

# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Volume 44, No. 3 · El Paso, Texas · Fall, 1999

**Marilyn C. Gross**  
Editor

**Richard Field**                      **James M. Day**  
Associate Editors

**Margaret Burlingame**  
Assistant to the Editor

**Richard Baquera**  
Book Review Editor

### **Editorial Board**

J. Morgan Broadus, Clinton Hartmann, Douglas Meed, Leon Metz,  
Mary Ann Plaut, Carol Price, Claudia Rivers

### **Honorary Board Members**

Mrs. John J. Middagh, Martha Patterson Peterson, Mrs. Eugene O. Porter

Graphic Artist    Denise K. Mankin  
Historical Society Logo    José Cisneros

ARTICLES APPEARING IN THIS JOURNAL ARE  
ABSTRACTED AND INDEXED IN  
**HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS** and **AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE**

Correspondence regarding articles for **PASSWORD** may be directed to the editor at  
5133 Orleans, El Paso, Texas 79924

### **GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS**

**PASSWORD** requests that writers send a query letter and self-addressed stamped envelope before submitting material. Manuscripts should be double-spaced on 8½ x 11 inch paper, one side only, standard margins. Ideal maximum length is 20 pages including documentation. Shorter articles are welcome. For style and format consult recent issues of the quarterly. Please attach a brief biographical sketch. Photographs and illustrations should be accompanied by identifying captions. This material will be returned after publication. If you wish, you may also submit your article on disk using WordPerfect 6 or 7, Microsoft Word, or ASCII DOS Text, but it must be accompanied by a hard copy. There is no stipend for articles published. All articles or book reviews published become the property of the Society and are copyrighted.

The per-copy price of **PASSWORD** is \$6.25 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Correspondence regarding **back numbers, defective copies, and changes of address** should be addressed to:

Membership Secretary, El Paso County Historical Society, P.O. Box 28, El Paso, Texas 79940.  
Society Membership of \$25.00 per year includes a subscription to **PASSWORD**.

**PASSWORD** (ISSN 0031-2738) is published quarterly by  
**THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**, 603 W. Yandell, El Paso, Texas 79902

Periodicals Postage Paid at El Paso, Texas

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to**

**PASSWORD**  
The El Paso County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 28  
El Paso, Texas 79940

# PASSWORD

VOLUME 44, NO. 3  
FALL, 1999  
EL PASO, TEXAS



## CONTENTS

- 107 **El Paseño, Padre  
Ramón Ortiz: 1814-1896** ..... SAMUEL E. SISNEROS
- 122 **Business and Professional Members**
- 123 **The Irish/English Conflict  
of New Mexico's  
Lincoln County War** ..... JOHN R. MOORE
- 143 **Río, Mesa, and Sierra:  
An Environmental History  
of the Greater El Paso Area  
PART II** ..... DAN SCURLOCK
- 155 **Book Review**
- Christine Preston, Douglas Preston and  
José Antonio Esquibel, *The Royal Road:  
El Camino Real from Mexico City to Santa Fe* ..... DR. GEORGE TOROK



*Misión de Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe del Paso del Norte  
and Padre Ramón Ortiz. Original drawing by the author.*

© The El Paso County Historical Society, El Paso, Texas 1999

The El Paso County Historical Society  
disclaims responsibility for the statements and opinions of the contributors.

Entered as Periodical mail at El Paso, Texas



# El Paseño, Padre Ramón Ortiz: 1814-1896

By Samuel E. Sisneros

**A**s with many historical figures, the life of Padre Ramón Ortiz is shrouded with myths, truths, and half-truths. Though not much has been written about the *cura* of El Paso del Norte and surrounding parishes, Padre Ramón Ortiz could be considered among the illustrious figures of regional Mexican history. He is one of the few *Paseños*<sup>1</sup> of the nineteenth century whose accomplishments, character and prestige are worthy of historical essays, yet he is virtually unknown in academia and in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

Although some historical information concerning the work of Padre Ramón Ortiz as a priest and as a humanitarian and statesman is provided by correspondence among early Anglo-American settlers in the El Paso valley, newspaper articles, and family oral history, there is little information on his background and family. Herein will be presented previously unpublished material on his early life which will unveil the many connections that Ortiz had with people of influence and prestige. These connections, combined with his own courage and hard work, prepared him for a life of service to God, man, and country.

A committed *Paseño* in heart and in deed, Padre Ramón Ortiz's life began on the serene hillsides below the Sangre de Cristo mountains in Santa Fe, the capital of the Spanish province of New Mexico. Although an incorrect birth date was printed in the *El Paso Daily Herald*,<sup>3</sup> the actual birth date is found in the recently microfilmed Archives of the Archdiocese of Durango, Mexico.<sup>4</sup> In the papers describing his ordination, the Vicar of Santa Fe, the Most Reverend Juan Felipe Ortiz, certifies that "according to public knowledge" Padre Ramón Ortiz was born on January 28, 1814 to don Antonio Ortiz and doña Teresa Miera. His parents were descendants of prominent families which dated back to early

colonial New Mexico, Chihuahua, and Mexico City.<sup>5</sup> He was the last son born into a family of eleven children.

