

BETWEEN THE RIVER AND THE MOUNTAINS:
A HISTORY OF EARLY SETTLEMENT
IN SIERRA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO.

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1984 I agreed to prepare a historical study of the Rio Grande Valley in Sierra County, New Mexico, as one component of a project headed by Mr. Stephen H. Lekson to conduct an archeological reconnaissance of the same valley. A grant from the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division assisted this work. It was agreed that the historical study would contain (1) a general historical narrative of this area to the beginning of construction of Elephant Butte Dam (i.e., to 1910); (2) a settlement history; and (3) a history of irrigation and agriculture. The Rio Grande Valley was understood to include only the lower portions of the tributary valleys, including the town of Cuchillo. It developed that Monticello, originally called Cañada Alamosa, was an integral part of such a study and it has been necessary to refer to the history of that community as well.

It was soon found that almost no reliable secondary sources existed and that the towns, except for three, were literally unknown. This meant that far more time than had been expected had to be spent in examining primary source materials - courthouse documents, U.S. Army and Superintendency of Indian Affairs records, contemporary newspapers, and in particular the U.S. Census schedules from 1860 through 1910. There was also one Territorial census, made in 1885. Without the census schedules this study would have been impossible. Unfortunately the 1890 schedules were badly damaged in a fire in 1921 and subsequently disposed of. The 1900 and 1910 agricultural schedules also no longer exist.

Since one of the overall objectives of the project was evaluation of a settlement-subsistence model for the study area, it was necessary to consider historical Apache use of the area and the possibility of Apache settlements,

including agricultural ones. Until now Apache agriculture has seen very little discussion. It was also decided to adopt a perspective more nearly that of cultural geography than of history since the focus was upon man's use of the landscape. Hopefully persons with various professional backgrounds will find the results interesting.

The most useful references were often the most difficult to find. Sierra County was created in 1884 and until then most of its lands were in Socorro County. The early Socorro County record books and microfilms of these books are at the New Mexico State Records Center in Santa Fe, except for Record Book "D" and the index volume to county records through 1883. These two volumes remain in the courthouse at Socorro. The ten-sheet set of topographic maps of the Rio Grande Project produced by the U.S. Reclamation Service in 1908 was indispensable and two sections have been included as illustrations in this report (Figs. 4, 5). Sets of the original maps are held at the Bureau of Reclamation office in Amarillo, Texas and in the Rio Grande Historical Collections (RGHC) at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Rare reports such as the Proceedings issued by the International (Water) Boundary Commission (IWBC) in 1903, the Water Facilities Area Plan published in 1940 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and a variety of studies by Herbert W. Yeo and others were fortunately available at the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Library in Las Cruces. The examinations of U.S. Army and New Mexico Superintendency of Indian Affairs records were done primarily from microfilms and are very incomplete; these films no doubt hold much additional information of value.

I appreciate the patience of Mr. Lekson and of Mr. Thomas W. Merlan, Director of the Historic Preservation Division, during the preparation of this study. For assistance with locating and obtaining copies of references

I am indebted to the staff of the New Mexico State Records Center (NMSRCA), particularly Stanley D. Hordes, Donald R. Lavash and J. Richard Salazar; the Interlibrary Loan staff at New Mexico State University; the Museum of New Mexico History Library and Mr. Orlando Romero; the Rio Grande Historical Collections, Mr. Austin Hoover and Mr. John Grassham at NMSU; my wife Cheryl, who is Special Collections Librarian at NMSU; Mr. Doug Boyd at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Southwest Region offices in Amarillo; and Mrs. Marion Grinstead of El Paso, Texas. The offices in New Mexico just listed were all visited as were the Socorro County courthouse, the University of New Mexico Library Special Collections, and the New Mexico State Library in Santa Fe. Mr. Lee Myers of Las Cruces kindly loaned his microfilms of the Fort Craig and Fort McRae monthly post returns. Indexes to articles in newspapers were reviewed at NMSU, the El Paso Public Library, and the Museum of New Mexico History Library.

Personal documents from early Sierra County settlers were limited to a few newspaper items and some pieces of correspondence in Federal archives. Until after 1885 few individuals outside of the community leaders were literate, so personal records may always have been rare. All known references thought to be important for this work were seen and examined.

This study is in two parts. The first is a review and analysis of Southern Apache occupation from the 1600's to the middle 1870's. Some of the conclusions about the nature of this occupation are original in this report. The second part is a study of the largely Hispanic settlement that began in 1859. A synopsis of Fort McRae, which was the one military post in the area, is included here. Each of the parts is subdivided into a history of settlement and a history of irrigation and agriculture. With respect to this last, emphasis is upon explaining the agricultural practices of the period and the different types of irrigation systems, rather than on trying to list every recorded

instance of a ditch system. Hopefully very few systems were missed, however. Endnotes have been used for referencing in view of the lengthy citations sometimes needed. A selection of documents and newspaper items used in this study has been reproduced here as an Appendix.

Capt. Hatch's map (Fig. 1) showed a feature called "Adobe Wall" on the west side of the Rio Grande. This place name was not uncommon in military accounts from the early Territorial years. It referred to a natural feature, not to a cultural one. As Emory¹ described it,

.... A butte was seen in the distance, close to the river, and surrounded by trees, which was at first taken for an adobe house, but the near approach showed it a conglomerate cemented by lime, which had been left standing when the surrounding earths were washed away.

According to Col. Philip St. George Cooke this landmark stood about thirty feet high; it marked his campsite of November 4-5, 1846. The rock has since fallen over and lies in ruins in Section 17, Township 10 South, Range 3 West.²

THE EARLIEST SETTLERS OF SIERRA COUNTY

Who were the earliest settlers in what is now Sierra County? John Reid, who traveled across southern New Mexico in 1856-57, confirmed what George Ruxton had said eleven years earlier: that the Rio Grande valley lay uninhabited from Doña Ana as far up as the little village of San Antonio.³ In his diary entry for March 29, 1853, Governor William Carr Lane wrote that there was no settlement from Doña Ana north to Val Verde, a distance of about 120 miles. Lane did note an abandoned town at Santa Barbara, 35 miles upstream from Doña Ana, when he passed by there on March 30th.⁴ Valverde, 15 miles south of San Antonio, also stood in ruins.⁵ As of 1857, the Rio Grande Valley through what is now Sierra County had no European settlers.

There were other settlers there, by 1857 and long before. Like the Hispanic farmers in New Mexico, these people lived in small communities and relied upon irrigated farmlands. The traces of their dwellings and agricultural systems may yet exist, and there may be little difference between some prehistoric and historic settlement remains or between those left by different ethnic groups. The history of settlement in Sierra County began with the Indians who lived there.

What Indians lived in Sierra County historically and could their sites be confused with those of later settlers? When the Chamuscado-Rodríguez party came into New Mexico in 1581, the Spaniards found an abandoned town alongside the Rio Grande in what is now southern Socorro County. This was the southernmost Piro Indian pueblo, the one called San Felipe. It may or may not have been the site now known as LA597 at the mouth of Milligan Gulch.⁶ Occupation at LA597 would have continued into the early historical period since Mera⁷ found all of the glaze-paint pottery groups well-represented there. During

the 17th century the Piro settlements were all north of the San Marcial area.

Apaches in Western Sierra County: Spanish and Mexican Periods

If no Pueblo Indians dwelt in Sierra County, what about the Apaches? What Apache Indian groups frequented this part of the Rio Grande Valley? Did Apaches live there and if so what did they do? What kinds of remains might they have left and could any of these now be identified as Apachean? What bearing does all of this have upon the history of settlement? We can explore these questions but answers are not easily found nor are they necessarily in line with existing interpretations.

Opler⁸ recognized the Warm Springs Apaches as a local group of the Eastern Chiricahua band. He considered Coppermine, Mimbrenos and Mogollones to be other names for the same band. Schroeder⁹ indicated that the Warm Springs Apache home area lay west of the Rio Grande in what is now western Sierra County. How long had these people been there?

The name 'Warm Springs' is a reservation-period term, first used in the middle 1870's in connection with the short-lived Southern Apache or Hot Springs Reservation above the town of Cañada Alamosa¹⁰ (Fig. 3). Prior to that, reports from the 1869-71 period had described the Apaches camped around Cañada Alamosa as Southern Apaches, as Mimbres and Mogollon Apaches, or simply as Apaches,¹¹ and asserted that the country was part of their old homeland or planting grounds.¹² If these claims were valid then earlier references to Apaches in that country should exist.

Such references were very scarce before the middle 1850's. Through the first century and a half of Spanish rule, until the 1770's, the country between the Rio Grande and the Black Range remained virtually unknown.

Benavides' 1634 account of the Xila or Gila Apaches placed the village of

Captain Sanaba 14 leagues west from Senecu, a Piro pueblo.¹³ Fray Martín del Espíritu Santo had been sent in 1628 to catechize the Gila Apaches and to gather them into pueblos, but we hear nothing more about that friar. The distance and bearing from Senecu would be about right for Captain Sanaba's people to have been living at the Ojos Calientes, at what later became the Southern Apache Reservation above Monticello Canyon (Fig. 3).

The Gila Apache country originally embraced all of southwestern New Mexico. Few Spanish expeditions penetrated their domain until the late 1740's. When Governor Don Diego de Vargas returned from his 1692 reconquest of New Mexico towards El Paso, he followed the west bank of the Rio Grande south as far as the "place called San Diego" (San Diego Mountain). There he caught up with and killed two Apache Indians. Until then the return had been uneventful.¹⁴

From 1747 through 1756 and again during the 1770's and 1780's, Spanish presidial troops and their Indian allies scoured the Mimbres and Gila River countries for hostile Apaches. Several contingents did range through the Black Range, then called the Sierra de las Mimbres, but only a few reports mentioned the country east of this sierra.¹⁵ Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco's ca. 1760 map of New Mexico showed hut symbols and the name "Apache" on a western tributary of the lower Rio Grande while a later map named the Rio de los Nogales, now called Nogal Canyon.¹⁶ This knowledge must have been gained during the 1747 and the 1756 expeditions.

In the fall of 1775 Don Hugo O'Connor marshalled perhaps the largest force ever brought together in northern New Spain to war against the Apaches in the Southwest. At least one of his commands pushed west from the Rio Grande to the Sierra de las Mimbres but we do not know what they found.¹⁷ Five years later, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza led an expedition from New Mexico to

Sonora, passing down the west side of the Rio Grande to a point two leagues beyond the pass of the Sierra del Cavallo (Palomas Gap?), then turning towards the southwest, possibly up Las Animas Creek. They found four recently deserted Apache rancherías in the Fra Cristóbal Range but saw no more evidence of campsites until they began skirting the Sierra de las Mimbres.¹⁸

During a 1784 campaign, Commander General Phelipe de Neve sent the fifth division, under Captain Francisco Martínez, to pursue any fleeing Indians to the Sierra de las Mimbres.¹⁹ Martínez' diary has not been published but the map compiled by Thomas²⁰ had his division marching up the east front of the Mimbres Mts. Four years later Governor Fernando de la Concha followed a similar route and met no Indians. Concha sent a detachment under Ensign Antonio Guerrero to reconnoiter the place called Salsipuedes, where Guerrero found signs that the Apaches had fled. In the campaign journal Concha wrote - "I am sure that they have always lived there". Salsipuedes Canyon is an old name for Monticello Canyon, a cleft wherein Alamosa Creek wends its way between the Hot Springs and the town of Monticello²¹ (Fig. 3).

The armies of New Spain campaigned almost continually in southwestern New Mexico until the Gila and Mimbres Apaches finally pledged themselves to peace, around the middle of 1790.²² From then until the opening of the American period we know of no other expeditions through what is now western Sierra County. Schroeder's²³ maps showing Apache raids and locales include no additional references to Apaches living in this country prior to the early American period. In sum, there is evidence that Apaches resided there during the Spanish period, but nothing that would lead one to think that this was more than a peripheral area or that it was the home of some separate Apache group. The kinds of remains that might be expected and the prospects for identifying Apache settlements will be taken up after we review the American period.

Apaches in Western Sierra County: The Early American Period

With the American occupation of New Mexico in 1846, traffic down the west side of the Rio Grande increased considerably (Fig. 1). General Kearny led part of his Army of the West down the Rio Grande to a point several miles below present Truth or Consequences, N.M. before turning west on the way to California. Col. Philip St. George Cooke followed less than a month later with the Mormon Battalion, but Cooke continued along the river almost as far south as modern Hatch, N.M. before he struck west. Three members of Kearny's party kept journals and there were a number of diarists for the Mormon Battalion plus Cooke's own journal of the march. In addition we have two recent studies of the routes.²⁴ The troops passed hundreds of Apache lodges in the Mimbres River Valley but until they reached there neither party saw Indians or mentioned signs of them. Kearny met his first Apaches at the Santa Rita copper mines; Cooke saw none until he was almost into Arizona.

The next travelers of record were the '49ers bound for California over Kearny's old route or along the path of the Mormon Battalion. A number of these people kept journals. When Lorenzo Aldrich's party was camped about 27 miles below San Antonio, N.M. they had two mules stolen. Aldrich followed a trail for 25 miles, "reaching the highest of the mountain," before recovering the mules as the Indians fled.²⁵ H.M.T. Powell's company preceded Aldrich's by about two weeks and found an Indian bow plus "a number of recent Indian traces" at a point now several miles above Elephant Butte Dam. Beyond that they discovered an old Apache camp a short day's march east of the Mimbres River but met no Indians at all.²⁶ William Chamberlin and Robert Green, who traveled together along Kearny's path, met their first Apaches more than 30 miles west of the Rio Grande. Until then they had neither seen Indians nor any signs of them.²⁷ Charles Pancoast, Caspar Ricks and Benjamin Haynes all

made no mention of Indians beyond Socorro or San Antonio, N.M. until they reached or had gone beyond the Mimbres River.²⁸

Governor William Carr Lane visited the southern part of New Mexico Territory in March and April of 1853. On his return he set out from Fort Webster on the Mimbres River and reached the Rio Grande a few miles above Santa Barbara, then continued north up the west side of the river towards Fort Conrad.²⁹ The only Apaches he met were at Fort Webster, which was also the location of the Southern Apache Agency (Fig. 2).

The narrative to this point has attempted to show that no one found Apaches, by whatever name, living in what is now western Sierra County during the early American period. The few references available from the 17th and 18th centuries suggest that some Gila Apaches did dwell there. Two tentative conclusions are that (1) there were Apache settlements prior to the 19th century but the Indians ceased to live in the area, and (2) the claims made in 1869-71 for this country having been an old homeland or planting grounds had little foundation, perhaps dating only to 1855.

Apache Subsistence and Michael Steck's Apache Farms

By the late 18th century the Spaniards had learned what the Americans rediscovered after 1846; that the Southern Apaches were not self-sufficient in foodstuffs and had to raid, starve, or be provided with rations in order to live in their own country.³⁰ One of the principal Apache plant foods was mescal, the baked hearts of agave.³¹ Agave is not uniformly distributed and while abundant in the Mimbres River drainage, it is limited to a belt of limestone soils on either side of the continental divide through the Black Range country.³² In the Mimbres country and along the continental divide it was at least available, whether or not the Apaches ever made mescal there. Where it was not available,

east of the Black Range, there was that much less in the way of native food resources and too little to expect that any group of people could maintain themselves by hunting and gathering. It would be surprising if Apache settlements had been reported there in the early American period.

At this time the Southern Apaches were commonly called the Mimbres, Copper Mine and Mogollon bands. The name Gila Apaches was sometimes used as a collective term and again as the name of still another band (Fig. 2). The year 1853 marked the beginning of new policies affecting them. Edward H. Wingfield arrived as the Southern Apache agent about the time that Fort Webster was relocated to the Mimbres River. Under instructions from the Governor, who was ex-officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico, Wingfield brought in about 300 Mimbres Apaches under Ponce and other chiefs and contracted with his interpreter (Francis Fletcher) to plant a farm for them on the Mimbres bottomlands. The farm program limped along with no more than 25 acres of irrigated cornfields under cultivation. These produced a modest harvest that had to be parceled out among 13 bands. That same summer Wingfield was removed from office for mismanagement, one of the Governor's severest criticisms being that the lands on the Mimbres would not accomodate the Indians who were already there, yet the agent had brought Mangas Colorado's people and other bands from their homes on the Gila over to the Mimbres. "Has the agent been Insane?", Lane asked.³³

The Southern Apache Agency was off to a shaky start, but Michael Steck became the agent in May 1854 and he remained for seven years. Fort Webster was abandoned in late December 1853 and Steck established his agency near the new post of Fort Thorn, on the Rio Grande at the old site of Santa Barbara. During his years there, Steck consistently carried out an official policy of encouraging the Indians to become farmers. The year 1857 was an exception

as most of the Apaches wisely decamped to Janos to sit out the Bonneville campaign.

The efforts in 1853 had evidently left an impress on the Southern Apaches. Steck was no novice at this sort of thing; early in 1853 he had tried to get the Jicarilla Apaches in northern New Mexico to participate in a similar agricultural program.³⁴ Despite the interest among his current charges, agent Steck had very little to offer the Southern Apaches in 1854 except encouragement. During August he wrote

With regard to their farming operations on the Miembres they are very limited and not likely to be productive of much good. About fifteen acres in different patches have been planted most of which has been entirely neglected probably from the want of implements and some one to encourage them.³⁵

By October he was more optimistic. Although they were destitute,

The Gila Apaches seem anxious to commence the cultivation of the soil. All their principal men have expressed a willingness to do so and as proof of their sincerity I saw in my recent visit to their camps many acres of land that had been planted by them this season. But inasmuch as they have not been fed by the Govt. they have been compelled to leave their fields in order to obtain food. They have planted their corn with sticks (as not even a hoe has ever been furnished them to work with) & all without an agent or anyone to instruct or encourage them. Under these disadvantages it could not be expected that their farming operations should prosper, yet notwithstanding all these disadvantages they have many small patches that they have kept clean with sharp sticks and will yield them some recompence for their labour.³⁶

As a part of the program to encourage them to farm the Indians received rations, primarily of corn and beef.³⁷

Steck's plans in 1855 were ambitious:

The plan I propose is to clean off and plant a field for each of the principal men of the tribe [Gila Apache] or for such as will agree to take good care of it.³⁸

Steck assisted them himself. On April 13th he reported that

I returned yesterday from a visit to the camp of Cuchillo Negro who is encamped about 45 miles N.W. of this place [Fort Thorn]. He has selected an excellent place for planting on the head of the Rio de los Animas and his Band has cleared without assistance about three acres of land which is now ready for planting.³⁹ (Fig. 2)

A month later Steck wrote again, saying that he had been in the Indian country for the last 20 days where he had

.... assisted Cuchillo Negro, Rinion (?) and their people to plant on the Rio de los Animas about 40 miles from this place and that he was planting on the Mimbres as well, for Mangas Colorado, Delgadito, Itan, the family of Ponce and others.⁴⁰

In July, Steck sent another progress report, acknowledging that on March 14th he had instructions from Governor Meriwether that allowed him to spend \$750 to assist the Mimbres Apaches in planting. With this

I succeeded in planting a field of corn for the heads of fifty-three different families - principally from the camps of Delgadito & Itan - & Cuchillo Negro & Rinion - some however in each of the different bands. Such as have planted during the whole summer have remained about their fields and shown a disposition to do all in their power to make a successful experiment. They cleared off their grounds, assisted in planting and have since watched and tended their fields - and from present prospects they will be richly rewarded for their labour.⁴¹

The bands of Cuchillo Negro and Rinion totaled 30 lodges and 152 persons; all together the Mimbres Apaches then numbered 187 lodges and 893 men, women and children. At the end of the year Steck proclaimed that

The farming operations of last year were successful beyond my expectations. Some of those who planted have still a supply of corn stored away and I have had applications from many during the last year to select grounds for them.⁴²

Steck had something to sell - success - and as a result his funds were doubled for 1856. With this the Mimbres band placed about 200 acres under cultivation, planting and attending the corn mainly with their own hands. Steck contracted with Ammon Barnes of Doña Ana County to provide seeds, teams

and laborers for 35 days or longer to assist the Indian Agent "in preparing lands, digging Asequias and planting for Mimbres Apache Indians".⁴³

The Apache farm was a success story again, despite an ugly incident early in the year when troops clashed with a camp of peaceful Mimbres Apaches at the copper mines.⁴⁴ Most or all of the farming seems to have been done on the Mimbres, where Steck helped the Indians to clear lands, plant, hoe their fields, irrigate and repair their dams. At the end of June he had five men assisting them with irrigating and hoeing corn.⁴⁵ After the harvest was in, Steck reported that the farming last summer "was attended with entire success," but he gave no details.⁴⁶ There is an interesting description of Steck's agency as of December that year.⁴⁷

Southern Apaches were also farming quite independently of Steck's efforts. In September 1856, St. Vrain said that the Mogollon Apaches had cornfields on the Rio Prieto, Valle del Nogal at the foot of the Mogollon Mt., and on the Culebra River.⁴⁸ Rio Prieto is a former name for the San Francisco River. The Mogollones were the least known of the Southern Apache bands.

When spring arrived in 1857, most of the Mimbres Apaches were at Janos. They had heard about Col. Bonneville's proposed campaign through their country and decided to get out of the way.⁴⁹ Steck dropped the idea of planting on the Mimbres although he did open a farm for the Mescalero Apaches that year at Nuestra Señora de La Luz. Bonneville's Gila Expedition duly arrived and campaigned for a couple of months, in the midst of which Cuchillo Negro and some of his Mimbres band wandered into the zone of operations with more than 1000 stolen sheep. Col. W.W. Loring caught up with the Indians at a place called the Cañon de los Muertos Carneros. When the shooting stopped six warriors and old Cuchillo Negro lay dead.⁵⁰ Apart from this incident the Gila Expedition found very few Indians in southwestern New Mexico.

New Mexico. No. 4507-1855-

A MAP
OF THE COUNTRY INHABITED
BY THE
GILA AND MIMBRE RES-
APACHE INDIANS.

