranching, not dry farming, proved more suitable for those trying to scratch out a living in and around the PCMS.

Congress also hoped that the new Homestead statutes would work in conjunction with the 1894 Desert Land Act (also referred to as the Carey Act). The Carey Act, though well intentioned, had never lived up to its potential. The measure was ambitious enough — it authorized the president to set aside up to 1 million acres of public lands in each of the targeted Western states. The respective state governments would then request that the acreage be withdrawn from the public domain for development. In theory, canal companies could thus apply to the state for land that they could reclaim — subject, of course, to the mandatory approval of a state engineer. Settlers would then acquire parcels for a mere 50 cents per acre. The new homesteaders also bore the cost of the water projects, but this was to be averaged out over a 10-year period. By 1902, only 4 of the 10 eligible states had even bothered to apply for the federal lands made available by the act.[6]

Nonetheless, the new homestead legislation did bring about a brief land boom on the PCMS, one spanning the years prior to and immediately following the First World War. Then, as in the late 1870s and early 1880s, a wave of Anglo homesteaders would stake their dreams to an unforgiving landscape. Indeed, Friedman has noted that 55 of the 67 PCMS archaeological sites cited in one survey had their origin in either the 1909 or 1916 homestead legislation.[7] Small wonder then that land prices in eastern Colorado increased between 200 and 400 percent between 1900 and 1910, with even higher values during the world war.[8]

A hunger for land could not in itself create successful settlements — this ultimately depended on the ability to water the earth consistently and with cost efficiency. In this regard, too many projects rested on overly confident assessments. Two such projects that promised to make the PCMS productive amply demonstrate the perils of irrigation in the early twentieth century. The first venture, the proposed Badito Reservoir, sought to use the Carey Act to reclaim over 71,000 acres of land, much of it in the study area. The company's sponsors faced a blunt appraisal from John Philip Donovan, one of the engineers hired to evaluate the viability of the impound. Striking an ominous tone, Donovan noted that the "history of irrigation projects of both national and private undertakings has been such that no project should be undertaken without the most careful investigation…" He also pointed to a collective failure by "farmers and engineers" as well as "promoters, financiers, and managers" to adequately "study crop conditions." In addition, the many "mis-statements by irresponsible men, [a] failure to understand costs and necessities of proper construction, and the willingness to…build systems with practically no information at hand…" had doomed many water schemes to failure.[9]

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[6] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 156. The Carey statute met with limited success. Only Idaho, with over 60 percent of the total lands reclaimed, pursued development with any vigor.
[7] Freidman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 70.
[8] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado,* 177.
[9] John Philip Donovan, "Report on the Project of the Colorado Southern Irrigation Company" (Denver Public Library, Donovan Papers, ca. 1912).

Donovan's language certainly suggests an attempt to shield himself from litigation. Yet it also indicates hard won experience and weariness in dealing with the directors of such projects, most of whom wanted to recover their investment regardless of the eventual outcome. The backers of the Badito impound were no exception, and they clearly were not pleased with the report's conclusion that the proposed 71,000 acres far exceeded the capacity of the planned reservoir. Rather, Donovan saw 40,000 irrigable acres as a far more realistic figure — a number arrived at only after much haggling between Donovan and State Engineer C.W. Comstock on one side and the irrigation company on the other. Nonetheless, Donovan and Comstock had forced the withdrawal of 31,000 acres from consideration.[10]

Donovan's frank report may have come too late for some investors. In the files of the Denver Public Library one can find a promotional flyer for the Badito Reservoir, issued by the Twin Peaks Realty and Security Company circa 1906. In faded shades of orange one can see that the acreage of the original Badito plan included a substantial portion of the PCMS. On the reverse of the map one finds an all too characteristic language. Land in the area could "reach as high as $1,000 per acre" and annually produce "alfalfa, sugar beets, or melons worth as much as $50 to $100 an acre." As for the scurrilous reputation of water projects, it was true that "a few years ago the word 'irrigation' damned securities instantly. Now the word spells 'security.'" Donovan's warning not withstanding, the marginalia provided an additional boost — any delay in jumping on the bandwagon would mean that "you will then be too late."[11] Even more incredible was the flyer's claim that "politics do not enter into irrigation projects."[12] In the end the Badito project did proceed, but on a much more limited scale, and one that did not impact the PCMS.