Insight into Ramón's early social influences can be found in the Archives of the Diocese of Durango, where his birth date was given. Padre Juan Felipe Ortiz, Ramón's third cousin, reveals in his letter that Ramón's godparents at baptism were the Lieutenant Colonel don José Manrique, Governor of New Mexico (1808-1814) and his wife doña Inez Tellez. *Padrinos*, or godparents, hold an important social and political role in the extended family in Latin cultures. It is an institution that bonds non-relatives into a family. Ramón's *padrinos*, the Governor and first lady, certainly, were influential in his future life. It is likely that the Ortiz family, as with other privileged families in Santa Fe were *hacenderos*. Even today, some Ortiz families are still shepherders in northern New Mexico.<sup>6</sup> The only known biography of Padre Ramón Ortiz is a monograph written by Fidelia Miller Puckett in 1950, which does not give much information about Ramón's childhood or upbringing.<sup>7</sup>

Puckett interviewed the grandchildren of Padre Ramón Ortiz's sisters, Ana María and María del Rosario. The detailed accounts of their interviews are very interesting but are not supported by the primary documents of his life. As an example of this, a story related by Puckett says that when Ramón was born, and the family was finally blessed with a son, his mother, doña Teresa, made a solemn vow that she would return her gratitude by rearing her son to become a priest. The story continues: even before Ramón was born, don Antonio Ortiz, her husband, had died, and a week after Ramón's birth, doña Teresa also died. On her death bed, she entrusted her newborn to the eldest daughter Ana Maria and her husband the *alférez* Fernando Delgado, and admonished them to carry out the promise that Ramón would become a priest. A few years later Ramón's adoptive father was killed, leaving his sister/adoptive mother a widow.<sup>8</sup> Such is the story as romanticized by Puckett and which was later dramatized in a radio program entitled "Builders of El Paso," which aired on Sunday, November 5, 1939,<sup>9</sup> on station KTSM.

This story, like many family recollections or traditions, provides insights and interesting anecdotes, but lacks conclusive evidence to help clarify certain chronologies or results of an event.<sup>10</sup> A document recently found in the Historical Archives of the Archdiocese of Durango contains the 1821 census of Santa Fe, New

Mexico which clarifies this episode of young Ortiz's life.<sup>11</sup> In the barrio of Torreón, which is located in the present city of Santa Fe, is listed the household of young Ramón Ortiz.

The head of the household is don Antonio Ortiz, sixty-four years of age, married. Listed below him is doña Teresa Miera, married, age fifty; Ana María, widow, age twenty-five; María Refugio, nineteen; Ramón age nine.<sup>12</sup> The Ortiz household also included five *agregados* or people who are not family members but who live in the household: María Dolores Campos, twenty-nine; María Antonia, nineteen; Dolores, nineteen; Josefa, four; and Guadalupe, seven. The following household is that of don Ramón's older brother Don Francisco de Paula Ortiz, age 31 and his wife doña Ana María de Arce, the stepdaughter of Alférez Antonio de Arce from Chihuahua.<sup>13</sup>

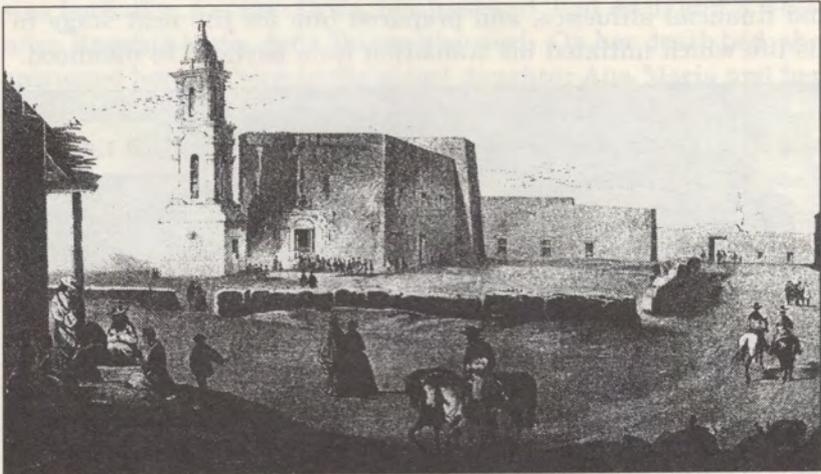
This census reveals that don Ramón Ortiz's parents did not die at his birth but rather they lived to see their youngest son become a priest.<sup>14</sup> The census also verifies the family oral history that Ana María was a widow sometime before 1821. She was the wife of the alférez don Fernando Delgado who was Ramón's first adoptive father according to Puckett's story.<sup>15</sup> It is apparent according to the census that he was not adopted by don Fernando Delgado nor by Ana María's second husband Lieutenant Colonel José Antonio Viscarra who was originally from Cuencamé, Durango and was the third Governor of New Mexico from 1822 to 1823 under the Mexican regime. Young Ramón became the brother-in-law of the governor, which, with his baptismal connection to the past Governor Manrique, might have provided Ramón with political and financial affluence, and prepared him for the next stage in his life which initiated his transition from boyhood to manhood.