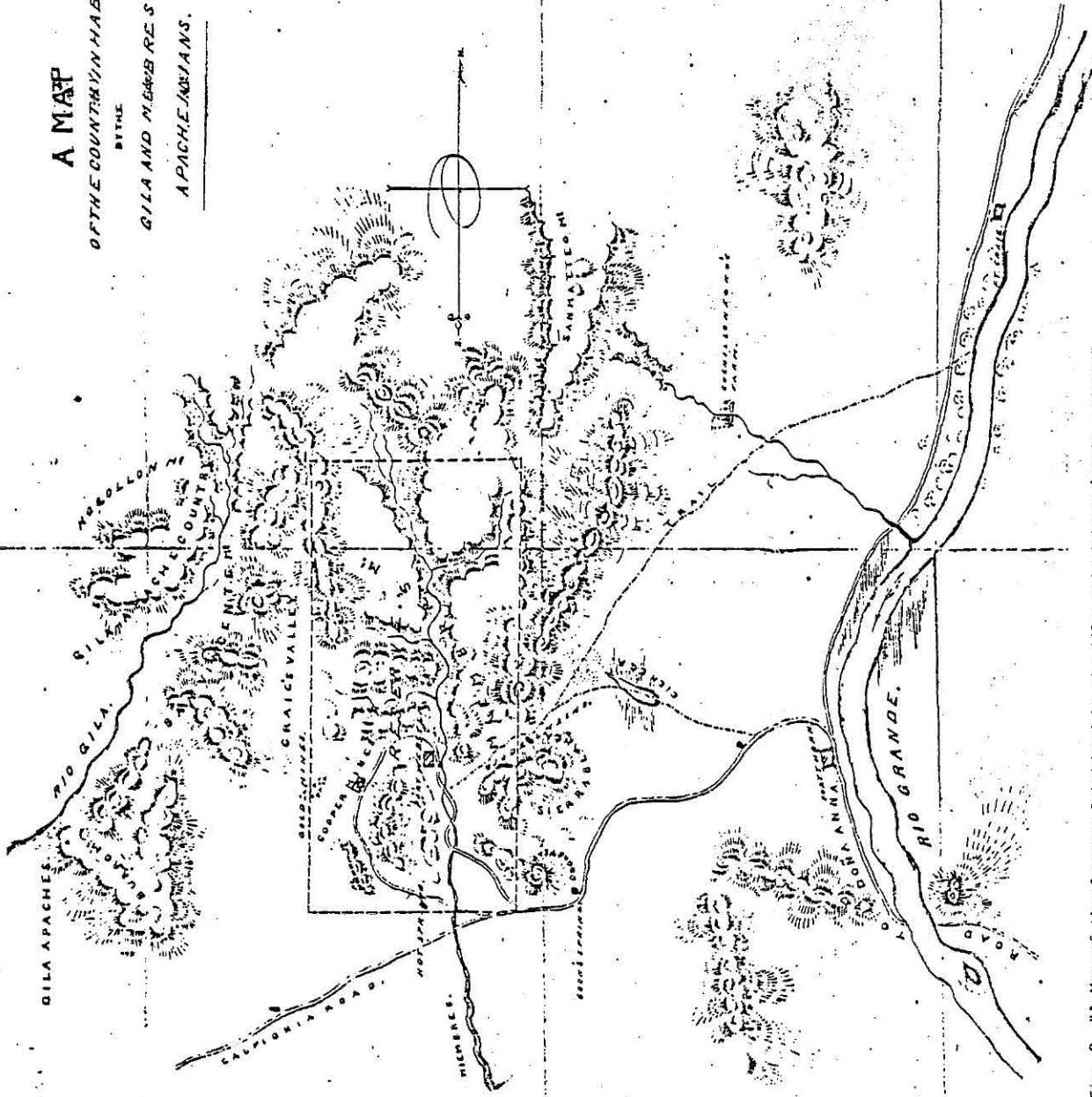


Fig. 2 "A Map of the Country Inhabited by the Gila and Mimbres Apache Indians," 1855. The 'Reserve' was proposed for the Mimbres Apaches by the unratified treaty of Fort Thorn, June 9, 1855. NA, RG 75, Map 1068.

By 1858 matters had quieted and the remainder of the Mimbres band returned to their old farm on the Mimbres River. Steck also arranged for some of them to plant on the Rio Palomas, about 35 miles from the agency.⁵¹ This was partly for convenience:

The poorer portion of the Band such as have no horses have planted upon a stream about thirty five miles N.W. of this agency - being near they are enabled to attend to their fields and come in regularly for their rations. The fields of those look very promising. Corn, Beans, pumpkins & melons several inches above the ground and look very promising.⁵²

Apparently 1858 was another success year since Steck wrote in August that the Mimbres and Mogollon bands had their corn planted together, about 150 acres in all and promising well.⁵³

By 1859 the Mimbres band had lost many of its people and agent Steck began to lump the Mimbres and Mogollon bands together in his correspondence, calling them Gila Apaches. The Mimbres Valley was rapidly being preempted by miners and settlers so that Steck moved the Apache farm to Santa Lucía (Mangas Springs) in 1859 and 1860. In the former year at least the farming was still going well; Brevet Major W.H. Gordon visited Mangas Colorado's camp and then passed down to the Gila River "through their crops, which extended some three miles in length, and are in fine condition."⁵⁴ Apache farms on the Rio Palomas and Las Animas were no longer mentioned.

When planting season came around in 1861, the Southern Apaches were at war and had driven the miners and settlers in southwestern New Mexico back to the Rio Grande. Michael Steck was absent in Washington and the Civil War was about to explode. No one thought seriously about Indian farms. Instead there was an Indian war that continued until 1869.

In retrospect, the feature that made Steck's Apache farms successful was the rationing program that accompanied the farming. The neophyte farmers.

generally received corn and beef each week while they tended their fields so that it wasn't necessary to roam or raid in order to eat. From its inception, this system drew the Apaches closer to their agency and also further east. Schroeder⁵⁵ pointed out that by bringing Mangas Colorado's band to the Mimbres, agent Wingfield had disturbed the normal territorial range of the Copper Mine and Mimbres Apaches. With the subsequent removal of the agency to Fort Thorn, the Mimbres band was then drawn to the eastern slope of the Black Range.⁵⁶ That country had probably seen no permanent occupants for generations. When Cuchillo Negro moved his people to the head of Las Animas Creek in 1855, he did so because the rations and the produce of their farms made it possible to live there (Fig. 2).

As time went on, Steck became less definite about the scale and locations of his Apache farms. There were irrigated fields along Palomas Creek in 1858 and possibly in neighboring valleys as well. In 1869, when the Mimbres Apache chief Loco began negotiations to abandon the warpath, he told agent Charles Drew that

.... they want to plant near the Cuchio Negro, where they used to plant before they were driven away; also to hunt on the east side of the Mimbres Mountains as far south as old Fort Thorn, and as far as the mountains east of the Rio Grande, known as the Sierra del Caballos, and to a distance of twenty miles north of Fort McRae.⁵⁷

Loco was vague about the time and circumstances of his prior claim but the area he described virtually coincided with the western half of Sierra County.

From all of the foregoing we can conclude that most surviving evidences of Apache occupation are probably no older than the middle 1850's. Apaches living in the area had irrigated farmlands and traces of their old irrigation works might be confused with prehistoric systems, or with structures built by Hispanic farmers.

A further interpretation is considerably more interesting. It has both historical and archeological dimensions, and a potential application that includes and extends well beyond the country between the Rio Grande and the Black Range. To explain it will require some additional background.

The Decline of Apache Agriculture

The Western Apaches lived in Arizona, in the mountainous country along the Gila River and north of there. Agriculture is recognized as having been an important element in their economic system.⁵⁸ Less well known is their extensive reliance on agriculture in pre-reservation days and how this in turn depended upon irrigation. In his annual reports for 1858 and 1859, Indian Agent Michael Steck reported that the White Mountain Coyotero and the Pinal Apaches cultivated the soil extensively.⁵⁹ Their labors were entirely independent of Steck's efforts to make the Southern Apaches into peaceful farmers.

This Western Apache talent for farming appears to be of long standing. As far back as 1775, Father Vélez de Escalante wrote that the San Francisco River below the box canyon, six leagues above the junction with the Gila River, entered a little hollow where one found various rancherias of Apaches who cultivated the valley "and with the aid of irrigation, harvest much yellow corn."⁶⁰ His information actually derived from the general campaign in 1747. In 1754 another expedition evidently visited the middle San Francisco valley. There the troops found "various Apaches who do not roam about or have horses but much yellow corn."⁶¹

There are a series of 19th century references to Western Apache farming with the use of irrigation, all from before the reservation period.⁶² Three of these merit special attention. On June 30, 1857, three days after Col. Dixon Miles defeated a large group of Coyotero and Mogollon Apaches, Lieut.

John Van Deusen De Bois camped at a very large Apache rancheria where the ground was irrigated, the acequias well and handsomely constructed, and "As far as I can see are corn & wheat fields."⁶³ Seven years later in that same part of Arizona, a civilian on a punitive expedition found himself amongst cornfields, and also at a large acequia about six feet wide and two feet deep, full of water.⁶⁴ Finally, Major John Green moved his command into White Mountain Apache country at the end of July 1869 to hunt for cornfields. His was one of the first recorded parties to enter their domains. He was astonished to find at least one hundred acres of fine corn, just in silk, planted along the White Mountain River. He destroyed it all, commenting that he

.... could hardly believe that the Apache Indians could and would cultivate the soil to such an extent; and when we consider their very rude implements, and the labor it requires to dig the acequias for irrigation, one cannot help but wonder at their success. Their fields compare very favorably with those of their more civilized brethren.⁶⁵

Later accounts from the reservation period described a pale reflection of Western Apache agriculture in earlier times.⁶⁶

Western Apaches were not the only ones who farmed in pre-reservation days. Opler's⁶⁷ Eastern Chiricahua informants told him that their people farmed and also had irrigation before the modern reservations were established. Other sources give historical depth and shed some light on the distribution of these practices.

As far back as 1630, Benavides claimed that the Apache nation

.... had no cultivated fields but lived by the hunt - although lately we have broken ground for them and taught them to sow.⁶⁸

His 1634 Memorial reflected either an incredible success rate or better knowledge of the Indians:

.... and although their [the Apaches] chief sustenance is derived from hunting, they also plant much corn.⁶⁹

Apache references later in the 17th century dealt almost entirely with their raiding. One exception was when Governor Vargas set out from El Morro on his return to El Paso in December 1692. After one league his guide (from the Zuni pueblo of Halona) told him that a mountain which they could see at a great distance, the Peña Larga, was where the Apaches Colorados had their rancheria and that they planted maize.⁷⁰

Father Bartolomé Sáenz, chaplain on the 1756 expedition, left the only eyewitness account of that campaign yet discovered. He had seen the Apache country for the first time and came away impressed, especially with Todos Santos. This was the area around present-day Cliff and Gila, N.M. Among other things,

The Apache plant plots of maize from Todos Santos along the entire Rio Gila and in the Cañada de Santa Lucía.⁷¹

Father Sáenz was unclear as to whether the irrigation ditch he saw at Todos Santos was prehistoric or one currently in use by the Apaches.⁷²

Don Hugo O'Connor, Commander-Inspector of the northern provinces of New Spain, preferred the mailed fist to the olive branch when dealing with Apache Indians. He campaigned extensively against the Gila Apaches from 1772 to 1776 but unfortunately only a few of the campaign reports by O'Connor and his commanders have been published. During his largest coordinated action, in the fall of 1775, he found cultivated fields a little beyond a place called San Cristóbal. He then crossed to the Rio de las Mimbres and found a great area of Apache fields near the Picacho de las Mimbres.⁷³

Sometime later, O'Connor laid out his plan for an even more ambitious campaign, with ten divisions to operate in unison. Three of these would unite at a place called el Alemán (north of Janos) and then, as quietly as possible,

.... so as not to be seen beforehand by the enemy, they will reconnoitre the Sierra de la Acha where, as in the places previously indicated, they will surely find the enemy making mescal, which is a large part of their sustenance. Provided with what they need for consumables, they [the Apaches] take their families to the Sierra de los Mimbres about the middle of April in order to sow their maize, beans and squash in the cañadas of the same range. This likewise presents an opportunity for their punishment,⁷⁴

O'Connor's strategy focused upon disrupting the native and cultivated food resources as well as punishing the Indians directly, so that those not killed in the campaign faced the prospects of starving or of eventually making peace. His successors' correspondence shows that they took account of these considerations.⁷⁵

When Governor Fernando de la Concha scouted the Gila Apache country in 1788, he entered it from the San Agustín Plains and eventually exited by way of the Rio Mimbres. While on the Mimbres he saw two cornfields.⁷⁶ One more reference from the Spanish-Colonial period is at hand, in the form of a remarkable map by Juan de Pagazaurtundua and dating from 1803. On this map he showed the provinces of Sonora and Nueva Vizcaya plus much of New Mexico, with a "Labor de Pachetiju" at the approximate location of the spring now known as Apache Teju, south of Hurley, N.M. The word labor implies an irrigated field and Pachitejú was the name of a Gila Apache chief during the 1770's.⁷⁷ The only other relevant place names on Pagazaurtundua's map were the Aguaje de el Sesca, northeast of the Picacho de los Mimbres, and a Plaza de armas de cuellan west of the Rio Grande about opposite the gap between the Fra Cristóbal and the Caballo Mountains.⁷⁸ The meaning or specific location of either place name is not known.

With the opening of the American period, references to Apache agriculture in southwestern New Mexico virtually ceased. Captain A.R. Johnston mentioned that "we found two small patches where the Apaches had made corn" as General

Kearny's troops camped at Santa Lucía.⁷⁹ The captain also made perhaps the earliest reference to Black Knife (Cuchillo Negro), whom he called one of the three principal Apache chiefs west of the Rio Grande. Four years later John C. Cremony had a near standoff with Cuchillo Negro when Cremony passed through Cooke's Canyon just ahead of the main Boundary Commission.⁸⁰ These two encounters suggest that Cuchillo Negro lived in the Mimbres or the Gila valley at that time rather than in the upper Rio de Las Animas where he farmed in 1855, or in the canyon that later bore his name.

Apache Settlement; An Interpretive History

In drawing conclusions about Apache settlement in southwestern New Mexico, we see a pattern in the sometimes sketchy reportage. By 1630 and for an unknown time before that, Gila Apaches were living west of the Rio Grande. They may already have been farmers. Aside from Benavides' statements, several lines of evidence support this. They were sufficiently sedentary by 1628 for a priest to be assigned to them. The neighboring Western Apaches and the Spanish settlers in Arizona and Sonora had consistently hostile relations from the 1680's on, which means that Western Apache fields and irrigation works were probably not modeled directly on Spanish practices. Western Apache farming might reflect knowledge gained from the Pima Indians, but the earliest known reference to irrigation among the Gila River Pimas was in 1744.⁸¹

A more reasonable interpretation is that the Western Apaches did not learn about farming from the Spanish or from the Pimas but instead were already farmers when they arrived in east-central Arizona from someplace further east, probably during the late 17th or early 18th centuries. If so, then the Gila and Western Apaches at one time had equal knowledge about farming. The Navajo Indians who adjoined the Western Apaches on the north have always been farmers.

As time passed, the Navajos and Western Apaches retained and perhaps enhanced their agricultural skills, while by the American period the Gila Apaches had nearly lost theirs. Aboriginally all of these Indian groups would have had favorite camp- and farmsites, and a substantial reliance upon their own farm products. The Apaches at least also had ditch irrigation. This was the contact-period pattern for the Gila Apaches, whose country included what is now western Sierra County.

The extensive campaigns of the 1770's and 1780's disrupted the Gila Apaches who came to rely less upon agriculture and more upon raiding, trading and rations from the Spanish. For a time in 1790-1792 some of them considered living alongside the New Mexico settlements on the Rio Abajo, a development that coincided with the creation of Apache peace establishments on the northern frontier.⁸² As of 1796, Antonio Cordero estimated that the Gileños had lost three-quarters of their forces in the recent wars and that the Mimbrenos had been reduced by more than half; if his figures were anywhere near accurate then the Apaches may have been ready for peace.⁸³ A reservation near Sabinal, N.M. attracted upwards of 226 Gila Apaches for a few months during 1793, but by the next year the Indians were gone again.⁸⁴ Many other Indians from the same bands lived at the presidios of Janos and El Carrizal until the rationing policy collapsed in 1831.⁸⁵

The Western Apaches remained untouched by these changes while the Navajos, until the time of the Bosque Redondo roundup, never experienced campaigns on the scale of those in southwestern New Mexico. The Gila Apaches bore the brunt of these earlier campaigns. By the time of the Mexican War they had been warring with Mexico since 1831; - 15 years. By this time also their economy was based primarily upon raiding and collecting. Farming had been abandoned almost entirely. They no longer lived in the country between the Black Range and the Rio Grande, where it was necessary to farm or live off of rations just to survive.

In Cordero's terms the original inhabitants of western Sierra County were probably Mimbres Apaches.⁸⁶ It was members of the Mimbres band who moved back there in 1855, drawn by a combination of inducements (rations, assistance with farming), an absence of competition for the land, and generally peaceful conditions. For some of the older Indians perhaps there was a sense of homecoming.

Navajo raiding parties ranged south to the Cañada Alamosa valley or beyond when they sought to drive livestock stolen from the Rio Abajo settlements back to the Navajo country in northwestern New Mexico. During January and February of 1860 the garrison at Fort Craig fought a brief but intense war with a number of these raiders. No one mentioned Apaches, who may well have been farming only a few valleys away. 1860 was the last year of relative peace, since 1861 saw the beginnings of both the Civil War and a general war with the Southern Apaches. Warfare continued intermittently until 1869, with soldiers from several posts chasing unidentified Apaches across the ridges and through the canyons west of the Rio Grande even as the new settlers in that area petitioned the Army for protection.

During the 1860's, any Indians in western Sierra County probably lingered no more than a few days at any one site. Late in the decade things became quieter when relations between the Indians and the townspeople began to change from hostility to reciprocal trade, although the trade involved traffic in liquor. When Lieut. Charles Drew became Indian Agent for the Southern Apaches in late August, 1869, the Mimbres and Mogollon Apaches came in to talk with him within a few days. They wanted a reservation, with its northern boundary at the town of Cañada Alamosa and extending south to include the Cuchillo Negro valley.⁸⁷

Matters rapidly became complicated from that point on. No reservation was established even though Drew did issue rations and move his agency headquarters

to Cañada Alamosa. Through 1871 the Indians around Cañada Alamosa were clearly identified as Mimbres and Mogollon Apaches, with a few Mescaleros. After the removal of these people to the Tularosa Reservation in 1872 the band identifications were dropped and each group was generally referred to by the name of its chief, or simply as Southern Apaches. The sequel to this story lies outside the scope of this report, except to note that a party of Indians under Sancho continued to live on the Cuchillo Negro, with permission, at least until October of 1872.⁸⁸ Prior to reestablishment of the Southern Apache Reservation in 1874, at the Ojos Calientes above Cañada Alamosa, the name 'Warm Springs Apaches' was not in use (Fig. 3).

It is probably not possible to identify all of the 'Warm Springs Apaches' with respect to their earlier band names. The Ojo Caliente Reservation included Mimbres Apaches, but with the creation of multiple Apache reservations at about the same time, the Indians were shifted around for some years. In late 1874 the Chiricahua Reservation in Arizona included 275 Mimbres, Mogollon and Coyotero Apaches, among others.⁸⁹ Schroeder⁹⁰ noted that by the 1930's informants were projecting reservation groupings back into pre-reservation times.

Archeological Implications of Apache Settlement

How to identify archeological remains as the work of Apaches or of someone else may be a substantial problem. We've seen that the Apache Indians not only farmed but did so with the aid of irrigation. Ditches might still be present where sections of valley floors have been left undisturbed by later cultivators. The problem would be in trying to determine whether the builders of these ditches were prehistoric Indians, Apaches, or more recent Hispanic farmers. As a further complication, earlier irrigation works could be put back into service. With Apache remains there would also be the question of their age; of

opening letter of July 5/76 from Comr. G. L. O. to San Gen.]

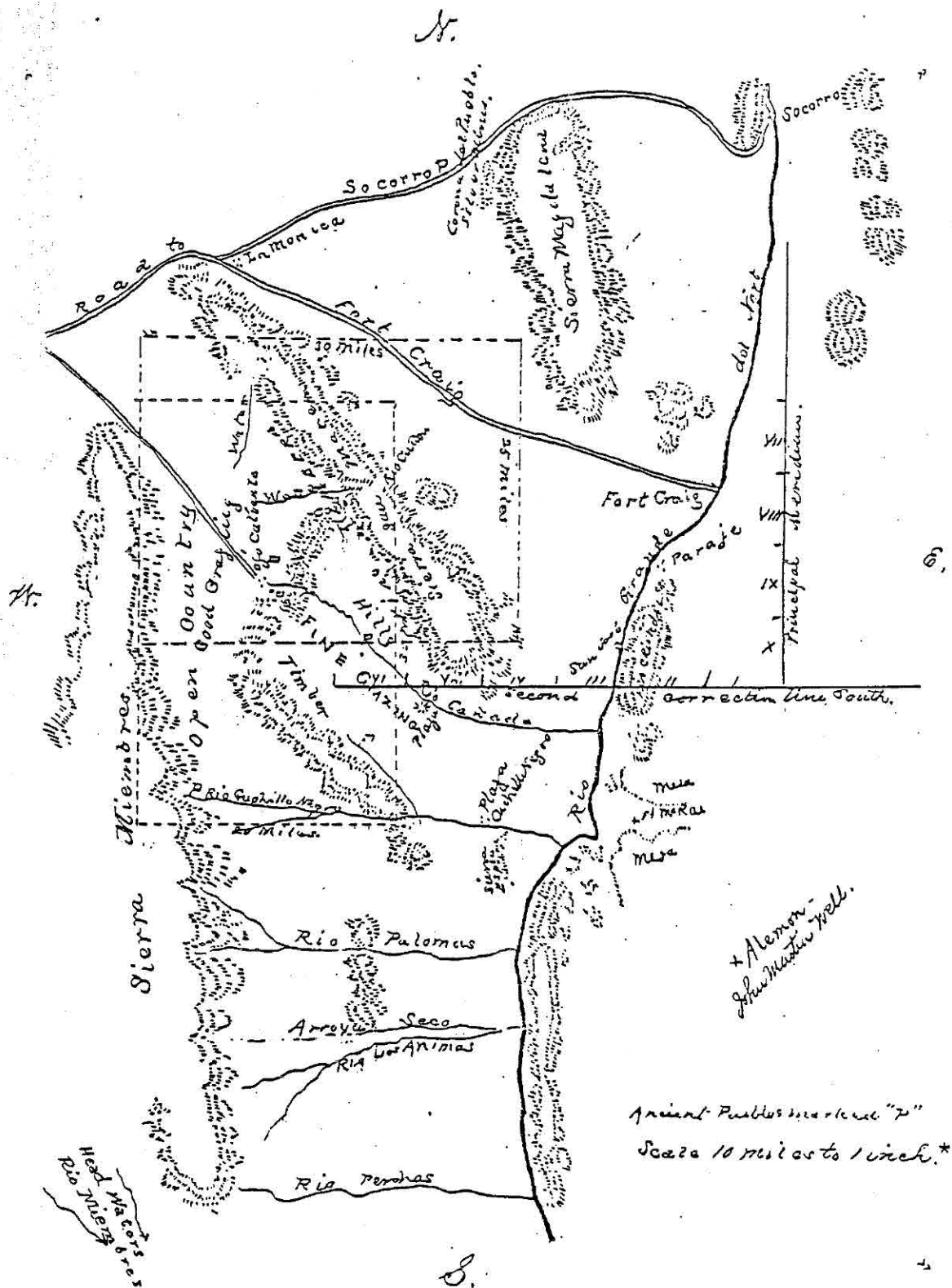


Diagram of Southern Apache Indian Reservation.