A second endeavor, the Model Ditch and Irrigation Company, did create irrigable land on the subject area. The Model venture, though briefly successful, could have used a dose of realism not reflected in the literature published by its "boosters" from the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce. Indeed, the Model proposal had behind it a number of prominent government officials and business leaders, all of whom hoped to create a new community based on the principles of irrigation. In Trinidad the "public spirited" members of the board included, among others, Sheriff J.S. Grisham and former District Court Judge J.G. Northcutt. Other investors included Trinidad merchants D.R. Hindman, W.M. Jamieson, and W.H. Howell. Further up the chain of support sat F.P. Read, president of Colorado Railway, Light, and Power Company, and State Senator John E. Button.[13] This was not only shrewd, but also necessary in terms of marshaling capital and overcoming potential legal challenges.

The Model Company rested on a foundation of immigrants from the Plains states, all of whom hoped that they could obtain irrigable land relatively cheaply. This seemed more possible in the years 1914-1918, when World War I disrupted European production and increased demand for American foodstuffs. By 1920 the community of Model could boast

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "Map of the Badito Reservoir system" (Denver: Twin Peaks Realty and Security Company, ca. 1906), Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. The Badito Company changed its name shortly after its incorporation in 1906 to the Huerfano Valley Irrigation Company. In 1912 the Colorado Southern Company bought the rights to the project from the Huerfano Valley concern.
[13] Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, "*Las Animas County*, 1910 or 1911.

over 100 residents, a post office, a swimming pool, a hotel, a dry goods store, a grain elevator, and a sugar beet dump.[14] Its location on the southwestern edge of PCMS also allowed it to serve residents from the southern tip of the study area, including those near the Van Bremer arroyo and Hogback Ridge. Yet the town's survival depended largely on a steady water supply and even steadier crop prices — and this did not last. By the early 1920s drought had hit and the reservoir began to fill with silt. With the war over for more than 2 years, crop prices also had declined substantially.[15]

As it was, the early 1920s put farmers nationwide to the test. As Donald Worster has pointed out, the annual value of crops in the United States plunged from $153 million to $84 million between 1919 and 1922. A full fledged agricultural depression had enveloped the country, and the farmers hit the hardest were those who had staked their dreams to national and private land reclamation projects.[16] A series of crop failures inevitably signaled the inability to make payments on land and water rights — and this meant bankruptcy. Las Animas and neighboring Huerfano counties, situated on the southern periphery of Colorado and on the edge of the Plains, suffered especially as mine closings and drought persisted through the 1920s.[17] The cycle of depopulation continued in the 1930s, when the Great Depression and Dust Bowl plunged the country into further misery.

As Freidman's earlier study shows, the PCMS of the interwar period presents a striking microcosm of what was occurring throughout the West. Moreover, the resemblance to the late 1880s and 1890s was remarkable — once again there was an exodus of homesteaders who realized the futility of their efforts. Some longtime PCMS residents, such as Beatrice Hill, recalled the tough days that the newer settlers faced:

> There were quite a few homesteaders in 1918… [But] it's ranch country. It isn't farming country. We don't get enough rain. You couldn't live waiting to get a crop in seven years. That's why the homesteaders didn't make it. I think they had really been deceived. It was advertised and shown pictures around Hohene, towards the mountains and all the irrigation… I felt sorry for them. They had built good homes, spent every penny they had, and couldn't make it.[18]

[14] Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 73.
[15] Ibid., 78.
[16] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 178.
[17] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 286.
[18] Cited in Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 78.