Red Lines (-----) show proposed change.

Fig. 3 "Diagram of Southern Apache Indian Reservation", 1875. Tract 25 by 30 miles withdrawn by Executive Order of April 9, 1874. Boundaries redefined, 20 by 30 miles, by Executive Order of December 21, 1875. Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, files in Public Room, Misc. Info. F-M; file envelope marked - Indian Reservation, Southern Apaches.

whether these dated from the Spanish period or to ca. 1855-60 when their agent Michael Steck was encouraging them to farm. The ditch systems in any case would look much alike and perhaps be indistinguishable, so that it may not be possible to say who built them unless they could be associated with other cultural remains. Prior to the mining boom of the late 1870's and 1880's, any settlement in western Sierra County without ditch irrigation probably had a very brief existence.

Wherever a settlement existed there were dwellings. Along the Mimbres, Emory found numberless Apache lodges. These lodges probably looked much like the ones that Capt. Johnston described for the Pinal Apaches:

.... their wigwams scarce peep above the low brushwood of the country, being not more than four feet high, slightly dug out in the centre, and the dirt thrown around the twigs which are rudely woven into an oven shape, as a canopy to the house; a tenement of a few hours' work is the home of a family for years or a day;⁹¹

Agent Michael Steck in his Annual Report for 1856 said much the same, specifically that the Apaches lived

.... in miserable little huts built of willows bent and tied together, & covered with branches of the same and other shrubbery. They are built at every encampment, lived in from two to three days, to as many weeks, and when once abandoned never returned to.⁹²

These would expectably leave little or nothing in the way of archeological traces.

We do have the specific location for one Apache settlement in western Sierra County since it was at a section corner when the exterior boundaries of townships were being surveyed in May of 1857. The surveyor's field notes said only "Apache camp at this corner".⁹³

Finally, there is circumstantial evidence that Apaches may have lived in abandoned pueblos. This would explain such curious statements as the one by

Governor Juan de Oñate in March of 1599; that although he was told the Apaches lived in rancherías,

.... in recent days I have learned that they live in pueblos the same as the people here. They have a pueblo eighteen leagues from here with fifteen plazas.⁹⁴

Benavides, with respect to Captain Sanaba and the Gila Apaches, persuaded them

.... that, as a good beginning to their Christianity, they should erect a cross in the center of the plaza of their pueblo so that I could find and worship it when I came to visit them.⁹⁵

In his Annual Report for 1856, agent Michael Steck included a Southern Apache tradition:

.... They claim that the ruins upon the headwaters of the Gila, the Mimbres and other mountain streams were the habitations of their fathers, and that they were destroyed in obedience to the custom that existed at the time of Montezuma's death & still exists of destroying all that belongs to them when a near relative dies.⁹⁶

An even more explicit statement was made by Captain William McCleave, who led a scout from Fort West, N.M. into eastern Arizona during the early months of 1863. He had a fight with some Apaches and on the way back to Fort West crossed a tributary of the Gila River northwest of the fort:

We found there, a good stream of water, and the third tributary of the Gila, coming from the North. We also saw a quantity of good land, in which the thieves raised excellent crops, if we may judge from the old corn stalks found standing there. They have likewise good adobe houses, built against a ledge of rocks. One of my men termed them one horse forts, the holes in them representing loopholes.⁹⁷

And so recently as this century, with respect to a small (prehistoric) ruin near Cedar Creek on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, anthropologist Leslie Spier commented that

Although it has been rebuilt by Apaches like many others, the original walls are fairly distinct.⁹⁸

THE EARLY COMMUNITIES OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1859+

John Reid⁹⁹ had claimed that the Rio Grande Valley above Doña Ana lay uninhabited. When his 'tramp' led him to Fort Thorn, Reid found that

The citizens, in equal numbers of American and Mexican, reside a few hundred yards from the post, and were generally engaged in vending "specits" and other groceries to, and gambling with, the soldiers.¹⁰⁰

Fort Thorn was at the site of Santa Barbara, about five miles northwest of present-day Hatch, N.M. Governor William Carr Lane had seen a deserted village there early in 1853, but with the establishment of Fort Thorn on December 24th of the same year, a garrison was available to protect settlers. By the spring of 1854 people were back at Santa Barbara and contending with the Army for the use of an acequia dug by the troops¹⁰¹ (Figs. 1, 2).

Fort Thorn ceased to be a U.S. Army post as of January 1859. Civilians continued to live at the site and probably in the old military buildings themselves since the 1860 Census recorded 32 persons at Fort Thorn. In about mid-October a party of Navajo raiders drove off a lot of livestock, whereupon

The settlers at the fort, numbering some 40, apprehending a renewal of hostilities, have abandoned the place and come into the Mesilla valley for security. They brought with them several thousand head of stock. The settlement is consequently entirely broken up.¹⁰²

The Mesilla News for January 8, 1876 reported that a few weeks earlier people from the county had again settled at Santa Barbara. An 1877 newspaper survey of Mesilla Valley communities referred to it as a flourishing town.¹⁰³

Santa Barbara lay in Doña Ana County, a few miles south of what in 1884 became the south line of Sierra County. Just north of the Sierra-Socorro County boundary another early settlement grew up at what had been a camping ground by the Rio Grande.¹⁰⁴ Paraje, at the north end of the ninety-mile trek across the

Jornada del Muerto, has been the subject of a recent historical and archeological study sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation¹⁰⁵ (Fig. 3).

Deputy surveyor John W. Garretson apparently caught the beginning of Paraje in June of 1857, when he ran a line between Sections 31 and 6 in Townships 8 and 9 South, Range 2 West - lands that were later incorporated into the Pedro Armendáris Grant No. 33:

Land. The bottom part good soil part covered with sand. There are patches of corn planted on both sides of the line. About 15 Chs. north of the line are some new Mexican cabins perhaps 5 or 6 families who have settled there this present year.¹⁰⁶

The 1860 Census recorded the village here as Fra Cristóbal, with a population of 196. It was occupied continuously for another 50 years although Paraje's importance lessened after 1881 when the railroad bypassed it. When construction for the Elephant Butte Dam and Reservoir began in 1910, the U.S. Reclamation Service bought up the small holdings and village properties in Paraje and at the other settlements downriver from it. Most of the people had moved away by the time the dam was completed in 1916.¹⁰⁷

By 1857 an established road led down the west side of the Rio Grande; surveyor Garretson called it the Fort Thorn to Fort Craig road and it still bore that name a decade later¹⁰⁸ (Fig. 7). This river road followed the routes of Kearny and Cooke, and apparently it became established through use since there is no record of a road improvements project.¹⁰⁹ John Reid¹¹⁰, writing in 1857, claimed that not only was this road constructed by the military but all government trains and troop movements were required to follow it. Whatever its origins, it was an alternative to the Jornada del Muerto and villages grew up alongside of it.

San Ygnacio de la Alamosa

Hispanic farmers made their first settlement within what is now Sierra County in 1859. They chose a location along the west side of the Rio Grande Valley below the mouth of Alamosa Creek and east of the next point of land north from Three Sisters Point (Fig. 4). The sole reference to its establishment is a remark by the 1860 Census enumerator, Louis Felsenthal, written at the bottom of a Schedule 4 sheet ("Productions in Agriculture") for the Town of Socorro:

In San Ygnacio de Alamosa the production of agriculture could not be found out because that place has not been populated but one year.¹¹¹

Felsenthal wrote this on June 25, 1860. Capt. Jno. Hatch's map dated April 1859 may lend support in that it showed a Ranch and a cultivated area at the mouth of an unnamed arroyo north of the Cañada de Palomas (Fig. 1). If Hatch meant to represent San Ygnacio then he showed the site too far south on his map. The proper location is the east-central part of Section 7, Township 12 South, Range 3 East (Fig. 4).

The full name of the community was used again on a certification concerning the theft of 12 oxen, two mules and four burros by Apaches on June 8 or 9, 1860.¹¹² Most often the town was identified simply as Alamosa. Occasionally it was called by still another name - Cañada Alamosa - as in U.S. Army reports beginning in September 1861.¹¹³ This last name also designated the broad canyon, drained by Alamosa Creek, that extended westward from the Rio Grande Valley just above the townsite.

The 1860 Census listed 321 persons at Alamosa when it was enumerated on July 3-5. There were 169 males and 152 females, who lived as 71 families in a total of 73 dwelling houses. All of the surnames were Hispanic, the most

common ones being Padilla, Apodaca, Chavez, Tafoya, Montoya, Trujillo, Sánchez, Salas and Paredes. Everyone had been born in New Mexico. The family heads ranged in age between 18 and 75 with 68 of the 71 household heads distributed quite evenly between the ages of 20 and 60. The oldest person was José Ramos Chavez, aged 98! As for professions, 43 of the family heads represented themselves as laborers (presumably meaning farm laborers or peónes) and only 17 as farmers. There were very few other occupations; Jesús Abela, a blacksmith; José Torres, carpenter; and José Romero, musician, plus several individuals who did not give an occupation.¹¹⁴

The main personage in Alamosa, the jefe or patrón if you will, was one Stanislado Montoya, merchant and farmer, aged 40. The values of his personal estate (\$10,000) and real estate (\$2,000) far exceeded those of anyone else. In addition to his wife and four minor children, his household included a cook, one laborer, and four servants, two of the latter being Indians. Montoya was from San Antonio, N.M., which suggests the possible source of the Alamosa settlers. Governor William Carr Lane had spent the night of April 22, 1853 at the house of Don Estaneslado Montoya in San Antonio. Don Estanislao (the more usual spelling of his name) recorded the sale of a piece of land in San Antonio, N.M., as of December 18, 1853.¹¹⁵

Although his wealth and status (in view of the honorific "don") indicate that he was a principal figure in Alamosa as of 1860, he didn't stay long since he was living in San Antonio again as of November 12, 1864, the date he purchased the interests of Manuel Trujillo and his wife in the Socorro grant.¹¹⁶ His name was recorded in many other land transactions in both San Antonio and San Pedro through the early 1880's, as both a buyer and a seller, including lots in a part of San Antonio known as Montoya's Addition. His influence was sufficient to cause Indian Agent O.F. Piper to call a council with the chiefs

and principal men of the Southern Apaches regarding some livestock that Montoya had been missing.¹¹⁷

With the date and the key figure in the settlement of Alamosa now established, the motive(s) and mechanism remain to be examined. The motive was presumably the same as it had always been in New Mexico - a desire for land, at a suitable location beyond the existing settlements. The mechanism too was apparently the age-old pattern of an organized group of families under recognized leaders, moving as a unit to establish a new settlement. This happened at Mesilla in 1850; at Tularosa, Puerto de Luna and La Luz in the 1862-65 period; and so recently as 1874 at Colorado (now Rodey), N.M. The population profile in the 1860 Census suggests that Alamosa was founded as a colony of farmers with their families and peones under a single leader - Estanislado Montoya.

Despite Louis Felsenthal's disclaimer that San Ygnacio had been populated but one year, there was a neatly filled-in Schedule 4 for this community, bearing a date of July 4, 1860 and Felsenthal's signature.¹¹⁸ The statistics for productions in agriculture would be most valuable for understanding the local economic system, but unfortunately they are not creditable.

A comparison of Schedules 1 (the population schedule) and 4 for Alamosa showed that only five names were common to both, despite the fact that Schedule 4 listed 39 persons as owner, agent or manager of a farm whereas on Schedule 1 only 17 heads of households had identified themselves as farmers. There were many other discrepancies between the two schedules such as the substantially greater wealth indicated on Schedule 4 and the reported production of 200 gallons of wine by Antonio Chavez during the year ending June 1, 1860 - an impossibility if the village was only one year old, unless the grapes had been grown elsewhere and brought to Alamosa. If the names and figures on the putative San Ygnacio de la Alamosa Schedule 4 were not fabricated, perhaps the

schedule sheet was mistitled and it represents some other town. This experience was a caution about accepting schedules at their face value.

As of 1860 Alamosa was the only Hispanic community in what is now Sierra County. Its existence was brief but eventful, probably more so than the settlers would have wished.

The Southern Apaches remained generally quiet until 1861 but not so the Navajos. In January-February 1860, Alamosa found itself in the midst of a small war between bands of Navajo Indians trying to make off with sheep stolen in the Rio Abajo settlements and Army patrols out of Fort Craig. There were a number of skirmishes, the main one fought in the western part of the Cañon del Muerto (McRae Canyon) several miles below Alamosa (Fig. 9). Capt. George McLane and his Company I, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, literally cut the Navajos off at the pass and killed 15 of them, recovering some 12,000 head of sheep. McLane's report is included here in the Appendix.

Over the next year and a half the Navajos were actively hostile and raided as far south as Fort Thorn. Both the Southern and the Mescalero Apaches, restless at first, finally took to the warpath in 1861. Indians killed three herders and ran off 780 head of sheep 15 miles below Fort Craig; 2d Lieut. C.H. McNally left the post April 15th in pursuit but returned empty-handed the next day.¹¹⁹ Alamosa citizens undoubtedly suffered from raids on their own livestock. They petitioned for military protection and perhaps took part in punitive expeditions, though we know few specifics.¹²⁰

✓ Late in July of 1861 the Civil War came to New Mexico. Col. John R. Baylor's Texas Confederates captured the Mesilla Valley and the Union forces there after a single skirmish. Alamosa, 35 miles south of Fort Craig, was in a no man's land. Two of Baylor's companies soon pushed northward and in the early morning hours of September 25, 1861, they surprised and scattered Capt. John Mink's

company of New Mexico Mounted Volunteers at Alamosa. The Captain himself and 23 others were captured.¹²¹ Union reports consistently referred to the town where this happened as Cañada Alamosa while Confederate sources called it Alamosa. Official reports were quite detailed about this skirmish, which the Federal side played down (no one killed or wounded) and the Southern newspapers trumpeted as the Battle of Alamosa, or La Mosa. For a few days Alamosa became a household word, at least in the Southern states. Newspaper coverage of the affair tended to be more colorful than the official reports if less accurate; examples of contemporary newspaper accounts are included in the Appendix.

Alamosa's role in the Civil War continued. During December of 1861 various companies from Fort Craig found themselves on picket duty at Cañada Alamosa.¹²² Lt. Col. Benjamin Roberts, the commander at Fort Craig, withdrew his pickets on January 3, 1862, but then received an express from the alcalde at Cañada Alamosa before daylight on January 20th, advising him that two companies of Texans had come into the town and remained about an hour before falling back to their camp.¹²³ This was only a scouting party. Very soon afterwards the Confederate Army of New Mexico did begin its advance up the Rio Grande. On February 21st it clashed with the Federal troops from Fort Craig at the Battle of Valverde. ✓

Alamosa figured again in the Civil War, when a group of wounded and paroled Confederates passed there in early June 1862 under escort back to their own army. Seven of the parolees dropped out from the column and hid in a vacant house as the group passed through Alamosa, then came out and constructed a raft. A friendly crowd waved them off as the raft swirled away down the swollen Rio Grande towards their friends and messmates, by then back in the Mesilla Valley.¹²⁴ Although this story has met with skepticism, at least three of the voyagers - S.W. Merchant, John M. Rapp and James DeSpain - were indeed wounded,

paroled late in May 1862, and returned to the Mesilla Valley.¹²⁵ One diarist with the Army of New Mexico confirmed that some of his comrades did float back to the Mesilla Valley on rafts.¹²⁶

After the Confederates left, things at Alamosa only got worse. In May of 1863 six Justices of the Peace from Socorro County, including Francisco Baca of Alamosa, petitioned General Carleton at Santa Fe for assistance. Families were destitute because the Rio Grande had destroyed their fields and acequias in 1862. There were also incessant Indian depredations.¹²⁷ Hope for relief was already at hand; in that Fort McRae had been established at the Cañon del Muerto late in March of 1863 (Fig. 9). This was just seven miles from Alamosa.

For the remainder of that year the garrison was almost continually skirmishing with Indians along the Rio Grande and the Jornada del Muerto.¹²⁸ Yet west of the river an Army wagon road reconnaissance met no Indians during April and May 1863 when it scouted between the mouth of the Rio Puerco and Fort West on the upper Gila River.¹²⁹

Hostilities continued with little or no letup into 1869, with the Mescalero Apaches committing most of the raids along the Rio Grande and to the east of it.¹³⁰ Southern Apache activities at this time are less clear. The Army pursued and skirmished with many adversaries identified only as Indians or Apaches, along the ridges and canyons west of the Rio Grande.¹³¹

Alamosa received many incidental mentions in Army reports but no one thought to describe the town, nor do we have any maps or plats of it. The 1860 Census told us that it was a good-sized village, what with 73 houses and 321 inhabitants. The location of Alamosa almost certainly corresponds with the remains of a settlement found at LA5151, just below the mouth of Alamosa Creek. Today that site is under approximately 100 feet of water.



Fig. 4 Alamocita and site of San Ygnacio de la Alamosa, 1908. From map "Vicinity of Alamocita", sheet #8 of 10, U.S. Reclamation Service, Rio Grande Project, Engle Reservoir. New Mexico State University Library, Rio Grande Historical Collections.

Alamosa ceased to exist sometime before the 1870 Census was taken. The latest recorded marriage was on October 6, 1866, when Amado Chavez of Alamosa wedded Jacinta Chavez.¹³² One year later Alamosa stood abandoned. In early October of 1867 W.A. Bell, travelling down the Rio Grande Valley in a railroad survey party, wrote that

.... we passed through the ruins of a large village, formerly known as the Alamosa, about half way between Craig and Thorn. The inhabitants, having abandoned their homes and the rich lands around them, had built another village on the opposite bank, under the protection of a small post, Fort M'Rae, garrisoned by a few United States Troops. New Alamosa, as it is called, is the only village we saw on the opposite bank for seventy miles; and on our side, Polomas, a place of some twenty houses, alone remained inhabited.¹³³

Alamosa's existence spanned seven or eight years, from 1859 to 1866 or 1867. Bell's report that the people who abandoned the village moved to the east side of the Rio Grande and built a new town, more commonly called Alamo-cita, can be augmented considerably (Fig. 4).

A Transition in Time and Place: Alamosa to Cañada Alamosa

In late July of 1865 Capt. Wm. French wrote from Fort McRae, saying that the corn in the neighborhood was fine and promised a good yield while not more than half a crop of wheat would be harvested.

The above applies most particularly to the Cañada, the crops at the town of Alamosa, having been nearly all destroyed.¹³⁴

The Captain's report implied that people lived at Alamosa but planted their crops at two locations - near their village, and also in the valley of Alamosa Creek near present-day Monticello, N.M. Almost two years earlier an Army wagon road reconnaissance party had described this situation in more detail as the party scouted the eastern front of the San Mateo Mountains and the Black Range:¹³⁵

September 28th (1863). We left the Texan trail at the Peñesco, and marched south over a smooth rolling country for 11 miles to the Cañada Alamosa. This is a wide cañada extensively cultivated by the inhabitants of the town of the same name, situated at its mouth. The stream has been diverted from its natural bed into an acequia 2½ feet wide and 6 inches deep. The water flows at the rate of about 2½ miles an hour. The grazing is good - the wood scarce. Nine miles further up the stream and in the pass leading to the Cienega de valerde are the Ojos Calientes. The descent into the cañada is difficult.

September 29th. The Indian trail which we entered led W. of S. for 18 miles over a rolling country intercepted by deep cañadas with steep gravelly sides. At 10 miles distance from camp crossed a large valley which the guides called the Cañada de la Cuchilla Negra. We finally entered a valley the guides called the Rio de los Palomas, but I believe it is Cuchilla Negra and that the Palomas is the next stream to the south. The bed of the stream was dry, and the valley thickly wooded. One and a half miles below we found a fine spring. It had now become evident that a wagon road could not be built on this route, without great expense and that it was inferior in many respects to that by the Nutrioso. I shall therefore not attempt to describe more than the general features of the country between here and Fort West.

September 30th. Travelled S.W. for 14 miles over a country similar to but rougher than that of yesterday, and descended a long steep hill into the Rio de las Animas as the guides called it. I believe to be the Palomas. It is a fine stream of running water. Grass and wood abundant. Here as at our former camp, we prospected for gold without success.

October 1. Travelled over a broken country S. 30 W. for 12 miles to the Cienega del Apache. 10 miles from the Animas passed the Hot Springs. At 12 the Rio Perchas. The valley of the Cienega is quite extensive and would no doubt make a fine farm if water enough could be had. This requisite is wanting. The soil as shown by the arroyos is in some places more than 25 feet deep. The springs are small but furnish enough water for the command.

October 2d. Course was S. 20 W. 7 miles to the Cienega Garaloso over hilly country, then S. 80 W. 6 miles to the Ojo del Beredo a small cienega in an open valley. Three miles from camp passed the Cienega de los Hombres and seven miles crossed the road from Fort Thorn.

October 3rd. Our course was W. over a rough hilly country and then down a ravine to the Ojo Gavilan 14 miles from the Berendo. This spring is in a pretty grove of Cottonwoods. The grazing is fine.

These two Army reports confirmed that Alamosa citizens had fields near their townsite and cultivated farmlands some 20 miles up the Alamosa Creek

Valley as well. When Alamosa was abandoned, part of the people no doubt did as Bell said and moved to the east side of the Rio Grande, where they established Alamocita. Those who had fields on Alamosa Creek simply moved up to these and founded a new town, called Cañada Alamosa (Fig. 3). This name continued in use until 1881 and was then changed to Monticello. Alamosa Creek Valley was also called the Cañada Alamosa in this early period.

Two points need to be substantiated: can an actual movement of people from Alamosa to some new place or places be shown, and did the breakup of the old village coincide with the appearance of Monticello née Cañada Alamosa? With respect to the first question, San Ygnacio de la Alamosa was the sole community within what is now Sierra County in the 1860 Census. There was no Cañada Alamosa then. The 1870 Census schedules listed Alamocita, Rio Palomas and Cañada Alamosa as the only settlements in the general area. In order to trace whether families in any of the latter towns came from Alamosa, the names of household heads were listed from the Alamosa schedule and then compared with names of family heads from the 1870 schedules.

Of the 74 names from the 1860 schedule, 22 or almost 30 percent could be accounted for in the 1870 listings. These identifications were made by virtue of the names and also the ages of individuals. There was some uncertainty because many persons who should have aged ^{or} by ten years between 1860 and 1870 reported themselves as anywhere from seven to 15 years older.¹³⁶ Assuming that the 22 individuals were the same persons in both censuses, then some 30 percent of the families enumerated at Alamosa were at Alamocita, Cañada Alamosa, and Rio Palomas ten years later. Apart from Estanislado Montoya, who returned to San Antonio, N.M., the other 70 percent of family heads either moved elsewhere or died before 1870.

With respect to the second point, Cañada Alamosa is outside of the present project area and only its beginnings are relevant here. Anderson¹³⁷ said that lands in the Cañada Alamosa were extensively cultivated by people who lived in a town of the same name at the mouth of that valley. Alamosa was still the only town in the area as of September 1863, even though U.S. Army reports had begun to call it Cañada Alamosa in 1861.¹³⁸ Confederate records used the more customary name for the town, i.e., Alamosa.¹³⁹

To sort through the confusion brought about by the erratic use of the single name Cañada Alamosa for two different communities and for a valley as well, we need to establish when a settlement was made at the second townsite, the one later renamed Monticello. This will tell us how early in time we may expect to find references to a Cañada Alamosa at that location.

At the end of September in 1865, Lieut. L.F. Samburn led a five-day scout out of Fort Craig to search for Indians who had been depredating at the "Town of Cañada Alamosa." This Cañada Alamosa was in a valley (the Cañada Alamosa) a day's ride west of the Rio Grande¹⁴⁰ (Fig. 3). Clearly this settlement predated the abandonment of the older village at Alamosa.

In 1886 the Socorro Bullion carried a long article on the Indian-fighting experiences of R.C. Patterson ("Tejano Barbon"), who from 1872 had been a miner, rancher and farmer in Socorro County.

Mr. Patterson had, however, become a citizen of this county long before this. As early as 1866 he and a few other adventurous American and native families, including Captain Joe Emerson of this city, founded the town of Cañada Alamosa, the first settlement west of the Rio Grande. The colonists were exposed to daily attacks from the Apaches and Navajos, and it was only by the most indomitable energy and bravery that the settlement was perpetuated.¹⁴¹

The circumstances may have been much as described. As we have seen, the town was there before 1866. An earlier newspaper article described a trip by that

paper's editor/publisher, N.V. Bennett, to find and interview "the Noted Apache Chief Cachise." Bennett actually accomplished this. He met with the Southern Apache agent at Fort McRae during the last week of October, 1871:

.... From there they journeyed from the fort, through the town of Alamocita, across the river, up the Cañada Alamosa or Cottonwood Cañon 30 miles to the agency.

Cañada is a Mexican town of about two hundred inhabitants situated near the foot of the mountains, and settled about seven years since. Until the last two years the Mexicans told us they were always compelled to labor in their fields with their guns strapped to their shoulders. Now as we sat in the office of the agent, and in fact until midnight, the night was noisy with the play of the Mexican children in the plaza.¹⁴²

Bennett's date of about 1864 is confirmed by a land location for 264 yards of land claimed by Isidro Barreros at Cañada Alamosa, dated in the month of February, 1864, and registered by justice J.D. Emerson on March 19, 1867.¹⁴³

Barreros, in the 1870 census, lived at Cañada Alamosa. His claim is the earliest one on record for that area. The beginning of the Cañada Alamosa settlement is therefore dated to 1864.

For a period of three years, 1864 through 1866, two communities in southern Socorro County were called Cañada Alamosa. One of these, better known as Alamosa and the older of the two, was abandoned in 1866 or 1867 while the newer town had its name changed to Monticello in 1881. A marriage between Porfirio Gonzales of Cañada Alamosa and Felicita Chavez of Alamosa took place on July 13, 1866, at a time when both towns were occupied.¹⁴⁴ These two were the earliest civilian settlements in that area and it is from them in part that the later communities have sprung.

In documents from the 1864-66 period, careful reading is required to decide which of the two sites was meant when the name Cañada Alamosa was used, if indeed the reference was not simply to the valley. A petition for a military guard or for arms and ammunition so that the citizens could protect themselves

from Indian raids was dated at Alamosa on October 12, 1866 (see Appendix). Actually the settlers at Cañada Alamosa wrote this. J.D. Emerson, cited earlier as one of the founders of Cañada Alamosa, was one of the signers, while a comparison of names on the petition showed that 21 of 37 signatories were living at Cañada Alamosa when the 1870 Census was taken. None of the remaining 16 lived at Alamocita in 1870. The establishment of a settlement at the second Cañada Alamosa location may have come about gradually over several years, between 1864 and 1866.

With Alamosa (1859 to 1866/67) and Cañada Alamosa (1864+) as the first two communities, other farming settlements in modern-day Sierra County evidently began as offshoots or daughter villages of these two. Much less is known about the later villages although Las Palomas persisted into the 1930's and Cuchillo is a small community yet today. All of the later towns were founded within a few years of one another. What is known about them is given below.

Alamocita

Alamocita lay on the east side of the Rio Grande in Section 9, Township 12 South, Range 3 West, opposite from its parent village of San Ygnacio de la Alamosa (Fig. 4). The beginnings of Alamocita about 1866 or 1867 have already been described. As a place name "Alamocita" endured into the early 20th century. As a village it had a life of little more than ten years. There is no known description of the town itself.

Alamocita was enumerated only in the Ninth Census of the United States, on September 5-6, 1870. The population schedule listed 196 persons, who were living as 43 families in a total of 47 dwelling houses. The population was nearly all Hispanic and born in New Mexico. Most heads of households listed their employment as farmers or laborers; there were also two merchants, a

justice of the peace, a constable and a school teacher. One of the merchants, Rafael Tafolla, had lived at Alamosa back in 1860.¹⁴⁵

Eighteen individuals at Alamocita owned or managed a farm and all but one also had at least two head of livestock. Antonio García had by far the most land under cultivation (20 acres) and the largest holdings of livestock (4000 sheep, 100 head of cattle). Other farmers worked six to 12 acres and in most cases had sheep and cattle as well. The only crops grown were wheat and corn.¹⁴⁶ The impression from the census schedules is of a small but prospering community.

Isidro Torres, age 27 and a citizen of Alamocita, offers a possible glimpse into the workings of the local economy. On November 17, 1872 he submitted his vouchers for 21,000 pounds of corn, amounting to \$525.00, to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Santa Fe for payment. Four weeks later he wrote again, asking for his check, noting also that the corn had been delivered to the Indian agency at Cañada Alamosa, N.M.¹⁴⁷ The 1870 Census had listed Isidro Torres as a 'general merchant' at Alamocita. With reference to the 1870 agricultural productions for this town, 21,000 pounds would have amounted to 20 percent of the corn crop. Torres' contract absorbed a good chunk of the harvest and was a cash sale to boot!

The only non-Hispanic living in Alamocita was John W. Ellis, then a clerk in the Quartermaster's Department, but formerly a 2d Lieutenant in the 1st Infantry, New Mexico Volunteers, and stationed at Fort McRae in 1864-65.¹⁴⁸ He was also the Mr. Ellis who served as an interpreter for the Army during the late 1860's and was wounded in a skirmish with Indians along Las Animas Canyon. He later wrote an autobiographical sketch that includes some questionable claims.¹⁴⁹

The 1870 Census caught two other individuals in Precinct #10 (Alamocita) who later became locally prominent. John Sullivan was a 24-year old soldier stationed at Fort McRae while 46-year old Bentura Trujillo had modest holdings

of both cultivated land and livestock in Alamocita. After Sullivan's discharge from the Army, he became a freighter, rancher, farmer and eventually a merchant at Alamocita, but by 1880 he was at Cañada Alamosa. That village was renamed Monticello for Sullivan's old hometown in New York.¹⁵⁰ Bentura Trujillo lived at Alamosa in 1860 where he reported himself as a 30-year old laborer. By 1880 he was the largest sheep owner (4000 head) in the Cuchillo precinct. His farm home on Cuchillo Creek became the nucleus of a tiny community called Chiz.¹⁵¹

Katherine Stoes¹⁵² found that Alamocita had been deserted since 1880, the reason being a change in the river course that left the irrigable lands formerly east of the Rio Grande either destroyed or on the west side (Fig. 4). The people left for neighboring villages. This may indeed be what happened since neither the 1880 U.S. Census nor the 1885 Territorial census mentioned Alamocita. When deputy surveyors Easley and Easley subdivided fractional Township 12 South Range 3 West in January of 1884, they noted that the only improvements were two ranches although the Rio Grande Valley was all tillable land.¹⁵³ The two ranchers, José Perfecto Gonzales and Pedro Montoya, may have been the last holdouts: the 1870 Alamocita population schedule listed a Pedro Montoya (45) and two persons with the name of José Gonzales (aged 34 and 48).

By 1910 there was once again an Alamocita. Attorney P.W. Dent went through the valley that fall securing purchase contracts for the small holdings of local ranchers as construction began on the Elephant Butte Dam and Reservoir. At Alamocita, San Albino and San José,

In each instance the villages are the centers of farming communities, the people living in a sort of a community system, a relic of other days when mutual protection was necessary.¹⁵⁴

Dent acquired several small parcels in the vicinity of Alamocita. The census population schedule that year had listed four families with 24 persons there. All four of the family heads were farmers and three shared the surname Gonzales.

The U.S. Reclamation Service topographic map "Vicinity of Alamosa" showed the tiny community in 1908 as several houses amongst some old fields (Fig. 4). The inhabitants may have stayed on until the rising waters of the reservoir finally reached their homes.

San José and San Albino

These two villages lay nearly opposite one another; San José on the west side of the Rio Grande at the mouth of San José Arroyo, in the west-center of Section 16, T10S R3W, and San Albino just east of the river near the projected west side of Section 10, T10S R3W (Fig. 5). San Albino actually lay within a private land grant, the Pedro Armendáris Grant No. 33, confirmed by Congress in 1860. Small parcels had been granted to local residents by court decree however and the Elephant Butte attorney acquired 28 of these at San Albino.¹⁵⁶

Two documents filed in the Socorro County courthouse tell most of what we know about the beginnings of these two towns. The documents were effectively group pre-emption claims; notices of squatters' rights intended to protect the settlers' interests until the lands could be surveyed and claims entered under the Federal land laws.¹⁵⁷ With respect to San Albino, the claimants said that they had taken possession of a tract of land suitable for farming and pasturage as well as residences,

.... and we have had possession of the same since the year 1869, having affirmed this [by the construction of] an acequia in the year 1873 and 1874 which tract is situated in the County of Socorro, N.M. east of the Rio Grande and in front of San José, and [is] known by the name of San Albino.¹⁵⁸

A similar declaration with respect to San José sought to preempt 160 acres

.... in a place formerly known as Los Esteros and Padercillos, and now [known] as the plaza of San José, in the precinct of Paraje, County of Socorro,....¹⁵⁹

San José was clearly in existence by late 1869. Venceslao Apodaca and Ponciana Miranda celebrated their marriage at San José on November 19, 1869, while Indian Agent Charles Drew's report of January 5, 1870 referred to several horses and cattle stolen from San José, allegedly by Mimbres Apaches.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps San José and San Albino were founded at the same time.

When deputy surveyors Lampton and Biggs subdivided Township 10 South Range 3 West in December of 1883 they used a church steeple in San José as a reference. The Rio Grande Valley was very fertile and in many places under cultivation, elsewhere generally covered with willow and cottonwood brush.

In the central portion of Sec. 16 is situated the town of San José, a Mexican town of some 50 or 60 houses and having a population of about one to two hundred inhabitants.¹⁶¹

The corresponding township plat showed that the houses in San José may have been arranged around a plaza. By 1908 San José was a loose clustering of buildings while in San Albino the houses lined either side of a road (Fig. 5).

Both towns should have been listed in the 1870 Census but their statistics were included in the schedules for Paraje precinct, contributing to an overall total of 526 people. In 1880 the population schedule for Inhabitants of the Town of San José listed 90 persons and 24 dwellings while for Settlements East of the River from San José (presumably meaning San Albino) the enumerator found 72 people living in 20 houses. At San José, 14 of the 24 family heads were farmers and another nine were laborers. Across the river, the 20 families included 14 headed by farmers, two by laborers and one by a carpenter. All of the residents were Hispanic except for a single, Irish-born soldier staying with one of the San José families.¹⁶²

By 1880 gold and silver mining was getting underway in the Black Range but people from the river towns still depended upon agriculture. A schedule of productions in agriculture for San José and (Cañada) Alamosa showed a range

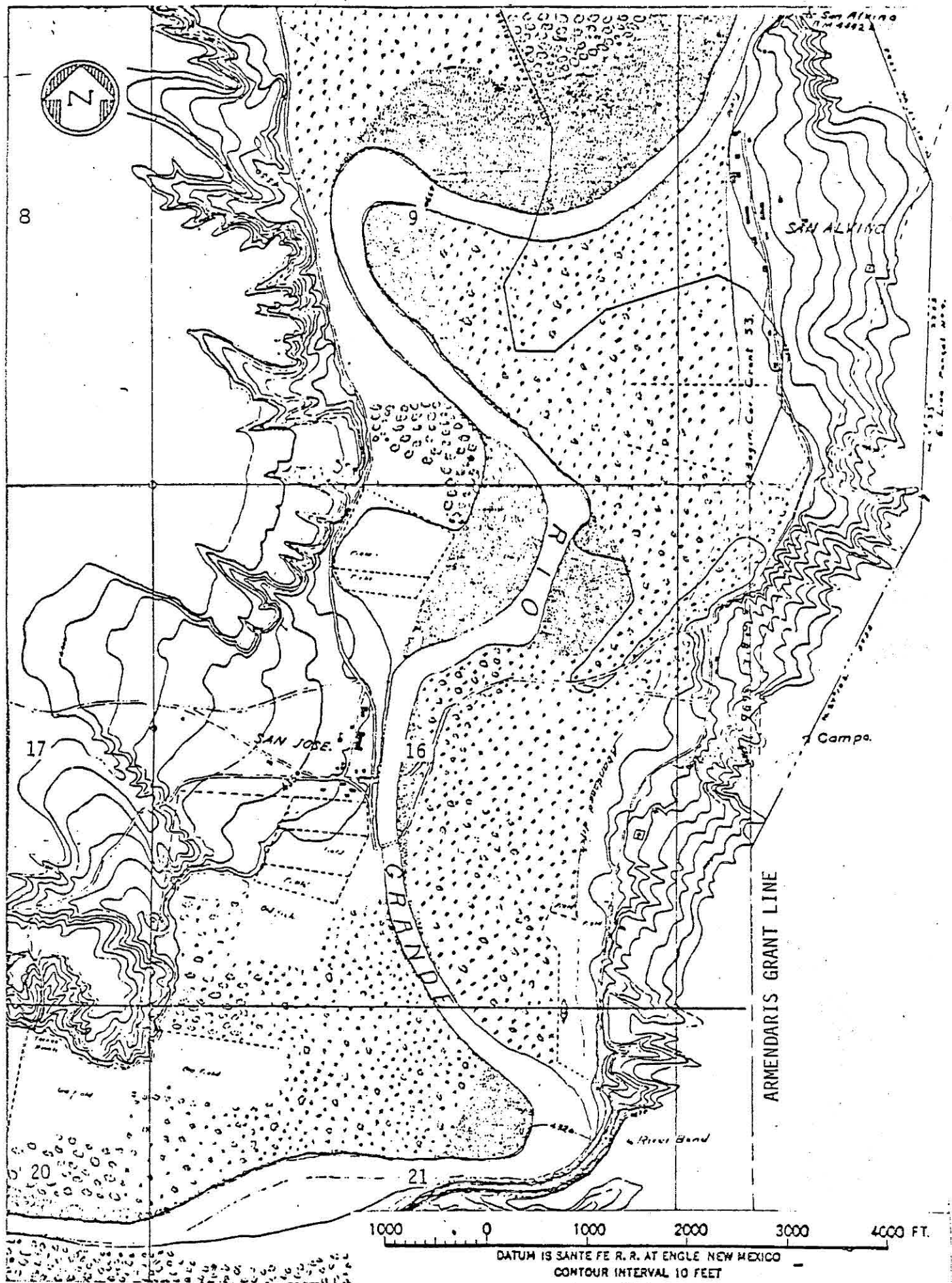


Fig. 5 San José and San Albino, 1908. From map "Vicinity South of San Albino", sheet #6 of 10, U.S. Reclamation Service, Rio Grande Project, Engle Res-

in size for individual farms of four to 17 acres with the average at ten. Crops were corn and wheat, with half of the farmers growing both. Three farms also included one to two acres of barley. Livestock holdings were insignificant, being limited to a few milk cows, oxen and horses.¹⁶³

The 1885 Territorial census listed Precinct #8 as San José. Presumably this included San Albino. The population had grown to 181 persons who now lived as 52 families in 43 houses. The range of occupations remained unchanged; 25 family heads called themselves farmers and 16 were reported as laborers. With the exception of four Anglo men, all of whom lived in a single house, the population was Hispanic and native New Mexican.¹⁶⁴

The schedule of productions in agriculture that year showed a completely different situation compared with 1880. Production of corn, wheat and other grains at San José was zero! Although the 1885 schedule listed ten farmers (none of whom were the same as in the 1880 Census) with an average of 7.4 acres tilled, two of the 'farmers' were ranchers with herds of 140 and 600 sheep. The others had only a dozen or so head of milk cows, oxen, mules and horses apiece. These curious statistics suggest that the family heads may have considered themselves to be farmers but they actually engaged in wage work to earn a living.¹⁶⁵ The mines in Sierra County offered opportunities in 1885 that had not been available five years earlier. San José and San Albino lay in relatively narrow parts of the Rio Grande Valley, which made them subject to the same river channel shifts and destruction of farm lands as had happened at Alamocita.

In 1900 the census enumerator found 161 persons in 33 families, living in 32 houses in Precinct #8. Twenty-three of the family heads called themselves farm and day laborers. No one actually farmed for a livelihood although there were six sheep and cow herders and two stock-raisers.¹⁶⁶

Stoes¹⁶⁷ said that a school was maintained at San Albino in 1908 but that by 1914 only a single elderly couple remained there. The U.S. Reclamation Service map "Vicinity South of San Alvino" showed a dozen or so buildings at each town, the ditches and fields apparently abandoned (Fig. 5). In May of 1910, six months before the attorney from the U.S. Reclamation Service came around to buy the land, the last census recorded a total of 87 people still living in Precinct #8.¹⁶⁸ Of the 17 households only 13 were actually families, the family heads listing themselves as farmers, laborers and herders. As before, all had Hispanic surnames. Mr. Dent purchased several small parcels in the vicinity of San José for the reservoir. With the completion of Elephant Butte Dam in 1916, San José and San Albino soon saw their last inhabitants depart.

Zapata or San Ignacio

Zapata, a tiny hamlet along the Rio Grande about 3½ miles below the mouth of the Canada Alamosa, met a watery death in 1916.¹⁶⁹ It lay on the west side of the Rio Grande, northwest from Kettle Top Butte; in terms of land subdivisions Zapata fell within the southwest quarter of Section 20, T12S R3W, inside the confines of the Pedro Armendáris Grant No. 33. The U.S. Reclamation Service map "Vicinity Fort McRae and North" showed the remaining buildings as ruins in 1908.

Zapata (or Zapato) evidently began with a land location recorded by Antonio José García on January 4, 1869. He claimed for cultivation "and for the contentment of my family" an unoccupied tract of land 2000 yards long by 600 (yards) in breadth, west from the pass of Alamocita, bounded on the south and west by the ancón del sapato.¹⁷⁰ This pass of Alamocita was evidently the old name for the passage through the Fra Cristóbal Mts. via Reynolds and Flying

Eagle canyons.

E.W. Eaton's enumeration of the inhabitants of Zapata or San Ignacio on June 29, 1880, was the only census record of that town. Later census-takers simply included its population in the schedules for the appropriate precinct. Eaton used the dual name without explanation; the original San Ygnacio de la Alamosa had been about 3½ miles north of Zapata.

The 1880 population schedule listed 58 persons who lived as 15 families in 14 houses. All were native New Mexicans, the heads of families giving their occupations as farmers (11), laborers (2), farm hand, and carpenter.¹⁷¹ On the agricultural schedule, the average acreage in cultivation was 12. Everyone grew wheat and corn, eight farmers planted barley and three produced beans. Andrés Gonzales was clearly the wealthiest man in the community, due mainly to his 3000 sheep.¹⁷² The people at Zapata were as well-off as persons in the other river towns and had a slightly more diversified range of crops. By its location this little village would have been subject to the loss of its acequias and farmlands from shifts in the river channel. Whether this happened here we do not know, but by 1908 Zapata was already an abandoned town.

Cuchillo

Cuchillo is a shortened form of the original name for this town, which the census returns through 1900 identified as Cuchillo Negro. In a 1902 promotional booklet and the 1910 Census it was called simply Cuchillo. The village stands today where it has always been, along the north side of the Cuchillo Negro Creek Valley in about the center of Section 28, T12S R5W. The name was that of a Mimbres Apache chief killed in 1857, but no documentation that would link him or his band to this particular valley has yet been found.

The beginning date and circumstances for the settlement at Cuchillo Negro are less certain than for the other communities. As with the Cañada Alamosa, cultivation in the Cuchillo Negro Valley predated a permanent settlement there. In the fall of 1869, when the Hot Springs Reservation was first being proposed for the Southern Apaches, Agent Charles Drew wrote that

I was out on the proposed reservation ten days, making about twenty-five miles per day. I find that the mountains are covered with a fine growth of timber - pine, oak, and cedar. There seems to be plenty of water, and, with the exception of the small Mexican town of Polonas, there are no settlements on the place. At this town, for a distance of six miles, the people have planted corn, and have fine crops. Some corn planted on the Rio Cuchilla Negro, but the people live in Alamosita and have no claim on the land, and I cannot find that any of this land has been surveyed except Polonas.¹⁷³

The 1870 Census did not list a Cuchillo Negro.

When General O.O. Howard left Cañada Alamosa on September 19, 1872 on his odyssey to find the Chiricahua chief Cochise and convince him to accept reservation life, Howard's party followed the track of an unshod horse to a point on the upper Cuchillo Negro. There,

.... we reached an abrupt descent. It led to a deep cross-canyon. At the bottom flowed the Rio Cochinito Negro. We could descry that river's tortuous course for miles toward the Rio Grande. The valley afforded many rich fields for cultivation. At intervals waving corn glistened in the sunlight and gave picturesqueness to the view.¹⁷⁴

In the valley was an Apache camp, Ponce's people, who had not gone to the new reservation at Tularosa. Ponce agreed to lead Howard to Cochise after the General took the whole band to the nearest Mexican hamlet (unnamed) where there was a general merchandise store. There, in Howard's own words, he furnished this gypsy-band with supplies for thirty days.¹⁷⁵ Nothing was said about who owned those fields of waving corn. Since Howard datelined at least three communications from Cuchillo, N.M. all on that same day, the hamlet with the

store was probably Cuchillo Negro.¹⁷⁶ At the beginning of that year newspaper publisher N.V. Bennett had written while at Aleman, on the Jornada del Muerto, to say that the settlers were all coming in from the Cuchillo Negro because they feared an Indian outbreak.¹⁷⁷

The consensus of all this is that actual settlement on the Cuchillo Negro probably took place in 1871, preceded by an unknown length of time during which farmers cultivated the valley and lived somewhere else. The timing for a new community at ca. 1871-72 suggests that the people may have expected their farm products to find a ready market at nearby Cañada Alamosa, where the Southern Apaches were being rationed and where the citizens expected a reservation would soon be established. An 1875 map showed a Plaza Cuchillo Negro (Fig. 3).