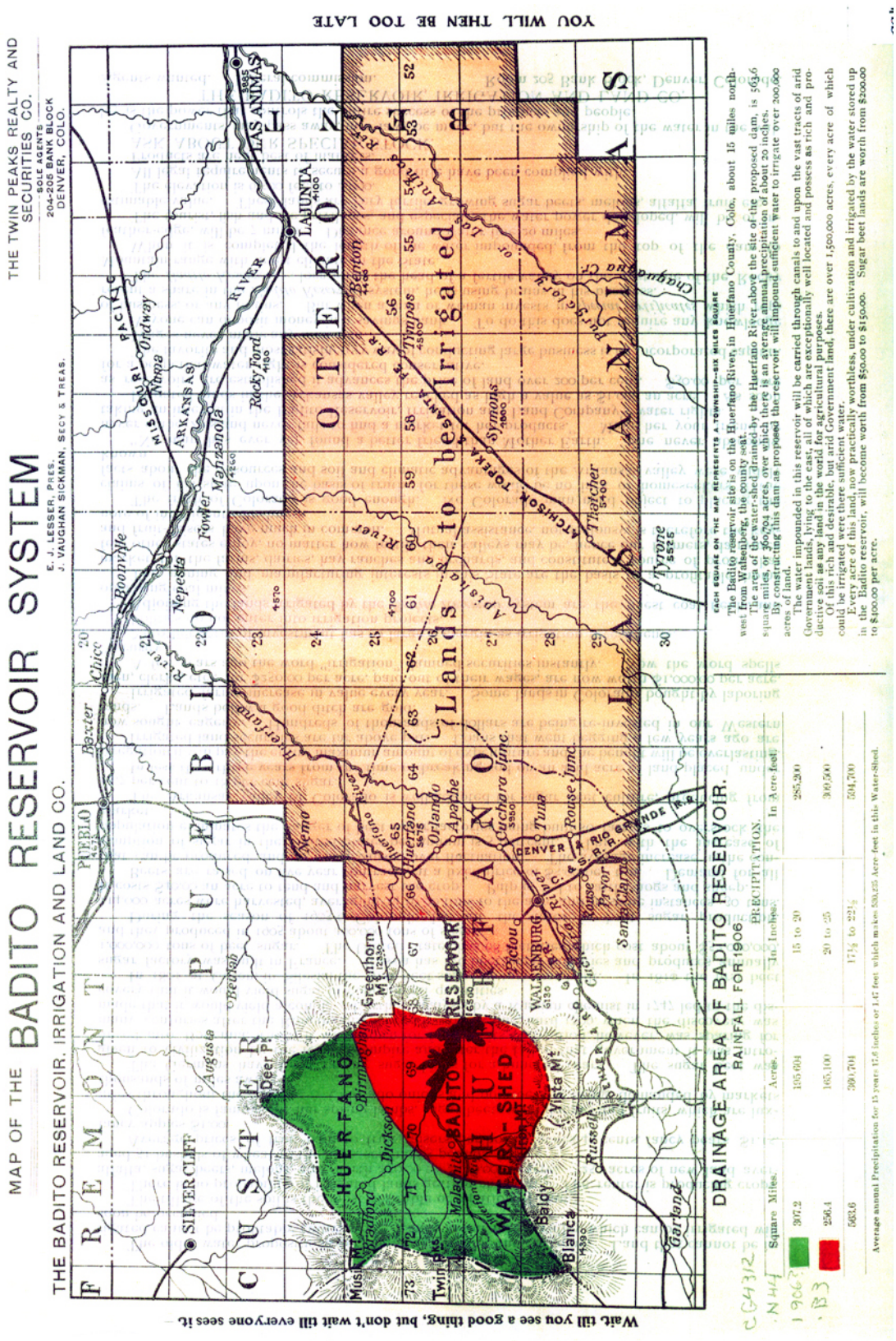

Figure 9. Badito Reservoir System.

Map courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History/Genealogy Department.

Beatrice Hill had hit upon an essential characteristic of the PCMS and its landscape — it was not, and never would be, suitable for dry farming or any other kind of farming barring that at a subsistence level. The Jicarilla had apprehended this, as had the first Hispano pioneers.

The hard times and depopulation created an opportunity for some inhabitants to enlarge their holdings, particularly those engaged in ranching. Sam Kitch, for example, had owned about 1,440 acres between Red Rock Canyon and Lockwood Arroyo according to the 1920 census records unearthed by Freidman.[19] In that same decade he purchased the Bar VI ranch from Sandy Cross, as well as numerous smaller homestead plots. The land title records clearly bear this out.