At the time of its first census in June of 1880, Cuchillo Negro had 233 people living in 51 houses. All but three of the residents were native-born New Mexicans. Eighteen of the 55 family heads were farmers, another 31 were laborers (presumably farm laborers), and the list included one tailor, two carriers (freighters?) and a miner. The very small range in professions suggests that the community was dependent upon agriculture.¹⁷⁸ By 1885 the population showed a moderate increase to 296 and the number of families to 79, with only six new houses. The range in occupations had changed little although 43 families were now headed by farmers and 20 by laborers. Another nine family heads were widows, an unusually high proportion and perhaps a reflection of high civilian casualties in the Apache wars just ending.¹⁷⁹

Chief Victorio's Apaches ravaged the Cuchillo Negro and adjacent valleys through the fall and winter of 1879-80, with several major battles when the Army and its Apache scouts managed to catch the raiders. In a running fight within the upper Cuchillo Negro canyons on September 29-30, 1879, Col. Morrow's 9th Cavalry and attached Indian Scouts had the worst of it. For a

brief time early in April 1880, Col. Edward Hatch assigned his battalions for the next stage in the Victorio campaign from a temporary headquarters at Cuchillo Negro.¹⁸⁰

A year and a half later, Nana's raid terrorized southern New Mexico. Lieut. Gustavus Valois' troop of the 9th Cavalry was struck by Nana's band near Cuchillo Negro and in a severe fight two troopers were killed. Three of the survivors received Medals of Honor. The same day Nana ran into another detachment of the 9th Cavalry, which captured some Indian horses while losing several of its own.¹⁸¹ After a series of raids through the Black Range in 1885, the Indian wars in this part of New Mexico came to an end.

In 1885 Cuchillo Negro remained Hispanic except for six names, one of which belonged to Ed Fest. Fest, then a 36-year old bachelor, was the town's only merchant and also operated a ferry across the Rio Grande on the road to Engle, N.M. As of 1888, Fest owned the stage line as well. Cuchillo Negro lay directly on the stage and wagon routes between the railroad siding at Engle and the mining towns of the Black Range. Silver mining was then at its height but this seems not to have affected Cuchillo Negro directly.¹⁸²

Farming, stock raising and probably wage work were the major livelihoods in 1880 and 1885. Cuchillo Negro's agricultural statistics for 1880 were partly combined with those of two other towns. Most farmers had between six and 18 acres under cultivation, from which they produced corn, wheat, barley and a few bushels of beans. The tilled acreage in 1885 totaled 189, of which some 65 acres were evidently in pasturage and 50 acres each in corn and barley. Wheat and potatoes made up the balance. Ranching was important to four heads of households in both 1880 and 1885, Bentura Trujillo being the only rancher common to both schedules. The ranchers all listed 3000 to 4000 head of sheep on hand in 1880 but only 1000 to 2000 head in 1885. Bentura Trujillo's sheep holdings had

dropped from 4000 to 1000 head in five years but his agricultural productions rose from five acres of wheat in 1880 to ten acres of corn plus seven acres of potatoes in 1885.

Cattle ranching had a late start in Sierra County. In 1885 there were only two ranchers at Cuchillo Negro with significant holdings; José Tafoya with 300 head and Snyder Bros. & Searce with 1000 cows, 800 of which had been purchased in 1884. Tafoya & Vallejos used the JTG brand and had their range at Las Alamos, Cañada Alamosa Creek, while Snyder Bros. & Searce branded with SS and ranged on the Cuchillo Negro and Cañada Alamosa creeks. Angora goat raising had already been introduced to the Southwest but apparently not yet to Sierra County.

Just as sheep and cattle ranching at Cuchillo Negro was in the hands of a very few people, only one-third of those who said they were farmers actually grew crops. Forty family heads gave their occupation as farmer on the 1885 Census population schedule. The agricultural schedule listed 25 individuals as farmers, of whom only 14 produced anything.¹⁸³

The 1880 Census listed no businesses. After that Cuchillo Negro was always a one-store village. Ed Fest established his mercantile business some time before 1885 and evidently sold out his interests to Emil Grandjean around 1889. Grandjean and his partner Frank Calhoun operated the combined merchandise and livestock business until 1902, when Robert Martin bought a half-interest. Two years later Martin acquired the entire business and made his headquarters at Cuchillo until 1917. Between 1902 and 1913 Martin also operated the Black Range State Line, a line organized by the Armstrong brothers back in 1886. The stage traveled 52 miles daily between Engle and Chloride.¹⁸⁴

The 1900 Census found only 180 people at Cuchillo Negro, all but one (Emil Grandjean) of them native New Mexicans. Most of the family heads were

laborers and farmers, with several stock raisers and herders as well as a carpenter, blacksmith, lawyer, brick mason, and Mr. Grandjean. Thirty-six of the village children attended school. The numbers of households and dwellings (56 each) were practically unchanged from 1885. Although the population schedule indicated 14 farms, the relative importance of agriculture and other pursuits cannot be measured.¹⁸⁵

By 1910 Cuchillo's population had increased more than 50 percent - to 275 - the increase being primarily in the number of children since the numbers of both families and houses remained almost the same. Nor had the range of occupations changed significantly although the blacksmith, lawyer, carpenter and mason had departed. Children in school now totaled 46. Unemployment had apparently become a factor since seven family heads gave "none" as their occupation. Farming, so far as can be told, was down to the scale of meeting family requirements; a "home farm". Only Lorenzo A. Armijo had a General farm.¹⁸⁶ Angora goat ranching was about at a peak and the ten herders in the village were possibly so employed.

Cuchillo is a small village today and the once-green fields are almost entirely brown. The decline is laid to the destruction of homes and fields wrought by Cuchillo Negro Creek during floods in 1904-05 and again in the 1920's. Mining and freighting declined after World War I; these economic losses combined with the effects of floods to bring Cuchillo's days of prosperity to an end.¹⁸⁷ When Bentura Trujillo passed away in 1913 at his home in Chiz, he may have been the last survivor of the first settlers along this section of the Rio Grande Valley. He had seen it all; right from the earliest beginnings at Alamosa, moving to Alamocita, then to Cuchillo Negro and finally to Chiz.

Las Palomas

Palomas Creek was the only tributary with a perennial flow all the way to the Rio Grande. Lt. Col. Emory noted the name of the creek (Paloma; Pigeon creek) when Kearny's army passed this way in 1846.¹⁸⁸ Governor Lane said that the stream was 12 or 15 feet wide, the water exceedingly clear and cold:

Running water is so rare in this region, that it would be an unpardonable omission in a Traveller not to note the Rio de Paloma. It is the first running water, since we passed the Mimbres, & the 2d since leaving the Gila.¹⁸⁹

Such an attraction could hardly fail to attract settlers.

Fanciful stories about the town of Las Palomas, originally called Rio Palomas, were in circulation scarcely 17 years after its establishment. None of the individuals named in a lengthy 1884 newspaper account about Las Palomas were present when the settlement began nor were the circumstances as the reporter described them¹⁹⁰ (Fig. 6).

Las Palomas started in very much the same way and at about the same time as the other river settlements. At one point in the Apache campaigns of the late 1860's, the commander at Fort McRae reported to District headquarters

I have the honor to state that the report of R.C. Patterson a citizen of Cañada Alamosa is correct and that the Indians are there very often, that the most of the people have left there and are settling on the Rio Palomas river 20 miles below Fort McRae, a much safer place and one that this Post can guard with a small squad of men.¹⁹¹

Early in the fall of that same year the citizens at the Plaza of the Rio Palomas petitioned for protection of themselves and their fields from Apache raids. They incidentally gave a fair amount of information about the new town (see Appendix).

Deputy Surveyor Isaac Stuck subdivided the two townships wherein Rio Palomas and its fields lay during the first two weeks of December in 1867.

He gave unusually complete descriptions (Fig. 7). With respect to Township 14 South Range 5 West, he said:

There are no persons living in the township, but those who are tending the land live in a town about 1 mile east of the east boundary. This is done as protection against Indians, as there is no safety for a family being isolated in this section of New Mexico, nor in fact in any other which I have ever visited.¹⁹²

A few days later Stuck surveyed Township 14 South Range 4 West and described Rio Palomas:

General Description

Land in this township mostly bottom and can be irrigated. The hills are stony and broken, are almost destitute of grass and are worthless.

The timber is chiefly cottonwood and is of good quality, better than is generally found on the Rio Grande, and is used in the town of Rio Polomas for building houses.

Rio Polomas contains about 60 houses and as many families, and has a population of about 250 persons. It is improving rapidly, houses going up every day, and if the Indians don't clean it out will make a considerable town.

The houses are built by setting timber upright in the ground, daubed up with mud & covered with earth. These buildings are here styled Jacal. They are intended as temporary houses, it being the intention of the people to build Adobe. It is situated in Sec. 30 in the Rio Palomas valley, about 10 chs. from the Rio Grande, and the water used is taken out from the Rio Palomas & conveyed to the town by an acequia some 5 miles long. Altogether the Rio Polomas is a prosperous village.

The township is capable of sustaining a large population, and if there was any safety for persons living outside of a town it would soon be settled up. But as it is, no sooner does a settler get a house built and a few head of stock around him, than the Indians are after him and soon succeed in robbing him of all his stock and anything else they can get their hands upon.

There is considerable farming done in the township west of this and it is done by those living at the Rio Polomas. Some of them go as much as 5 miles to get to work.¹⁹³

At this point in time the town of Rio Palomas was about one year old.

TOWNSHIP NO 14 SOUTH RANGE NO 5 WEST OF PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN.

FRACTIONAL TOWNSHIP NO 14 SOUTH RANGE NO 4 WEST OF PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN.

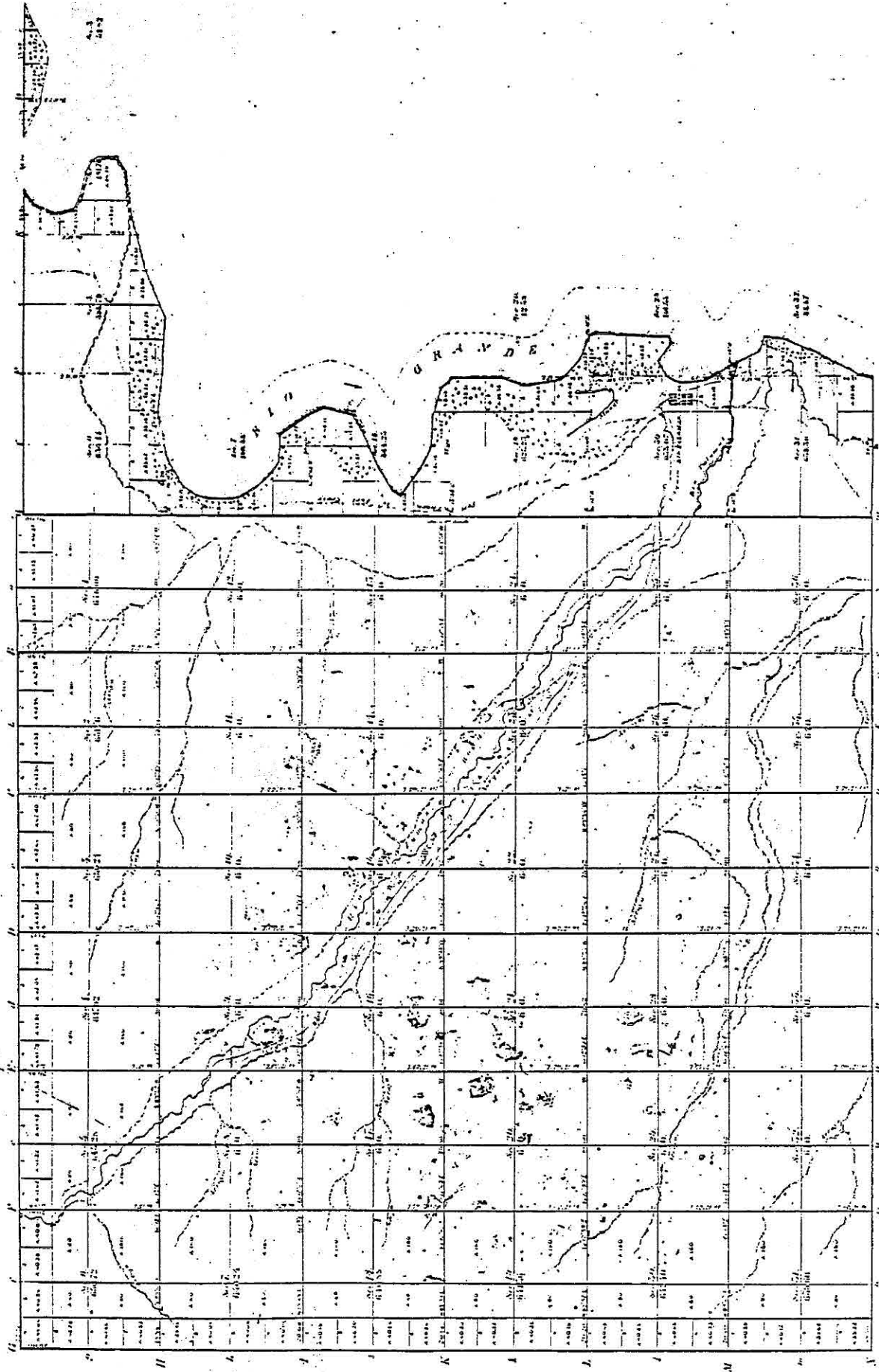


Fig. 7 Township Plat Map, showing village of Rio Paloma (Las Palomas) and its fields, December 1867. Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office

In 1867, a map of the Township of Rio Paloma was made by the Surveyor General, showing the location of the village of Rio Paloma and its fields, and the location of the Principal Meridian.

Surveyor's Name	Date of Survey	Amount of Survey	When Surveyed
John W. Gunter	December 2, 1867	100	May 1867
John W. Gunter	April 10, 1868	100	April & May 1868
John W. Gunter	June 11, 1867	100	June 1867

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John W. Gunter	June 11, 1867	100	June 1867

1. 凡在本市行政区域内从事生产、经营活动的单位和个人，均应当依照本办法的规定，依法缴纳地方教育附加。
 2. 地方教育附加的征收范围包括：
 (一) 增值税；
 (二) 消费税；
 (三) 营业税；
 (四) 企业所得税；
 (五) 个人所得税；
 (六) 房产税；
 (七) 车船税；
 (八) 城市维护建设税；
 (九) 土地增值税；
 (十) 其他依法开征的税种。
 3. 地方教育附加的征收比例按照下列规定执行：
 (一) 增值税、消费税、营业税、企业所得税、个人所得税、房产税、车船税、城市维护建设税、土地增值税等税种，按照其应纳税额的百分之二征收；
 (二) 其他依法开征的税种，按照其应纳税额的百分之五征收。
 4. 地方教育附加的征收机关为地方税务机关。
 5. 地方教育附加的征收期限按照下列规定执行：
 (一) 增值税、消费税、营业税、企业所得税、个人所得税、房产税、车船税、城市维护建设税、土地增值税等税种，按照其应纳税额的期限征收；
 (二) 其他依法开征的税种，按照其应纳税额的期限征收。
 6. 地方教育附加的征收管理按照下列规定执行：
 (一) 地方税务机关应当依法征收地方教育附加，并出具合法有效的征收凭证；
 (二) 纳税人应当依法缴纳地方教育附加，并妥善保管征收凭证；
 (三) 地方税务机关应当依法对纳税人缴纳地方教育附加的情况进行监督检查；
 (四) 纳税人违反本办法规定的，将依法予以处罚。
 7. 本办法自发布之日起施行。

Nine of the 16 signatories of the September 5, 1867 petition still lived at Rio Palomas in 1870. Two others had moved (or returned) to Alamocita. The 1870 Census found 186 people at Rio Palomas, living as 51 families in 47 houses with four other houses vacant. The only non-native New Mexican was Felix Libold, a 43-year old farmer born in Baden but married to Juliana, born in Mexico.¹⁹⁴ Nearly all of the family heads were farmers or farm laborers, the only other occupations being a justice of the peace, a constable, and a carpenter. Evidently Rio Palomas did not have a store.

According to the agricultural schedule, 24 farmers cultivated a total of 690 acres for an average of almost 29 acres of improved land per farm. This figure is incredibly high and when one sees that all of the farms were reported to be 20, 30 or 40 acres in size, it looks like the enumerator rounded his numbers excessively. The only crops were corn, wheat and a few bushels of beans. Livestock consisted of work oxen, several horses, cows and pigs, plus Felix Sánchez' 20 head of sheep.¹⁹⁵

By 1880 the population at Las Palomas (including Las Palomitas) had more than doubled, to 445, as had the numbers of families (105) and of houses (104). The great majority of the people were Hispanic and from New Mexico, but the community included one black family (Andrew Yoelsey) and 18 or more persons from the eastern United States, England and Germany. Sixty-three heads of households listed their occupation as farmer, although on the agricultural schedule this reduced to something over 30. There were four merchants (Blas Chaves, Antonio José García, Donaciano Montoya, and J.P. Chase), two school teachers, a baker, carpenter, cabinet maker and three freighters - altogether a community with a varied economy. Nine of the non-Hispanic males were farmers employed in the household of Jesus Armijo, himself a farmer with a wife and ten children! Since Mr. Armijo's holdings were 20 acres of tilled land

and two dozen head of cattle, easily manageable by a man and his immediate family, it appears that Armijo may have been running a hotel or a boarding house operation as well.¹⁹⁶

The cultivated area in 1880 totaled about 375 acres, which averaged out to a believable 12.5 acres per farm. For 20 of the farmers, the census enumerator gave corn, wheat and barley as the principal crops, with a few beans. On the schedule with nine non-Hispanic male farmers he wrote - nothing planted in 1879. Sheep raising was now significant with six men running more than 1000 head apiece - including Antonio José García, with 9000 sheep on hand. Since he was a merchant as well, he would have been the dominant economic force in Las Palomas at that time.¹⁹⁷

Surveyor Isaac Stuck's 1867 plat implied that Las Palomas had its houses around a plaza (Fig. 7). As of September 25, 1876, the U.S. issued a patent for the Palomas town site to the probate judge, as trustee for the inhabitants.¹⁹⁸ When the Rio Grande Republican's reporter visited Las Palomas in December of 1883, he came south by buckboard along the west side of the Rio Grande, past the Hot Springs,

From these springs to the town of Palomas, the road follows the course of the river; and is splendid meadow land, covered at intervals with a thick growth of cottonwood. Many ranches are passed that are still inhabited, and many more ranches, and in some places even small villages, are entirely deserted, and the former habitations reduced to mere heaps of ruins¹⁹⁹ (Fig. 6).

After pulling into the stately plaza and having estimated the population at 600, about double its probable figure, he proceeded to describe the town.

It is composed of a fine large plaza, surrounded by handsome stores, and with streets leading from it to the various roads and ranches. The mayor-domo is Don Juan Analla, and his constable is Gideon M. Tomlinson, There are three saloons on the Plaza; one is kept by Mr. J.C. Summers, another by Mr. John Taylor, and the third by Messrs. Strickland & McKenzie. The latter house is also the city restaurant,

where all Americans take their meals who are not elsewhere provided for. There are also three stores, all doing a good business and making money. Don José M. Apodaca, who keeps one of these stores, has also the post-office, where tri-weekly mails are received from the outside world. Another store is owned by Don D. Montoya, but is under the management of his father-in-law, Mr. Philip Bourgonia [Bourguignon]. The third store is owned by Messrs. Brooks & Hopewell, who recently opened it because they have a large number of men employed on their ranch who thought the Mexican prices would not do for them. This store seems to be drawing the Mexican custom (sic) also, and it does the largest business in the town.²⁰⁰

Las Palomas had just celebrated a service in its yet-to-be-completed church, described as a roofed-in shell of adobe still lacking doors and windows.²⁰¹

A year and a half later economic power in Las Palomas had passed to other hands. Antonio José García was gone completely; Doniciano Montoya still had his store, and José M. Apodaca likewise ran his store but had lost virtually all of the 3000 sheep and 80 head of cattle he owned in 1880. The ten acres of land he still had in cultivation produced no crops.²⁰²

Two new faces - Messrs. Brooks and Hopewell - were now the local powers. These wealthy gentlemen appeared around the end of 1882, liked the area and entered homesteads at a place they named "Vega Blanca" about two miles south of Las Palomas (Fig. 6). They also bought up many of the neighboring ranches. When the newspaper reporter visited this new ranch, he found that Mr. W.S. Hopewell had

.... nearly a hundred men employed, partly in the erection of his buildings, and partly in care of his stock, of which he has an immense number, having received a single consignment of 85 carloads only a week or two since.²⁰³

The journalist went on to cite the handsome new residence, the large corral, boarding houses for the men, blacksmith's shop, storerooms, et. al. By May of the same year this partnership had become Grayson, Brooks and Hopewell, a cattle and mining company.²⁰⁴ Publication of the stock brand  two years

thence identified it with the Animas Ranch of Grayson & Co., Las Palomas, Sierra County.²⁰⁵

Las Palomas may have witnessed less violence than the mining camps and cattle towns, but it didn't escape entirely. The morning after Dutch Charley wounded a young man named Rivera, Charley walked into J.C. Summer's saloon on the plaza. William Martin called him a vile name, then went for his six-gun and pumped two shots in Charley's direction. Charley, who was unarmed, ran out the door but Martin followed and tumbled Charley for good with a shot in the chest. Martin then went to the corral, saddled up his horse and galloped out of town shouting "Adios". A coroner's jury delivered the verdict that Charley came to his death by means of a bullet. This was deemed too imprecise, so the jury deliberated again and decided that he had been assassinated by one William Martin. Charley was laid to rest the next day, wrapped in a blanket and without the benefit of clergy.²⁰⁶

On April 4, 1884, the Silver City Enterprise reported a bold robbery the previous Friday at Las Palomas. Three men entered the store of Donaciano Montoya y Armijo and relieved him of \$1200 cash. With their plunder in hand, the bandits knocked the merchant senseless, blew out the lights and rode off on horseback.²⁰⁷

The range cattle industry would have been at its height in 1885 and the Territorial census at Las Palomas reflected this to some extent. The population (254) had dropped by almost 200 and the 70 families lived in 60 dwellings. The largest proportion of people were native Hispanics, but many others had come from the eastern U.S., England and Germany. José Apodaca and Donaciano Montoya were joined by a third merchant, Judson E. Strong. Fifty-four heads of households gave their occupations as laborers and farmers while five said they were stock-raisers. Nathan Grayson, originally from Kentucky but more recently a

San Franciscan, listed his assets in land and cattle at \$156,000, including 6100 head of cattle. These dwarfed the holdings of five other cattlemen, who had from 150 to 1000 head each, and the solitary sheepman with his 300 sheep on hand. The tilled acreage (387 acres) was virtually the same as in 1880 but consisted now of Nathan Grayson's cultivated lands (100 acres), other farmland (211 acres) and permanent pastures (76 acres). The types of crops were unchanged from 1880 but they benefitted only 11 farmers. Grayson was the only one who combined farming and stock-raising.²⁰⁸

The range cattle business was largely ruined by a combination of drouths, overstocking and low prices, beginning with a severe winter in 1885-86.²⁰⁹ Successful operations also depended upon outside capital. The Grayson operation presumably folded when it was no longer profitable. Farming continued and does to this day. Max Kahler located along Palomas Creek in 1887 and developed his land into a farm of 200 acres. He also controlled the range surrounding this.²¹⁰

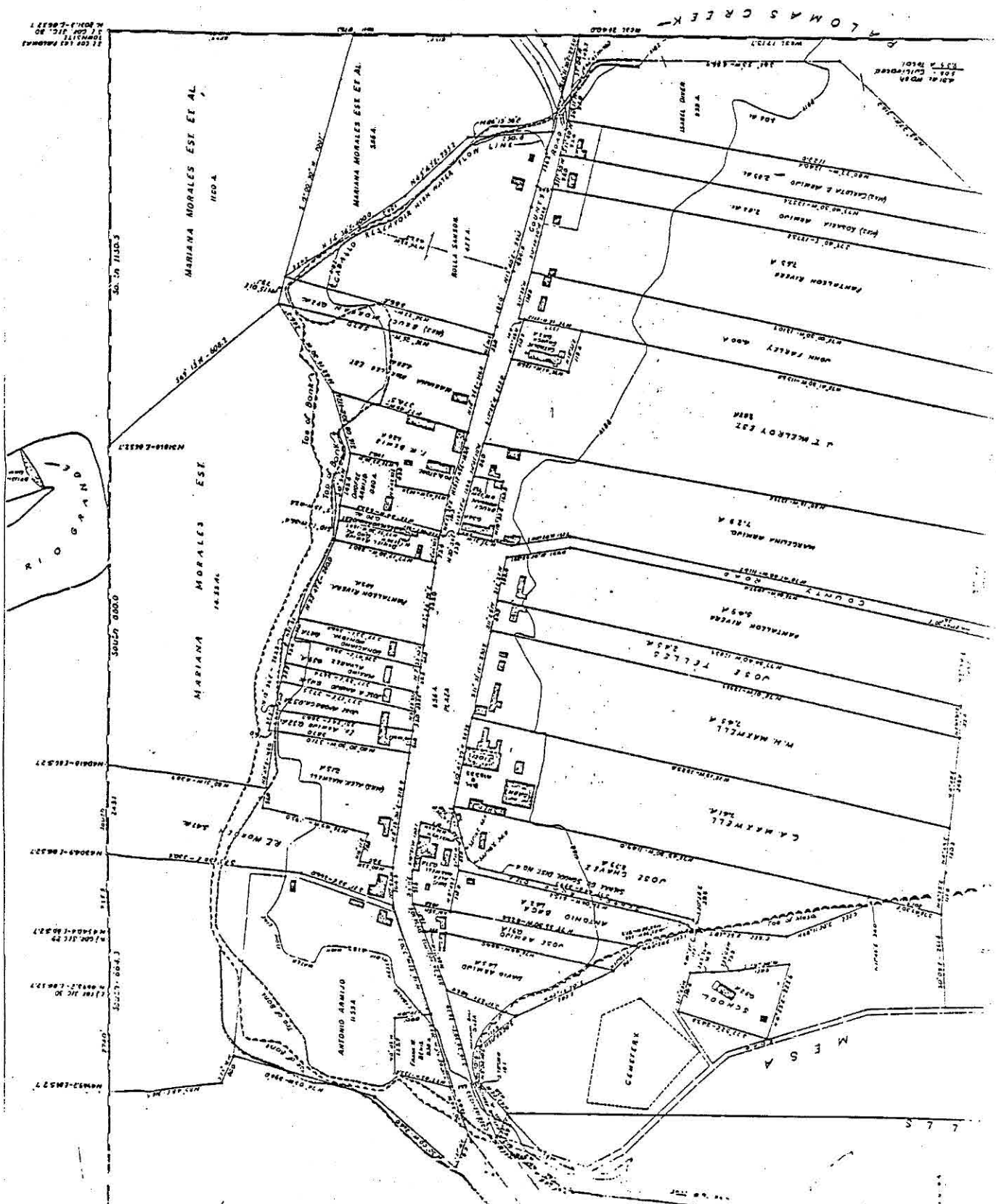
In 1900 Las Palomas had 250 people, almost the same number that lived there 15 years earlier. There were fewer families (55) and also houses (54) than before. Most of the residents were native-born New Mexicans but others had come from the eastern states. The variety of occupations was much greater than before and included a blacksmith, weaver, music teacher, two miners and a book agent. Sixty percent of the family heads identified themselves as farmers and laborers, although the population schedule showed only 11 farms. Thirty children attended school.²¹¹ Las Palomas was now down to one store, Alex Maxwell (self-described as a 'grocerman') having bought out Donaciano Montoya's mercantile business.²¹²

Las Palomas was affected only indirectly by construction on Elephant Butte Dam since the U.S. Reclamation Service built its own townsite a mile

below the dam, roughly ten miles upriver from Las Palomas. Yet by 1910 something had happened to revive the town, which recorded 320 people that year in 73 families, with 74 houses. The majority of names were Hispanic, as before, but with many non-Hispanic ones as well. The single black family present in 1900 had gone. Almost 60 percent of family heads continued to identify themselves as farmers and laborers but among the remainder there were more occupations than ever before - doctor, professor, photographer, stone mason, shoemaker, cook and mail carrier. The stone mason actually was employed at a ferry boat. Four merchants - Alex Maxwell, Tomás Baca, Frank Worden and Leandro Armijo - vied for local business and the thirsty could wash the dust from their throats at two saloons. One of the two persons who listed "retired" as their occupation was Perfecto Duran, born in Texas, who gave his age as 105!²¹³

This revival may have been based partly upon agriculture since there were more than twice as many farmers in 1910 (22) as in 1900 (10) while the number of farms had increased to 19. Another factor may have been a new industry - raising Angora goats - that appeared about the time cattle went into a decline. Sierra County took the lead in New Mexico in the goat industry.²¹⁴

Completion of the Elephant Butte Dam in 1916 again left Las Palomas unaffected since many buildings at the old Elephant Butte camp were removed and reassembled at the new Palomas Hot Springs townsite, many of the people moving there as well.²¹⁵ Las Palomas continued until 1938, when the Bureau of Reclamation bought out the interests of the townspeople as the waters behind Caballo Dam rose to where they encroached upon the old village (Fig. 8). Las Palomas in 1938 probably bore little resemblance to the compact village that the first settlers built to defend themselves when Apache raiders swept through their valley.



For awhile Las Palomas had a suburb, called Las Palomitas. Atlas Sheet #84C in the U.S. Geographical Surveys West of the 100th Meridian series showed Las Palomitas as about two miles north of Las Palomas and on the east side of the Rio Grande. That map was drafted from information gathered in 1877-78, while the 1880 Census lumped the statistics from Palomas and Palomitas. Herbert Yeo wrote that Las Palomitas was the first settlement in the Palomas Valley, i.e., below the Elephant Butte Dam site and above the mouth of Percha Creek, to use water from the Rio Grande. The ditch there was destroyed in 1887 and the town later abandoned.²¹⁶ Follett²¹⁷ noted that the ditch system was on the west side of the Rio Grande but had been washed out and abandoned in 1884.

Fort McRae

Brigadier General James H. Carleton assumed command of the Military Department of New Mexico in September of 1862. The Confederates had been expelled but the settled parts of New Mexico were still under attack by hostile Indians. To deal with them, Carleton established a chain of new forts, one of which was Fort McRae. The garrisons at these posts rode out to strike the Apaches and Navajos, eventually forcing most of them to give up or be killed. Those who surrendered were to be confined on reservations. This at least was the strategy. With respect to the situation along the Rio Grande, Carleton wrote:

.... Among all my endeavors since my arrival here, there has been an effort to brush back the Indians, as you have seen from official correspondence, so that the people could get out of the valley of the Rio Grande, and not only possess themselves of the arable lands in other parts of the Territory, but, if the country contained veins and deposits of the precious metals, that they might be found.²¹⁸

Fort McRae was officially established April 3, 1863 and named for Capt. Alexander McRae, 3d U.S. Cavalry, killed at the Battle of Valverde. The position of the fort in the Canyon del Muerto blocked the Indians from driving

stolen livestock through that pass and allowed the troops from Fort McRae to protect travelers on the Jornada del Muerto (Fig. 9). The Ojo del Muerto, on the north side of the canyon, was the only water east of the Rio Grande between Fort Selden and Paraje. The Canyon del Muerto is now called McRae Canyon and the waters of Elephant Butte Reservoir cover parts of the old fort during times of high water.²¹⁹

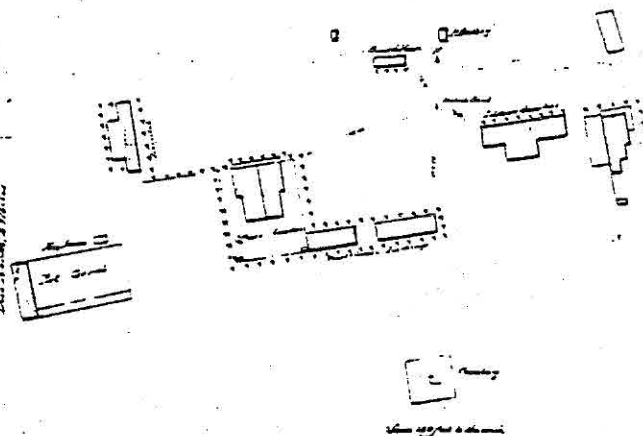
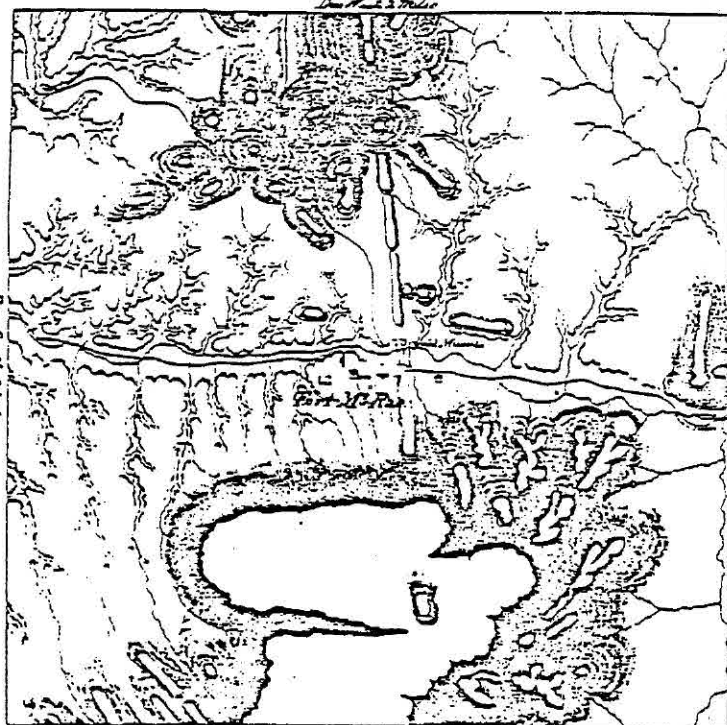
Fort McRae never had a large garrison - one or two companies. Volunteer troops manned the post until 1866, when Regular Army infantry units took station there. In the spring of 1872 the cavalry branch moved in and stayed for the last 4½ years of the fort's active life. During much of this time and especially in the early years the garrison was out scouting and pursuing hostile Indians after a raid on a settlement or an isolated ranch. The Army abandoned the post on October 30, 1876.

Albert Jennings Fountain became a leading citizen in southern New Mexico during the late 19th century, but he was 2d Lieut. Fountain in Company G, 1st Infantry California Volunteers when his company took station at Fort McRae in the first days of July 1863. Three months later Fountain wrote to his brother in a letter that described the continuous round of campaigning, the preparations to leave on a moment's notice, fighting the Apaches at twenty to one "and numerous times when the odds weren't so great". He liked the life and was comfortably situated in a two-room jacal roofed with a Sibley tent.²²⁰

Not all of the men in Fountain's company were so fortunate and in May of 1864 their commander, Capt. Henry Green, did an unusual thing. The graveyard was filling up and in the center of it he erected a neat and pretty monument, nine feet high.²²¹ The inscriptions were barely legible 20 years later when a passing reporter transcribed them. They were in memory of Pvts. Geo. S. Dickey, R.S. Johnson, Chs. M. O'Brien, and Wm. J. Rowlett, all of Company G. Three of

Military Reservation of **FORT M^CRAE, N.M.**

Surveyed by order of Major General G. W. Getty, commanding Dist. of New Mexico.
Mag. Var. 13 deg. 20 minutes. Area 4 square Miles. Scale 4 inches to the mile.



OFFICIAL

C. W. Woodruff
CAPTAIN OF ENGINEERS - DISTRICT CLAUDE, N.M.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fig. 9 Plat of Military Reservation and Plan of Fort McRae, N.M., April 1869. Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, files in Public Room, Misc. Info. F-M; Fort McRae Indian (i.e., Military) Reservation file envelope.

the men had been killed by Apaches; Pvt. Rowlett drowned in the Rio Grande.²²²

With respect to subsistence, an inspection in January 1868 had little good to say. The bread was bad, the storeroom leaked, and worst of all the records were not up to date!²²³ Buildings were another matter. Permanent construction got underway in 1865 with an adobe commanding officer's quarters, barracks, guardhouse and a hospital, all completed the next year. The commandant at Fort McRae luxuriated in a six-room house with 1500 square feet of living space. New officers' quarters - two sets of adobe quarters, each with gypsum plaster floors

and open fireplaces for heating - followed about 1869. By this time there was also a new storehouse with two large rooms and an office. Evidently the work was well-done, since reports on the post used the rarely-heard adjectives "excellent" and "good condition". McRae had a parade ground but unlike most posts of the period the buildings did not form a rectangle around the parade ground. The layout might in fact be called a straggling alignment (Fig. 9). By 1869 a post garden had been planted near Alamocita, six miles distant, and a permanent detail from the garrison cultivated this garden. It was but partially successful.²²⁴

For about ten months in 1869-70 1st Lieut. Charles Drew was Indian Agent for the Southern Apaches. He used Fort McRae as his agency headquarters. After the agency and the Indians were transferred to Fort Tularosa in 1872, many Southern Apaches continued to roam and the garrison at Fort McRae scouted the canyons west of the Rio Grande looking for them. By the spring of 1874 the desirability of removing the Apaches at Tularosa back to Cañada Alamosa was being debated. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico, L.E. Dudley, inspected the proposed Hot Springs Reservation early in May and while there, his military escort performed an interesting experiment:

Lieut. H.J. Farnsworth 8" Cav. with Det. Co. H same Regiment left Post May 5 '74 to accompany Supt. of Indian Affairs for New Mexico to Cañada Alamosa & Hot Springs - points on the proposed new Apache Indian Reservation. Returned May 9, 1874, marched 100 miles - Communicating while at Cañada Alamosa with Post of Fort McRae by means of 'flashes' air line distance 28 miles several messages were received and sent. 2d Lieut. H.G. Carleton 8th Cav. & Sgt. M.E. Beauman, Co. H 8th Cav. in charge of stations.²²⁵

This described a little-known communications system that used artificial lights, not the heliograph line that the Army introduced into the Southwest in 1886 and used in the Geronimo campaign.²²⁶

In mid-summer of 1874 the Southern Apaches were moved back to the Hot Springs Reservation (Fig. 3). Fort McRae then drew its final mission. For two years, detachments from the 8th and later the 9th Cavalry units stationed at Fort McRae were sent to Ojo Caliente as a backup for the Indian agent and to aid in keeping the Indians on the Reservation if need be.²²⁷ In September 1876 this ended; the troops were sent from Fort Craig and Ojo Caliente was designated a subpost of Fort Craig. Fort McRae no longer had an active role and by Special Order of the District Commander it was abandoned at the end of October. Three years later that same District Commander, Col. Edward Hatch, may have rued his decision as he watched his own battalions and Victorio's Apaches race back and forth across southern New Mexico, stopping now and then for a short, fierce battle.

Less than ten years after it closed, a passing newspaper reporter wrote the epitaph for Fort McRae:

The fort has quite a history, both in the Civil and Indian wars, but has been abandoned for years, and is now almost forgotten. The walls of immense adobe buildings still stand to attest the durability of such structures, and many acres of ground are covered with these ruins, but everything that was worth carrying away has long since been removed by Mexicans or Indians. Nothing is left but the adobes, and even these may yet be appropriated and removed by pioneer settlers. Just in the rear of the fort is the soldiers' graveyard, enclosed with an adobe wall, and in the centre of it stands a handsome monument, surmounted by an obelisk,²²⁸

IRRIGATION AGRICULTURE IN EARLY SIERRA COUNTY

All of the early communities in Sierra County were at locations with water and lands suitable for cultivation. Until the mining boom started in the late 1870's, people were dependent on agriculture. Farming in turn was synonymous with ditch irrigation. Only in the 20th century did people begin to drill irrigation wells and try a little dry farming in the higher elevations of the Black Range.

There are a number of descriptions, some quite minute, of Hispanic agriculture and farming in early Territorial New Mexico.²²⁹ A few accounts gave details about cultivation practices and crops in early Sierra County. Before getting into these, some of the distinctions basic to understanding agricultural practices in this area need to be outlined.

One distinction is the Rio Grande Valley vs. the tributary valley systems. This recognition of two different types of watercourses and valleys, with separate problems, dated from at least the 1890 Census:

Sierra County is rough and mountainous, and it contains the smallest amount of cultivated land. The Rio Grande flows through the county from north to south, but for the greater portion of the distance it is in a deep, narrow canyon, with little or no agricultural land along its course. In the mountain valleys to the west of the Rio Grande are scattered tracts of cultivated land, but the water supply is insufficient for their further extension without recourse to storage. During certain seasons of the year there is an ample supply of water,²³⁰

Settlers had recognized this difference long before and adjusted according to the local circumstances.

When Col. Philip St. George Cooke led the Mormon Battalion down the Rio Grande Valley, he camped the night of November 3, 1846 on a plain about opposite the site of Paraje. He noted that for the last 40 miles the river valley had been a flat bottom about two miles in width, much of it covered with a

-75-

"white efflorescence" that made the soil unfit for agriculture. There was also the fear of Indians and in consequence the district was entirely unoccupied.²³¹ From there on south the country became broken and wild, and on November 7th Cooke commented that

There is every few miles a small bottom in a bend of the river; none other.²³²

Emory in passing over the same route a month before had been similarly impressed:

October 9.- The country becomes broken, and the valley narrows into a cañon which sweeps at the base of Fra Cristóbal mountain, making it necessary to rise to the table lands on the west side,²³³

The day before, when about west of Paraje, Emory had said that

The valley of the Del Norte, as we advance, loses what little capacity for agriculture it possessed. The river commences to gather its feeble force into the smallest compass to work its way around the western base of Fra Cristóbal mountain.²³⁴

At least one of the '49ers echoed these observations.²³⁵

North of Paraje and especially above San Marcial, the Rio Grande Valley was relatively broad and people farmed the valley lands at many locations. Below Paraje the river valley was scarcely a half-mile in width and at several places only a canyon. Above Arrey, N.M. the valley opened out again. The confined stretch was the broken and wild country seen by Emory and Cooke, and was the section that H.M.T. Powell had in mind when he wrote:

The river is a muddy rapid stream, with shifting sands and very treacherous quick places in all directions. It has but one saving clause about it, it raises good catfish, blue, yellow, and white.²³⁶

Examination of the U.S. Reclamation Service topographic maps of the Rio Grande Project, a ten-sheet series produced in 1908, confirmed the earlier descriptions. This map series was the only one that showed the Rio Grande Valley between San Marcial and the Elephant Butte Dam site as it was prior to construction of the dam. The maps indicated the locations and layouts of

villages, acequias, fields, pastures and other features (Figs. 4, 5). Those portions of the valley wherein San José and San Albino lay, and again between Alamocita and Zapata, were also where the river looped from side to side within a half-mile wide valley, creating the situation that Col. Cooke saw every few miles of small bottoms in bends of the river. The terrace level or second bottom within these bends was the farmland.

.... The soil of River bottoms, where they are subject to be overflowed, are Sandy & unfit for Cultivation; above this level they are fertile and easy of irrigation,²³⁷

At San José, San Albino, Zapata, Las Palomitas and presumably at Alamocita, the agricultural systems were to farm the river bends, there being no other arable lands. Irrigation water was taken directly from the Rio Grande via acequias. Individual ranches elsewhere along the valley evidently followed the same practices. At San José and San Albino, engineer W.W. Follett reported 300 and 200 acres respectively under irrigation in 1896. Yeo found cultivation decreasing at the two towns as of 1907, the acreages then being only 160 and 100. Yeo also listed as abandoned three out of four ditches upstream from San José / San Albino and five of the six ditches below, as far as Zapata. Besides San José and San Albino, the only irrigated areas of the Rio Grande Valley between Paraje and the Elephant Butte Dam site as of 1907 were at three ranches. There too cultivation was decreasing or already abandoned. Yeo confirmed that the Alamocita ditch was abandoned because of a change in the river. At Zapata there was some cultivation although the irrigation ditch had gone out of use.²³⁸

The ditch system at Las Palomitas and Hot Springs had irrigated 900 acres but washed out and was abandoned in 1884.²³⁹ This lay in the Palomas Valley section of the Rio Grande Valley, i.e. between the Elephant Butte Dam site and the mouth of Percha Creek. Irrigated acreages were reported for the Palomas

Valley in 1907 (150 acres) and 1928 (235 acres), but these had no necessary connection with the old Las Palomas farmsites and none at all with the village of Las Palomas, as will be seen. A report written about 1920 suggested that the Palomas Valley may not even have been farmed then:

The Las Palomas Valley remains the only unirrigated land between Elephant Butte Dam and the lower end of the project through which the river runs but most of this is high enough to be unaffected by seepage from the river.²⁴⁰

Farming the river bends could be highly productive since everyone agreed that the lands were very fertile. Unfortunately this was a high-risk system since the rivercourse was subject to change with every flood - more so here than in the broad valley stretches above San Marcial or downstream in the Mesilla Valley. To keep the ditches operating even under normal conditions was a demanding job. It was only a matter of time until a major flood washed away these ditches, the farmlands and perhaps even the villages themselves. The villagers then faced a choice of rebuilding their works, giving up on farming, or moving away. By 1908, according to Follett, Yeo, and Stoes²⁴¹, people were choosing the latter two alternatives.