This begs the question — why did the PCMS homesteaders decide to challenge the landscape when history would have suggested it to be highly risky? First, as noted in the previous discussion of the Badito Reservoir scheme, the promotional literature of land/water projects encouraged settlers to overlook obvious perils. One Model Ditch and Irrigation Company pamphlet reflected upon Colorado's "unfailing streams rising in snow covered mountains [that] wend their way to the Plains and valleys below, where waters can be stored in reservoirs" and make arable more than one million acres of unclaimed land. The pamphlet also applied the notion of an "unfailing stream" directly to the Purgatoire River itself, noting that it "gains torrential force" following storms.[20]

On a more practical level, the brochure pointed out that the proposed 20,000 acre tract in the area of Hogback Flats would parallel the Santa Fe Railroad on one side. This was critical, for it meant that crops could be easily transported to a market that included "thousands of miners and other workers who furnish a strong and growing demand for all classes of farm products."[21] As for the possibility of silt accumulation, "provision has been made for the capturing most of the silt … and it will be many years before an accumulation of silt would reduce the capacity of the big basin perceptibly."[22] Within this context, one should note that the lure of modernity, via new technologies and laws, led many homesteaders to believe that the failures of the 1880s and 1890s could be remedied in the more "progressive" twentieth century.

The belief in what was 'new' in dry farming and irrigation also led settlers to underestimate just how arduous life on the Purgatoire could be. As one water project manager wrote, too many farmers, especially those who had moved West with little agricultural experience, imagined that "by sitting on the back porch, he can pull a string that will lift a gate and irrigate the back lot," when the reality more likely included the possibility that the ditch might degrade, "drowning half his crop [while] … the other half dries up before the ditch is fixed …"[23]

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[19] Ibid., 79.
[20] Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, "Las Animas County,"10.
[21] Ibid., 26.
[22] Ibid., 20.
[23] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 175.

This is not to entirely downplay the idea of successful irrigation, however. Those who established homesteads on the PCMS could look to some positive examples just north and west of the study area, around the town of Rocky Ford, to fuel their dreams. Irrigated orchards prospered there, although they did not yield especially good farm prices. The 1900 census, for example, listed 150,000 apple trees, 25,000 peach trees, and 17,000 cherry trees. Far more important was the sugar beet processing industry that emerged around Rocky Ford between 1905 and 1907. There, the powerful Holly Sugar Company maintained a base of operations. Their main rival, the American Sugar Beet Company, responded by building a plant at Las Animas in 1907.[24] Together, the Holly and American companies dominated the region and "fiercely competed for cooperating farmers" as well as building railroad feeder lines from the irrigated areas.[25]

As the construction of the beet dump at Model shows, the town's planners clearly had hoped to copy the success of Rocky Ford. What they did not account for, however, was the significant local variation in the landscape. The waters of the upper Arkansas River serving Rocky Ford were more predictable than those of the Purgatoire, and crops that prospered in one place might very well die just a few miles away, particularly when fifteen inches of rain might be considered a good year. It was truly ironic — the PCMS rested on an environmental periphery, lacking consistent rainfall on the one hand and the substantial reserves of coal that spelled survival for towns like Trinidad on the other.

The best bet for survivability, other than ranching, was to augment one's income when possible, just as the Hispanos had done in the 1870s and 1880s when railroad construction crews and coal mines offered a means of temporary employment. The decline in mining after 1918 had taken away some of the flexibility of the past, but a new opportunity came in the form of the Colorado Interstate Gas [CIG] Company pipeline and the construction of a pumping station at Purgatoire Canyon, on the land of Adam Arnet, in 1927.[26] Some of the better known residents of the study area worked for CIG — Bobby Hill's father rented space to construction workers, and John Arnet's son-in-law Charles Minic worked for the company in between his ranching duties.[27]

Locations like Canyon Station were invaluable in the West insomuch as they established social contact in a region defined largely by distance and isolation. A few simple structures, rising out of the Plains, gave a more definite sense of place, or meaning as defined by William Wyckoff's study of Colorado cultural geography. Indeed, the twenty or so families living at Canyon Station formed their own social club, sponsoring boxing and card games. Square dancing too was a popular occasion, with festivities going as late as three or four in the morning. Those who gathered at the pumping station were in essence a hard core of survivors, too attached to the unforgiving landscape to leave it. The sense of a shared fate, and equally shared determination to remain where others had failed, provided a strong cohesive element to those who chose to remain on the PCMS.[28]

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[24] Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 170.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Friedman, *Valley of Lost Souls*, 76.
[27] Ibid.
[28] See Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado*, 187-189 for a discussion of landscape in shaping cultural traditions and beliefs.