Another problem that affected the entire Rio Grande valley was mentioned in the 1890 Census, reported in detail by Follett and documented with great clarity in Hedke's 1924 study. This was the reduced flow of the Rio Grande that came about after 1880 because of excessive withdrawals in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. Follett estimated that the average summer flow at El Paso had been reduced by 1,000 second-feet in consequence. Informants told him that in five of the eight years 1889 - 1896 the Rio Grande was dry for part of the year at Las Palomas.²⁴² The first stream-gauge records on the Rio Grande below Embudo, N.M. began at San Marcial in 1895, from which date there was a dry river during some part of the irrigation season 22 out

of the next 30 years of records.²⁴³

The combination of normal hazards to farming due to floods along the Rio Grande, the disastrous decreases in riverflow during the irrigation season, and expanded job opportunities had brought agriculture in the Sierra County section of the Rio Grande Valley to a virtual halt even before Elephant Butte Dam construction started in 1910.

Follett²⁴⁴ and Yeo²⁴⁵ did a number of interesting things in their irrigation studies. Follett was the first to assign numbers to irrigation ditches along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, also estimating their age, capacity, and acreages watered by these ditches. Yeo continued and expanded this system. Follett classed the New Mexico ditches outside of the immediate Rio Grande Valley into a separate series of Districts from those within the main river valley. As a result, his District No. 17 extended from San Marcial to old Fort Selden and encompassed the communities and ditches just discussed. Follett's District No. 11 included all of the drainage area west of the Rio Grande between the Rio Salado and Berenda Creek, the first stream with a water supply south of the Salado being Alamosa Creek. Follett also found that

From San Marcial to a point some 20 miles above Rincon, about 100 miles by river, the hills abut closely onto the channel of the stream, there being but little valley land. From the west enter several small tributaries, which have cut down deep into the Mesa Cuchilla Negra; each of these has along it a narrow fertile valley, and, while each brings to the Rio Grande some snow water in the spring from the Black Range lying to the west, dependence for a summer water supply rests on springs which appear in the bed of the stream about halfway between the mountains and the Rio Grande.²⁴⁶

The country for 60 miles to the south of the Salado is without water for irrigation. Then, cutting deeply through the Cuchilla Mesa, are met several lines of drainage leading from the Black Range to the Rio Grande. Only in seasons of excessive snowfall or after heavy rains does the water flow from the hills to the river. But about midway between the two, springs are found in the dry channels, and the water from these is led

into the long, narrow valleys below. While the water supply is scanty, it is constant, and the users have learned to utilize it fully, and they raise good crops with an amount of water so small that it would mean failure anywhere else in the Territory. The settlements all antedate 1880.

The water supply is regular, and the amount estimated for 1894 and 1895 is assumed to be the amount used back to 1880, except in 1889, when a slight reduction is made.²⁴⁷

Follett was operating under severe time limitations when he made his investigations in 1896, but he claimed to have seen nearly all of the irrigated lands in the New Mexico portion of the Rio Grande drainage. Actually he may have missed a good many smaller systems on the tributaries, including some abandoned works, but Yeo's 1928 inventory added more ditch systems. A more recent compilation not only described additional irrigation facilities (with a different numbering system), it specified their location, size and nature with accuracy²⁴⁸ (Table 1; Fig. 10). The latter listed abandoned irrigation systems as well (Table 2) and noted that faint traces of other systems were noticed but had been so long abandoned as to be almost obliterated.

Between these three sources one could compile an inventory of historical irrigation systems, within the Rio Grande Valley as well as along the tributaries to the west of it, that should be nearly complete for Sierra County. Yeo²⁴⁹ was aware that prehistoric Indians practiced irrigation in the Rio Grande Valley but his inventory presumably included none of their works.

Yeo did pick up one distinction not made by Follett, namely that some ditches diverted floodwaters while others provided water from perennial stream flows or springs. This kind of distinction did not exist within the Rio Grande main valley where the river was the only water source. Palomas Creek had a perennial flow all the way to the Rio Grande; the other major tributaries had a perennial reach at one or more locations along the streambed but carried only floodwaters down to the Rio Grande. Along these tributaries one might find

TABLE 1

EXISTING IRRIGATION FACILITIES

No. ^{1/}	Location S T-S R-W	Source of Supply	Irrigated ^{2/} (acres)	Flood ^{3/} Irrigated (acres)	Abandoned (acres)	Remarks
1	3	Alamosa River	16	---	7	-----
2	7	"	650	---	50	Monticello Community Ditch
3	19	"	---	100	---	Pasture
4	29	"	---	20	---	Cropland
5	27	"	---	45	---	Cropland
6	32	"	---	17	8	Cropland
7	32	"	---	25	30	Cropland
8	34	"	---	75	30	Cropland
9	7	Rio Cuchillo	58	---	4	Chiz Community Ditch
10	20	"	353	---	55	Cuchillo Community Ditch
11	4	Palomas Creek	315	---	10	San Miguel Community Ditch
12	31	Spring	5	---	---	-----
13	31	Palomas Creek	28	---	---	-----
14	5	"	20	---	---	-----
15	8	"	400	---	30	Las Palomas Community Ditch
16	35	Las Animas River	15	---	55*	*Includes 20 A. now dry farmed
17	8	"	8	---	---	-----
18	8	"	26	---	---	-----
19	9	"	34	---	---	-----
20	23	"	27	---	10	-----
21	24	"	265	---	---	Las Animas Community Ditch
22	30	"	40	---	---	-----
23	17	Perca Creek	---	15	---	Water Right for 1 acre
24	16	"	---	20	---	-----
25	19	"	---	30	---	-----
26	22	"	---	40	---	-----
TOTAL			2,260	387	289	

1 Number as shown on map (Fig. 10).

2 Irrigated in recent years by perennial stream flow; - 2038 acres irrigated in 1939.

3 Irrigated by intermittent stream flow.

Note: All areas planimetered from aerial mosaics.

(Retyped without change from Table 22 in Water Facilities Area Plan for Alamosa River Rio Cuchillo Negro etc 1940)

TABLE 2
ABANDONED IRRIGATION FACILITIES

<u>Number</u>	<u>Location</u>			<u>Former Source of Supply</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
	<u>S</u>	<u>T-S</u>	<u>R-W</u>			
A-1	10	9	7	Alamosa River	10	<u>1/</u>
A-2	25	14	7	Seco Creek	80	Water-right of Record-System not inspected- Reported abandoned.
A-3	16	15	6	Las Animas River	15	Has been abandoned over 10 years.
A-4	18	16	8	Percha Creek	12	Six small water rights recorded - mostly abandoned.
A-5	8	16	7	Percha Creek	<u>80</u>	2 water rights of record - mostly small plots near Hillsboro at least 90% abandoned.
TOTAL					197	

- 1 This system was reported to have been abandoned for some 10 years and appeared so on the first inspection trip. A recheck on July 1, 1940, showed that attempts were being made to irrigate from it, but with little success.

Number as shown on map (Fig. 10).

(Retyped without change from Table 25 in Water Facilities Area Plan for Alamosa River, Rio Cuchillo Negro, etc. 1940)

ditches that diverted floodwater or perennial flows, in different sections of the same valley²⁵⁰ (Fig. 10). It is difficult to judge the relative importance of one type of system versus another, but the geologist Kirk Bryan recognized this same distinction and described flood-water farming in the larger valleys further north:

It appears that before 1880 farming by flood water was more extensive than at present. In the main stream valleys, such as the Rio Puerco, it was a thriving business. Here the Spanish-speaking New Mexicans settled about 1870 and built simple diversion works and ditches. Log and brush dams and at least a short length of permanent main ditch were usually constructed. Juan Bandera, who came from Texas and settled near San Ignacio in 1882, told me that low brush dams were thrown across the channel during later phases of a flood, and the water was diverted into ditches or simply warped over the land. At times of great floods the whole valley floor was inundated and so saturated that no further irrigation was necessary that year.²⁵¹

The stream-channel entrenchment that concerned Bryan did not take place in the tributary valleys of western Sierra County, where flood-water farming continued until at least 1940.²⁵² In this area the temporary diversion dams were earth or sand fill structures rather than brush.

With one possible exception, the agricultural settlements along tributary valleys all depended upon irrigation waters diverted from perennial streams, springs or subsurface flows that rose to the surface. A letter of June 25, 1868 by Surveyor General John Clark gave a minute description of such a system (see Appendix). This is not to say that flood-water systems were necessarily small or unproductive; at least two (#3 in Fig. 10 and the diversion on Seco Arroyo) furnished water for 100 acres of land, while with respect to #5 (Fig. 10) there was "an elaborate distribution system in excellent condition and evidence of good crops produced on the land" as of 1940.²⁵³

In Figure 10 the community ditch systems were #2 (Monticello), #9 (Chiz), #10 (Cuchillo), #11 (San Miguel), #15 (Palomas) and #21 (Las Animas). As of

1940 the Chiz ditch served about 58 acres and the one at Monticello some 650 acres; the others were all in the range of 300 to 500 acres.²⁵⁴ The map reproduced as Figure 10 is the best single guide to the location, nature and condition of the various water facilities. Tables 1 and 2 give the acreages of the irrigated tracts.

In addition to the systems shown in Figure 10, Follett had listed a ditch system watered by springs in the Cienega Apache (now Trujillo Arroyo) that headed in Section 31 of Township 16 South Range 6 West and furnished water to irrigate 60 acres, while another ditch supplied by springs in Berrenda Creeek and heading in Section 12, Township 18 South Range 7 West allowed irrigation of another 80 acres.²⁵⁵ Both were evidently in disuse by 1928 since Yeo didn't mention them.

One hundred acres on Jaralosa Creek near Lake Valley were usually irrigated from springs, according to Yeo. Sixty acres on two ranches were watered from Tierra Blanca Creek during normal seasons and three private ditches on North Percha Creek diverted water for irrigating 100 acres of land. The four spring- and flood-water ditch systems that Yeo listed for Percha Creek between Kingston and Hillsboro had evidently gone out of use by 1940.²⁵⁶ Any ditch system not owned by a community would have been held by a ranch or a private individual.

The possible exception mentioned was the earliest settlement, San Ygnacio de la Alamosa. This settlement was a mystery in several respects, in spite of what has been said about it. For example, the early Socorro County records contained no land locations or quit-claim deeds for Alamosa, which made it unique among Socorro County communities of the time and also among the towns whose histories are reviewed here. While it's doubtful that such claims and deeds had much legal force, everyone did it anyway except at Alamosa.

Agriculture at Alamosa is another mystery in that the people had part of their fields somewhere near the townsite and another part 20 miles up Alamosa Creek. Fields at the latter location would have been the precursor of Cañada Alamosa, but the location and nature of croplands near the village itself are uncertain. Francisco Baca of Alamosa had been one of the signatories on a petition that claimed the people of Socorro County were made destitute in 1862 when the Rio Grande destroyed their fields and acequias.²⁵⁷ Perhaps the extensive cultivation reported for the Cañada Alamosa location as of September 1863 was a response to the Rio Grande flooding in 1862. The crop loss that Capt. Ffrench reported at Alamosa in 1865 might have been a result of drought or of Indian depredations rather than from flooding. Capt. Ffrench did not explain.

One clue to the whereabouts of Alamosa's fields may be Capt. Hatch's map made in April 1859, about the time the settlement was beginning (Fig. 1). If the "Ranch" at the mouth of a broad tributary valley north of the Cañada de Palomas was intended to represent Alamosa, then the fields shown just above the mouth of the Cañada Alamosa, on the south side of the valley, would have belonged to Alamosa. There is some collateral evidence in that when Deputy Surveyor Fred Shaw subdivided fractional T12S R4W in December of 1883, he wrote that

There is some good valley land in secs. 1, 2 & 3 and known as the valley of Cañada de Alamosa. The greater part of this valley was, at one time, under cultivation, but on account of a scarcity of water is now abandoned.²⁵⁸

Shaw added that a ranch and a small spring supposedly belonging to one Chris Keeser stood near the center of Section 3. He noted no other improvements in the Township.

If Shaw did see the abandoned fields of Alamosa, then the villagers must have had a flood irrigation system there. Alamosa Creek does not have a surface flow so far downstream. Another observation on this same system was made in 1940:

8. This is also a flood irrigation system and the last system on the Alamosa River. The usual type of temporary diversion dam is located in Sec. 34, T. 11 S., R. 4 W. about 3 miles above the point where the river flows into the Elephant Butte Reservoir. There is a main canal, in good condition, about 2 miles long and several laterals as well as a small reservoir which holds 2 or 3 acre-feet of water. It is estimated that some 75 acres are irrigated at present and that possibly 30 more have been abandoned because of encroachment of the shore line of the reservoir²⁵⁹ (Fig. 10).

If the settlers at Alamosa farmed along the Rio Grande as well, then the Rio must have removed all traces by 1883. Shaw failed to mention the ruins of a village or of any other farmlands in the township.

The other villages in the area - Cañada Alamosa, Cuchillo Negro, and Las Palomas - all had irrigation works consisting of a diversion dam, six miles or more of main canal and several laterals. The Cañada Alamosa system was functioning by 1863. When Indian peace commissioner Vincent Colyer visited there in 1871 he found a stream of pure water with every acre occupied by the Mexicans, who had a town of over 300 inhabitants in the midst of it.²⁶⁰ If the 1870 Census of productions in agriculture was accurate, 119 acres were under cultivation then. By 1896 this had increased to 600 acres, about the same amount farmed there today. The water was derived from perennial springs just above the box canyon on Alamosa Creek and brought some nine miles to the farmlands by a canal.²⁶¹ The system is still in use but has been improved considerably since 1977.²⁶²

For Cuchillo Negro there is less information. The first bare descriptions were made in 1881. The deputy surveyors who subdivided T12S R6W (west of the town) noted that the Cuchillo Negro was a fine stream of excellent water and the valley was a fine land for cultivation.²⁶³ For the next township east the same surveyors repeated that the Rio Cuchillo Negro was a fine stream and the land in the valley was susceptible of irrigation from that stream.²⁶⁴ Fifteen years later Follett found 300 acres under irrigation at Cuchillo Negro and 200 acres watered by three private ditches further upstream.²⁶⁵ Yeo²⁶⁶ reported that the Cuchillo Community Ditch headed eight miles above the town and diverted water to 450 acres near the village. There were other ditch systems upstream at Chiz and beyond. Three private ditches below Cuchillo diverted flood waters to hay land and pasture (Fig. 10). The water supply was judged fair. As of 1940 the Cuchillo ditch system had been recently improved and served slightly more than 400 acres.²⁶⁷ Today few if any fields remain in use.

Deputy Surveyor Isaac Stuck's description of Las Palomas when it was one year old was quoted earlier. By that time there was a completely developed irrigation system in place and functioning along Palomas Creek. Stuck made an excellent map of this system (Fig. 7) and went on to describe the local scene:

The bottom of the Rio Polomas on the south or right bank is cultivated from the Eastern boundary of the Township west to the west boundary of Sec. 9, and with one or two very slight openings the cultivation is continuous for the entire distance. This year it was in corn chiefly, there being occasional patches of wheat, but corn is the main crop, the stalks of which are still standing.

There is a mill in Sec. 16, I think in the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ but of this I am not certain as it was impossible to get bearings to it from the lines. This mill is run by water power, and consists of 2 stones or burs, as they are termed in the East,

about 18 in. in diameter and will grind corn at the rate of 2 Bushels in 24 hours. This is an immense turnout, and is quite in keeping with the arts and sciences as practiced in New Mexico among the Mexicans. Whilst at work in this township I saw 4 Mexicans with a cart, the wheels and axle of which formerly belonged to a U.S. Cannon, loaded with about 20 bushels of corn, and they were just as long grinding it as we were surveying the township. They completed their grinding & returned the same evening with us to the town. They eat the meal thus obtained, Bran, shorts and all.

The water from the Rio Polomas from Sec. 8 passes through the Acequia, and is sufficient to irrigate all land within its valley. Above Sec. 8 it is quite a stream, swift & pure water, and rocky bed, and I am told it is supplied from springs within the limits of Sec. 6, if not, but a short dist. beyond the Township boundary. The acequia extends 1 mile beyond the eastern boundary of the township & the water from it is used in the town of Rio Polomas.²⁶⁸

Isaac Short's descriptions of Las Palomas in December 1867 confirm a more general impression. This is that all such Hispanic settlements were initiated by an organized group of people who moved to a new area and gave their first priority to digging an acequia, laying out their fields and planting crops. Temporary housing would do for awhile. If they could hold on for the first year in the face of whatever adversities, they had a much better chance of making their 'colony' permanent. This is what was behind the petition of September 5, 1867 (see Appendix). Evidently the petitioners got the help they needed since they stayed that year. Their descendents remained until 1938, when the Las Palomas townsite was bought up as part of the land acquisitions for Caballo Reservoir.

Follett found 360 acres irrigated from springs in the Rio Palomas as of 1896 while Yeo reported the Las Palomas ditch carried irrigation water for 495 acres of land in 1928. The head for the Las Palomas ditch system lay 8.5 miles upstream from the townsite.²⁶⁹ Crop failures in this valley were reportedly rare. As of 1940 things had changed very little, and the 1939



Fig. 11 Palomas Creek Valley, looking up the valley from near the village of Las Palomas. June 28, 1939. Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library; Herbert W. Yeo Records, Box 12.

photograph looking up the Palomas Creek Valley showed a situation very similar to what Isaac Stuck had mapped in 1867 (Figs. 7, 11). The corresponding view of Las Palomas and the adjacent Rio Grande Valley in 1939 confirmed that the main river valley had no fields (Fig. 12). Today, although the townspeople have moved elsewhere, some farming is still carried on in the Palomas Creek Valley.

When attorney P.W. Dent came through in 1910 making his purchase contracts for the lands that became Elephant Butte Reservoir, the conservatism of the people was striking:



Fig. 12 Village of Las Palomas, looking north-northeast. Rio Grande Valley in background cleared of brush and trees. Palomas Creek is in lower right foreground. June 28, 1939. Rio Grande Historical Collections New Mexico State University Library; Herbert W. Yeo Records, Box 12.

.... He found the most primitive conditions prevailing all along the way, the people living very much as they must have lived a century or two ago. The old time flint and steel for starting fires and lighting cigarettes is still in use to a limited extent and the people are extremely expert in its use,²⁷⁰

Stoes²⁷¹ confirmed this impression. P.J. Smith, the first County Agent for Sierra County, found that people were still growing the old Sonora wheat. Irrigation water was scarce in the height of the growing season, in spite of which the Agent had gotten some of the progressive farmers to grow alfalfa. As a rule, however,

The farm houses in this county are mostly frame shacks, log cabins, dobie huts, or Mexican 'jacals'. The farm implements

are few, in poor condition, and belong in the age of our ancestors. Inquiry showed that the average farmer could not afford to spend a sufficient amount at any one time, to build a good house or purchase expensive machinery.

A well prepared seed-bed should be the rule on all farms. It is a rule that is not observed here, as the ground is scarcely disturbed in preparation, planted by children, scratched once by the farmer and the crop left to Providence.²⁷²

These descriptions indeed echo the detailed accounts of New Mexico agriculture reported to the Commissioner of Patents in 1851 and 1852. Alfalfa had been grown elsewhere in New Mexico since the 1880's.

Despite the seeming indifference to cultivation, the primitive utensils and shallow plowing, and the reliance upon silt deposited by irrigation waters to fertilize the land, agriculture in New Mexico was surprisingly successful. The crops were suited to the country and only when conditions beyond the control of the farmers intervened - floods, droughts, Indian raids - did their system fail. Otherwise it produced a sufficiency and until the waters of the Rio Grande began to fail after 1880, in most communities the standard of living was adequate.

All of the villages along the Rio Grande disappeared with construction of the Elephant Butte Dam and Reservoir if not earlier, so that today only two of the early settlements in Sierra County - Monticello (Cañada Alamosa) and Cuchillo - are living communities.

CONCLUSIONS

No Pueblo Indians dwelt in Sierra County historically. By at least the early 17th century the Gila Apaches were living there. Until 1747 the Apaches were rarely mentioned; after that the Spanish warred against them for the next 40 years. From about 1790 until 1831 the Apaches remained generally peaceful. After the Mexican government's reservation program collapsed, the Indians devastated northern Mexico. During the early American period to 1861 the Apaches in southwestern New Mexico were again relatively quiet. From 1861 until the beginning of the reservation period in 1869 the Southern Apaches and some Mes-caleros carried on an unrelenting warfare.

The Spanish and later the Americans realized that the Southern Apaches did not have a completely self-sufficient economy and for part of the year they either had to raid or be rationed in order to eat. This shortage may have been a result of the nearly continuous campaigning against them during the 1770's and 1780's, which disrupted their agriculture and led them to virtually abandon it. Prior to that the Gila Apaches had farmed extensively with the aid of irrigation, in the manner that the Western Apaches did in the 19th century. The earliest historical remains in present-day Sierra County might be Apache irrigation works, if any of these have survived and can be identified. Dwellings were probably too impermanent for traces to be left.

There is no evidence that any Apache bands lived in what is now western Sierra County as of 1846-49. How long that country had been unoccupied is not known. In 1855, as a result of Indian Agent Michael Steck's efforts, the Southern Apaches began to resettle the tributary valleys west of the Rio Grande and practice irrigation agriculture under the tutelage of men contracted by Steck (Fig. 2). This continued until 1861 when war erupted with all of the

Southern Apaches, followed by the Civil War and a Confederate invasion.

In 1869 the Southern Apaches claimed that they wanted to settle down and begin farming. A partial peace followed in 1869-71, during which they had a temporary reservation at the Ojos Calientes on upper Alamosa Creek. They were returned there to a short-lived reservation in 1874-78 (Fig. 3). After that the Indians left for a reservation in Arizona and saw New Mexico again only as raiders - Victorio, Nana, and others - until the last hostilities died away in 1885. The name 'Warm Springs Apaches' came into use during the 1874-78 period, as a collective term for all of the Apaches on the Ojo Caliente Reservation.

The Southern Apaches and their ancestors lived along the western tributaries of the Rio Grande during two periods, from ??? until around 1790, and again beginning in 1855 for about 20 years. Prior to 1790 and between 1855 - 1860 they farmed, using irrigation works, although in the 19th century they also depended upon rations. Without farm products there were very few natural food resources in that country. Apache farm locations would have been relatively stable but their habitation sites were not necessarily tied to these; crops may have been tended only occasionally during the growing season. After 1860 Apache sites would have been short-term camps.

At the beginning of the Territorial period there were no towns or villages in the 130-mile stretch of the Rio Grande drainage between San Antonio and Doña Ana, N.M. The first settlers moved to Paraje in 1857. A small civilian community at Fort Thorn began in 1854. Within present-day Sierra County, Hispanic settlers made their first settlement at a location below the mouth of the Cañada Alamosa, calling their village San Ygnacio de la Alamosa. This was in 1859. They came as an organized group or colony, with over 300 people. The townsite was more familiarly known as Alamosa (Figs. 1, 4).

At that time and for another 20 years this was Indian country. Hostile Indians ravaged the Lower Rio Grande Valley, beginning with Navajo raids in 1859-60. During the Civil War, Alamosa was still the only settlement between Paraje and Fort Thorn. In June of 1863 Fort McRae was established in a strategic pass, the Cañon del Muerto, just east of the Rio Grande (Fig. 9). The community at Alamosa broke up in 1866 or 1867 with part of the citizens moving to Alamocita on the opposite (east) bank of the Rio Grande and others relocating upstream near their fields on Alamosa Creek. They called the village there Cañada Alamosa.

In October and November 1866 the Apaches turned Cañada Alamosa into a battleground.²⁷³ Some of the people left and established a new town, originally called Rio Palomas, at the mouth of Palomas Creek. This settlement was soon known as Las Palomas (Figs. 6, 7).

In 1869 the Apache raiding quieted and many of the Indians sought to have a reservation created at the Ojos Calientes on upper Alamosa Creek. At the same time several new villages - San José, San Albino, Zapata - sprang up along the Rio Grande (Figs. 3, 5). The Cuchillo Negro settlement probably dates from 1871 although the farmlands had been cultivated earlier by people living in Alamocita. After 1900 Cuchillo Negro was shortened to Cuchillo. Cañada Alamosa became the Monticello post office in 1881.

In most of these towns the population was entirely native New Mexicans or had one or two non-Hispanics. Las Palomas differed in that more Anglos lived there, perhaps a reflection of this town's greater economic importance. In all of these communities the people had irrigated fields which they farmed on their own accounts or worked in as laborers. Until the 1880's there were virtually no other opportunities. A combination of flood damage and reduced flow

in the Rio Grande after 1880 reduced farming in the Rio Grande Valley to insignificance. People moved away or drifted into wage labor. The major western tributaries - Alamosa Creek, the Cuchillo Negro and Palomas Creek - had water supplies that were more constant and generally more controllable. Farming continued there.

Engineering studies during the 20th century made it clear that several types of irrigation systems were in use. In the relatively narrow valley of the Rio Grande, the villagers farmed the river bends - fertile terraces or second bottoms susceptible of irrigation, but also subject to damage or loss when the river flooded and changed its course (Figs. 4, 5). This system began to decline in the 1880's and by 1910 it had practically ceased to exist. Economic factors as well as physiographic ones weighed in this decline.

At Cañada Alamosa, Cuchillo Negro and Las Palomas, the fields received water via diversion ditches that delivered perennial stream flows from a head further upstream (Figs. 7, 10). These systems provided more constant if sometimes inadequate supplies; cultivated lands were developed to the extent of the available water. Dams were temporary affairs built for diversion, not for the storage of water, and the absence of reservoirs placed a limit on the amounts of land that could be watered. Ditch irrigation along the major tributaries was in any case more reliable and controllable than farming in the Rio Grande Valley although flood damage was still a hazard.

Still another type was flood irrigation. This depended upon diversion of flood waters from a normally dry creek bed by the usual diversion dam, ditch and laterals, or by spreader dams. This was practiced chiefly in the lower Alamosa and Percha valleys (Fig. 10). Since the yields were unpredictable, lands dependent entirely upon flood waters were largely devoted to feed crops.

Flood irrigation works may date mostly to the 20th century, but the remains of such a system along lower Alamosa Creek possibly belonged to the San Ygnacio de la Alamosa settlement. Flood irrigation could produce good crops.

U.S. Census schedules for productions in agriculture showed a very limited range of crops - corn, wheat, some barley and a few beans. Any of these might have been taken in trade by local merchants. The produce that was not bartered would support the family until the next year. In a bad year people probably went into debt but they would not have gone hungry. By 1885 some of the irrigated land - 20 percent of it at Las Palomas, 34 percent at Cuchillo Negro - was used for feed and forage crops or as permanent pasture rather than for growing foodstuffs. Local produce, including the occasional potato crops, would have had a ready sale at the mining camps in the Black Range. A couple of references suggested that the Southern Apaches intended to feast on crops grown by nearby Hispanic farmers rather than grow their own at the Ojo Caliente Reservation.²⁷⁴

Each farmer had his own work animals but the raising of livestock for sale, particularly sheep and later Angora goats, was limited to a few individuals. The range cattle industry came to Sierra County at about the same time as the mining boom, in the 1880's. There was one large ranch, based at Las Palomas, and it had disappeared by 1900. Mining towns adjacent to the Black Range provided limited local markets and opportunities for wage work, but the census schedules reflected very little impact from mining on the economies of the earlier settlements.

Construction on Elephant Butte Dam began in July of 1910. Several of the river towns had already been abandoned and the surviving ones had lost many of their people. Cuchillo and Las Palomas however were evidently prospering. At

Las Palomas the Bureau of Reclamation purchased the townsite in 1938 in connection with Caballo Dam and Reservoir (Figs. 8, 11, 12). The green fields are gone now at Cuchillo and the population is much smaller, but that village lives on.

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The invariable ansr to inquiries on this head is, 'quien sabe.'" See Carson 1964: 284.

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APPENDIX

Document 1.

Report of Captain George McLane,
fight with Navajo Indians,
February 8, 1860

National Archives, Record Group 393. Microcopy 1120, Registers of Letters Received and Letters Received by Headquarters, Department of New Mexico, 1854-1865. Roll 12 (1860N-Z). File No. P6/1.

Fort Craig, N. Mex^O
February 11th 1860

Sir.

I have the honor to report for the information of the Commander of the Post, that pursuant to his verbal instructions, I left here at a quarter past nine o'clock, on the Morning of the 5th inst., with my Company ["I", RMR], consisting of Lieut. Edward P. Cressey and forty enlisted men, to intercept a party, or parties, of Navajoe Indians, who had driven off large herds of sheep above this post, and who were supposed to be making their way down the river, on the east side, to cross at the Ojo del Muerto, or some place further south. I reached the Mexican settlement of Alamosa, thirty-five miles south of here, and opposite the mouth of the Cañon del Muerto, in which is the spring of Ojo del Muerto, after a gallop of four hours. I here learned from some Mexicans that had just come over from the Cañon that the Indians had not passed through - that they would probably cross further below. Don Jesus Lunas, one of Fremonts' Mountaineers, and who was one of my guides on this occasion, was of this opinion, and strongly urged upon me the propriety of moving down to some of the other passes. He had just returned from Capt. Hatch, who had on the 2d inst., started from here in pursuit on the east side of the river, and who had sent him into the post, to request, that a party should be sent down on this side; he thought that Captain Hatch would pursue the Indians, and that if they made for the Cañon of Del Muerto, could not fail to overtake them.

Accordingly, after feeding my animals, and resting them for a few hours, I started again at five o'clock, and Camped that night at a pass some fifteen miles further down. Capt. Manuel Chavis, an experienced and excellent Mexican guide + soldier, with a small party passed this post on the 2d inst., and had pushed down the Country on the east side of the river, passing through the Cañon del Muerto, and arriving at the Ojo del Muerto, about dusk on the evening of the 5th inst.; here he learned from some Mexicans, whom I had left to watch that pass, that I was below; he immediately dispatched an express to me, requesting me to hold on for him, and in a few hours afterward rode into my Camp. He advised, that I should at the break of day, move down some twenty miles further. He expressed the belief, that the Indians were making for the lower passes. Well acquainted with his reputation as a guide and Indian hunter, I could not be otherwise than governed under the circumstances by his opinion, and accordingly, that morning, I moved down the country, and concealed my men in Camp some twenty two or three miles north of Fort Thorn. Before leaving Alamosa on the 5th inst. however, spies were employed to watch the Cañon of Del Muerto.

At five o'clock on the evening of the 6th inst., these spies galloped into my Camp, and informed me, that at one o'clock that evening the Indians had reached the mouth of the Cañon - that it would take them until night to cross - that about forty Mexicans at the settlement opposite the pass, had armed themselves, and would annoy the Indians, as much as possible, until we would come up. It was a long distance for my jaded animals, yet, I did not hesitate an instant. In fifteen minutes, my men were in the saddle, and by a quarter after nine o'clock that night, I reached the foard

McLane to Post Adjutant, February 11, 1860, page 2:

(a distance of thirty three miles) where the Indians had crossed.

On my arrival at this point, I learned from the Mexicans, that the Indians numbering about fifty warriors, and driving some twelve thousand sheep, came down to the river a little after 2 o'clock P.M., when for the first time they discovered that they were watched, and supposing that the Mexicans would show them fight, fled precipitately, abandoning such of the sheep as had not crossed, and carrying off only some three or four thousand. They did not fire on the Mexicans, and these foolish fellows, were too glad to be let off in this manner, to make pursuit.

My animals could go no further. Captain Chavis' were in the same condition. Pursuit the next morning with our animals was out of the question. There was nothing to be done, but to furnish Col. Porter with a report of the direction the Indians were taking, and accordingly, I dispatched the following morning (7th) Capt. Chavis with several of his men on fresh animals to the post, for the purpose of giving the Colonel the information necessary to intercept the Indians, and to assist the troops in doing so. Capt. Chavis with six Mexicans arrived at the post after Col. Porter had left on a scout; but with provisions started immediately after him, and was only prevented from joining him, in consequence of an attack made on him, by a large number of Indians, forty miles from the post, who killed two of his party and wounded three after a desperate fight of several hours; the Captain making good his escape with his wounded, under cover of the night and returned here yesterday (10th) by the assistance of a few troops sent out to him that morning by Bvt. Capt. Hatch, who had received information the day before of Capt. Chavis' situation.

With my Company on the morning of the 7th inst., I moved up the river a few miles to obtain Fodder from the settlement of Alamosa, and was here joined by Sergeant Somday and twelve men on my Company who had brought me down the Forage and rations I had requested might be sent me, in my note of the 5th inst. from Alamosa, to the Commander of this post.

On the morning of the 8th inst. about nine o'clock, my attention was called to a dust in the Cañon del Muerto. Supposing that it was occasioned by another party of Indians bringing through more sheep, as it proved to be, I immediately saddled up. I directed Corporal Leammy with ten men, to proceed to the foard opposite the mouth of the Cañon, there to intercept such Indians as might escape in that direction from me in the Cañon; and with the remainder of my men (forty in number) I galloped for the Cañon. I succeeded with the aid of Don Jesus Lomas and two other Mexicans in entering the Cañon undiscovered by the Indians until within some nine hundred or a thousand yards of them. On seeing me, they divided into three parties. Some twelve or fifteen horsemen to the left, evidently with the intention of attacking me in the rear: Another party of some ten or twelve men, partially on foot, made for the river, carrying off with them, about a thousand sheep and forty-five head of cattle; and a third party about forty or forty-five warriors strong, entirely on foot, armed with the Rifle and Bow, fled to the hill side.

McLane to Post Adjutant, February 11, 1860, page 3:

Dispatching Lieut. Edward P. Cressey with a party to the left, this accomplished young officer, gallantly dashed after the mounted men, and chased them for some five or six miles back into the Cañon - thus preventing their attack on my rear, and securing the sheep from re-capture by the mounted Indians, while I attacked the party that fled to the hill side. Following this party to the base of the hill, I dismounted my men, and attacked the Indians with great effect - driving them over the hill, killing thirteen Indians and wounding several. Hearing and seeing nothing of Lieut. Cressey, and it being impossible for my horses to ascend the hill, I deemed it prudent to continue my pursuit no further, and accordingly rallied my men, mounted them, and proceeded to collect the animals & our Booty captured; consisting of some four thousand sheep, forty nine head of cattle, nine Indian ponies, two Burros, and a number of Blankets, their Packs &c. &c.

Placing these animals under charge of Sergt. James Louris and a small party of men with the Mexicans, to drive out of the Cañon, I went in pursuit of Lieut. Cressey, whom I found in a few minutes, on his return from the chase of the Mounted Indians. We then proceeded to the river, where I found Corporal William Leammy, who had with great credit to himself, intercepted the party that fled to the river, killing two of them, and taking from them all their sheep and cattle (one thousand sheep & forty five cattle) and two of their ponies. The conduct of Corporal Wm. Leammy on this occasion is worthy of the highest commendation.

The conduct of my men in the whole affair was excellent. 1st Sergeant Peter McGrath well sustained the high reputation which he has heretofore earned for coolness and daring - his gallant bearing during the affair was the admiration of all. Sergeant George Somday and Pvts. Thomas Gillan and Michael Ronayne particularly attracted my attention - their coolness and gallantry would have distinguished them anywhere. Sergeant Somday bore himself most handsomely in a single combat with a young brave. Pvt. Thomas Gillan killed two Indians, and Pvt. Michael Ronayne one. Pvt. Charles Kaufmann charged upon an Indian, killed him with his pistol, and took away his horse. Sergeant Louris and Pvts. Alexander W. Brown, Peter Reilly and Bugler John Welde, were by their gallantry and bearing, particularly distinguished. Lieut. Cressey whose good judgement and gallant diversion, to my left, prevented the animals from being re-captured, while I pursued the party to the hill side, recommends to my notice, that excellent non-commissioned officer, Corporal John J. Knox, who gallantly charged side by side with the Lieutenant, in his pursuit of the mounted Indians.

Leaving Sergeant James Louris, with ten men, to remain at Alamosa for a few days, I started on the 9th from there for this post with my Company, and the two herds of sheep taken at the Cañon del Muerto, numbering near twelve thousand, and arrived here yesterday morning (10th inst.).

I am Sir, Very Respectfully,
Your Obdt. Servt.

Bvt. Capt. Jno. P. Hatch
Post Adjutant
Fort Craig, N.M.

George McLane
Captain R.M.R. Commg. Comp'y. I

Documents 2, 3, 4

Three newspaper accounts of the skirmish at Alamosa,
September 25, 1861

ANOTHER VICTORY.

BATTLE OF LA MOSA.

One Hundred and Eight Confederates Route Four Com-
panies of U.S. Regulars - One Company of New
Mexican Volunteers Taken Prisoners - Federal Loss,
Twenty Killed - Only One Confederate Killed and
Three Wounded.

From the Mesilla Times Extra, Sept. 27.

An express reached here last night with the intelligence of an engagement between a detachment of Confederates, numbering 108 officers and men, under Capt. Coopwood, being composed of portions of Capt. Coopwood's Spy Company, Capt. Walker's, and Company E of the 2d Texas Mounted Rifle Regiment, and four companies of Regulars in the U.S. Army, near the village of La Mosa, in the Rio Grande Valley, about 60 miles above this place. Capt. Mink's company of New Mexican Volunteers were stationed at this village, being the Federal advance. On this company being surprised by Capt. Coopwood's command, they laid down their arms and refused to fight, declaring that they had enlisted expressly and only to fight the Indians. The men were sworn not to fight against the Southern Confederacy and discharged. The officers were made prisoners of war.

Capt. Coopwood's command then started on their return, with the prisoners; but they had gone only a short distance, when they were attacked by four companies of mounted regulars. After a sharp struggle the regulars were forced to retreat, with a loss of 20 men killed, and were pursued several miles in the direction of Fort Craig.

Fearing the Federalists would receive reinforcements from Fort Craig, Capt. Coopwood withdrew his men in the direction of Old Fort Thorn; and about six miles above that post, finding a strong, natural position, with plenty of forage for his animals, he encamped and dispatched an express for reinforcements.

Late last night and early this morning, several companies of troops started for the scene of action, including the remainder of Capt. Coopwood's, Capt. Walker's and E Company of the Mounted Rifles; Capt. Frazier's Arizona Guards; Capt. Walker's Company; Capt. Teel's Light Artillery; with a battery of five guns. The whole united force will be about 400 men. They expect to be in possession of Fort Craig within 48 hours.

In the engagement near La Mosa, Dr. Wright of Capt. Coopwood's Company, an old Texas pioneer, and late resident of El Paso, was killed. Three of the command were wounded.

At sunrise, on the morning of the 26th, while the command was breakfasting, the pickets came running in, announcing the approach of the regulars. In fifteen minutes about 200 men came in sight, being three companies of mounted regulars, a portion of Capt. Hubbell's, and the remainder of Capt. Mink's mounted volunteers, supposed to be under the command of Col. Roberts. They rode up within 600 yards of our position, dismounted, and formed into two lines, raking our position with cross fires. Our men were under cover of trees, high grass, and a ravine, but the horses were exposed. The regulars, likewise, fought under cover, not choosing to charge, though double in numbers. A continual fire was kept up for five hours between the forces, at a distance from 400 to 600 yards. Many of the Federalists were seen to fall. The commander was seen to fall from his horse, and was borne from the field by four men, as if dead. On the fall of their leader, the Federalists retreated from their warm position, carrying off their dead and wounded.

Dr. W.C. Wright, of Capt. Coopwood's company, was killed instantly, and Robt. W. Lyon, of the same company, was mortally wounded, and has since died. The following Confederates were also wounded: Of Capt. Pyron's company - Sergt. O'Grady, an arm bone fractured; Corporal Robinson, slightly wounded in the hand; F. Carrilly, flesh wound in the arm; T.W. Murphy and T. Connelly, flesh wound in the hip; E Co. Mtd. Rifles - A. Lambert, flesh wound in the cheek. Coopwood's Spy Company - Sergt. Quinn, flesh wound in the right cheek; Fred. Kessler, wounded in the left arm; 31 of our horses were also killed by the enemy.

On the withdrawal of the Federalists, Capt. Coopwood commenced preparing for another attack. The camp was entrenched, a well dug in the ravine, and the horses watered from hats and mess pans. The command remained in this position twenty-two hours after the retreat of the Federals, and then slowly withdrew in the direction of the Mesilla Valley.

LATER FROM ARIZONIA.

BATTLE OF ALAMOSA - FIVE HOURS HARD
FIGHTING.

The Mesilla Times, of the 3rd inst., has the following account of the brilliant affair of Alamosa, on the 25th and 26th ultimo:

Our extra of the 27th, which was hastily issued for the mail going South, giving an account of this battle, was, in a measure, incorrect in some of its details, but contained the report rife in Mesilla at the time. The following, however, can be relied upon, as the intelligence has been gathered from those who were present:

Capt. Coopwood, with a command of 114 men and officers, being 45 of the Spy Company, 45 of Capt. Pyron's Company, under command of Lieut. Poor, and 24 of E Company of the 2d Texas Mounted Rifles, under Sergt. Brown, surprised at 3 o'clock on the morning of the 25th, a company of New Mexican volunteers, under the command of Capt. Mink, being the Federal advance, at the village of Alamosa, on the Rio Grande, 60 miles north of this place.

The volunteers ran at the first fire, with the exception of Capt. Mink and ten men, who kept up a continuous fire from the houses and corrals until daylight, when they surrendered unconditionally, having three men killed and four wounded. No one of Capt. Coopwood's company was hurt. Twenty-five animals, nineteen guns, several revolvers, and several boxes of ammunition were taken. The privates taken were sworn not to fight against the Confederacy and discharged; the captain, lieutenant, orderly sergeant, and three teamsters, were made prisoners of war. Both the officers and men declared that they had been trifled with - that they had enlisted expressly and only to fight Indians, and had no desire to fight Americans.

Capt. Coopwood then withdrew his men in the direction of Mesilla, and camped thirty miles this side of Alamosa.

From Arizona. - We have been shown a copy of the Mesilla Times of the 3rd inst., from which we learn that Arizona is in a most deplorable condition. The Indians are having their own way in that portion of this Territory, and it may be imagined that they rule with no light hand. According to the Times "nineteen-twentieths of the Territory of Arizona is under their undisputed control." One-twentieth of the Territory therefore remains in the possession of the Texans. - That leaves a small field for the army of occupation to operate in, and proves the Indians to be quite as good, if not better, at conquest than the Texans.

The paper before us says: "Every day brings from the East, West, North and South, appalling additions to our black list of Indian murders. - Houses deserted, friends fallen victims to the savage foe." The Apaches have fully united their tribes, and the war which they wage is one of extermination. The unprotected ranch and the towns fare alike. No force can be obtained sufficiently strong to resist the overpowering attacks of the desperate savages.

The Times also contains an account of the fight at Alamosa, in which Capt. Mink and ten of his men were taken prisoners, and of the subsequent engagement, thirty miles south of Alamosa, on the 26th of September, the day after the affair with Capt. Mink. The report is gotten up in the usual sensation order, awarding unbounded laudation to the officers and men who did the fighting, and apothecaizing those who fell in the combat. In the statement in reference to the United States troops, there are some inaccuracies which should not be permitted to pass uncorrected. Instead of being commanded by Col. Roberts, they were under charge of Capt. Robt. M. Morris of the Rifles. Col. Roberts not having been there, was not seen to fall from his horse and per consequence was not "bourne" from the field by four men as if dead. Neither was Capt. Morris in any manner injured. The casualties of the fight so far as our troops were concerned consisted of two privates slightly and one seriously wounded.

In the fight of the 26th the Federal troops had decidedly the best of it, having suffered but little while the confederate loss even according to the statement of the Times, was considerable.

Document 5

Petition for a guard or for arms and ammunition,
citizens of (Cañada) Alamosa,
October 12, 1866

National Archives, Record Group 98. Tomás Montoya et. al., Alamosa, N.M., to Commandant, Fort Craig, October 12, 1866. LR, Ft. Craig, AC (no file number). Copy in Schroeder Collection, Southern and Western Apache file, NMSRCA, Santa Fe.

(Jacket endorsements)

Requests a guard or ammunition & arms for the inhabitants of Alamoca to protect themselves against Indians.

Cannot be granted at present.

Rec'd Ft. Craig Oct. 15"/66

(Petition)

Alamosa N.M. Octubre 12, 1866

Sr. Comandante del Fuerte Craig

Con mucho respeto, tenemos el honor los abajo firmados, de acer patente de V. todos los ultrajes que continuamente estamos recibiendo por los indios. Nada menos que el dia de ayer han venido y levantado groseramente una labor de mais de que han levantado nras. que cien costales y soltado ensima del mismo sembrado toda lo caballada en que levantaron la dicha suma de mais. y por esto nos vemos posirados á pedir de V. nos protega de algun modo con escolta o armas y municiones, pues parte de la gente no tiené unas armas y nos vemos por esto posirados á suplicar de la honda el de V. se digne concedernos el alivio de nuestros males.

Y con este quedamos con mucho respeto de V.

Tomás Montoya

Jues de Paz precinto de Alamosa

Ysidro Romero
Juan Montoya
Manuel Chaves
Juan N. Montoya
J.D. Emerson
J. _app

Luís Trujillo

Juan José Trujillo
José Romero
Juan Romero
Juan Abeyta
Juan Lucero
Bonifacio Justamante
Francisco Lucero
José Lionardo Torres
Fernandes Corrasco

Francisco Padia
Balentin Padia
Manuel Torres
José Ato Tafoya
Caspio Barela
Juan Trujillo

Paulino Aldos
José Estanislado Garcia
Simon Grijalva
José Ato Chaves
Bernabel Chaves
José Ato Errero
Lavino Errero
Ricardo Candelario

Perio Gonsales
Ricardo Gonsales
Santiago N.
Ricardo N.
Juan Valencia
Jesus Chaves

Document 6

Petition for arms or protection,
citizens of Rio Palomas,
September 5, 1867