The interviews conducted by anthropologists Larry Loendorf and Dianna Clise, and local residents Bobby and Joella Hill, bear poignant testimony to life in the area on and around the CIG station. Charlie Shehorn's family arrived in the Model area around 1913, when Charlie was approximately four years of age. Shehorn recalled that his own family had homesteaded in the Model area in 1916 — at a place they called Lone Tree.[29] By 1926 they had picked up and moved over toward the Van Bremer Arroyo, where they raised potatoes. And although the Shehorns did enjoy some good crops, the market price fell to such a level that they simply fed the tubers to their livestock. Charlie also recollected that his first experience riding broncos came at the Model rodeo. Despite the drought and tough times of the mid-1920s, the Shehorns managed to survive, as Charlie put it, because they "worked a little here and a little there." Eventually, the Shehorns sold their 640 acre homestead to "Bull" Watkins, a man known for expanding his holdings when his neighbors were forced to sell out. As an adult, Charlie Shehorn earned a living driving a school bus and doing odd jobs. By 1959 he had purchased the store at Model from a man named Albert Swiggert. At the time of the interviews in 1994 the Shehorns continued to operate the store.

Maryann Arnett Minic, the daughter of John Arnet[t], also recalled life on the PCMS, but somewhat later than Charlie Shehorn. Maryann's father had immigrated to the United States sometime close to the turn of the century from Alsace-Lorraine, a region on the border between France and Germany. Her mother's family, the Saters, homesteaded near Pinon Canyon around 1916, while her father's family initially settled near Rock Crossing, almost dead center on the current PCMS and near the Taylor Arroyo. Maryann's parents married in 1925, and she was born three years later, in 1928.

Maryann's husband, Charles Minic, was Romanian by birth — she met him at a dance in Model and married him in 1948.

Life on the PCMS changed remarkably little from the 1930s to the 1980s, when the United States Army assumed ownership of the land. Simply put, the PCMS region had seen its last boom end by the early 1920s. A few with ranches and livestock managed to survive, though with many tough times. By 1964 the last anchor of settlement, the Canyon Station, had also closed down.

The resilience of the latter-day PCMS inhabitants was nothing short of remarkable. The landscape had done much to foster a toughness and fierce independence among those who remained tied to the PCMS. Seen from this vantage point, the emphasis on landscape embodied in this study is even more appropriate — it had dictated ways of life and dispossessed those who could not adapt. But for those who could adjust, it became part of their very being.

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[29] Interview with Charlie Shehorn in Loendorf and Clise, *Interviews with Former Residents of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site*, volume II.

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14. ABSTRACT

When we refer to the 283,000 acres of United States Army land in Colorado's southeastern Las Animas County as the "Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site" (PCMS) we are using a deceptively simple and recent historical term. The PCMS did not exist prior to 1983 when the Army assumed ownership of the land and began creating a large-scale combined arms training ground. As required by law, the Army sponsored a number of studies designed to locate significant historical and archaeological resources within the installation and determine which of these sites were eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Although these early efforts proved invaluable in bringing the story of the PCMS to light, the intervening years have produced significant methodological and interpretive changes within the discipline of history that strongly recommend a reconsideration of the installation and its environs.

This study takes the recent developments within the discipline of history and offers a reconfigured narrative of the PCMS. This endeavor sheds new light on underappreciated histories by expanding the chronological and thematic parameters of prior studies and includes discussion of the long Spanish period in the Southwest and the importance of Spanish landholding patterns to later settlement.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Fort Carson; Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS); cultural resources; historic sites; National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

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