*Ruins of San José de Concordia el Alto. From Calleros, El Paso Then and Now.*

The sacrament of confirmation was administered in Santa Fe, New Mexico on April 13, 1830<sup>16</sup> by the Bishop José Zubira of Durango. At the age of sixteen the young man was now ready for the education which would set him on the road to pursue his vocation of priesthood by attending the consular seminary in the city of Durango, Mexico. The aforementioned relationships assured that he got there.

The person who took young Ramón under his care and gave him the formal education that would prepare him for the study of the priesthood was the Vicar and priest from the City of Chihuahua, bachiller don Juan Rafael Rascón.<sup>17</sup> Visitador Father Rascón, when on leave to Santa Fe, took Ramón and some other students into his Santa Fe home to begin classes which started in 1829. There Ramón studied Spanish grammar and Latin, which he “passed with honors”<sup>18</sup> and was now ready for the seminary. In 1832, he was accompanied by Father Rascón to the Seminary in Durango, where he studied philosophy.<sup>19</sup> A year later, while taking course work in physics and ethics, he took a leave of absence in order to go with his mentor, Father Rascón, to the city of Chihuahua where he studied moral theology and its application. There he showed “great growth mature conduct without any bad habits” and it was “estimated by fellow seminarians who knew him that he did not drink, smoke, fight nor had he ever promised to marry.”<sup>20</sup> All of these traits corresponded, according to Father Rascón, to the fame and honor that Ramón’s parents had in the territory of New Mexico, “for being honorable old Christians,



*The Plaza and Church of El Paso 1857. Courtesy El Paso Public Library.*

God fearing and beneficiaries of the church."<sup>21</sup> On June 9, 1835, Ramón solicited re-entrance into the seminary at Durango and was admitted to complete his studies. Ortiz soon became a deacon and on March 11, 1837 petitioned to be dispensed of the normal ordination age of twenty-four years as he lacked ten months to meet the required age. He was given dispensation and was ordained at the hands of Bishop Zubiria on Holy Saturday, March 24, 1837.<sup>22</sup> Content and elated, Padre Ramón's father Antonio, possibly uttering his last words, drew up his last will and testament on April 27, 1837, which was less than a month after his son's ordination. This must have been a jubilant day for both of his parents, not to mention the fulfillment of the supposed solemn vow of his mother doña Teresa.<sup>23</sup>

The newly ordained *cura* Ramón Ortiz, according to family tradition was given his first pastoral assignment in a small mining village in Mexico.<sup>24</sup> There is no record to identify this parish and verify the family recollections. A year later in 1838, Padre Ramón Ortiz was assigned to the Parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Paso del Norte, in present day Ciudad Juárez, where he served for sixty-two years.<sup>25</sup> His priestly ministry led him to many churches throughout northern Chihuahua as his signature appears in many church registers in Carrizal, Casas Grandes, Janos, Namiquipas, and through out the El Paso del Norte valley including Socorro, Ysleta, San Elizario and La Mesilla, New Mexico.<sup>26</sup>

Situated at the Nuestra Señora del Guadalupe Church, Padre Ramón Ortiz began his life-long commitment to serve the valley of El Paso del Norte. His pastoral work paralleled his successes as a statesman and humanitarian. Padre Ortiz took residence not in the central district of El Paso del Norte but rather a few miles down river in the Chamizal, which was the site of a later United States-Mexico controversy.<sup>27</sup> It was there that Padre Ramón began his double role of entrepreneur and charitable priest. He established a large home complete with a dam and mill, which was in use up until 1865 when, it appears, a problem arose because his neighbors were interested in opening the dam for irrigation.<sup>28</sup> Puckett's interviews describe Ramón's home as being spacious and comfortable. It was the largest in the area, complete with guest bedrooms and large patios. It was surrounded by orchards, vineyards and corrals, which covered seven acres. Puckett described how Padre Ramón sent for his sisters, doña Ana María

and doña Rosario from Santa Fe. Once they were settled he made the "dangerous trip," as Puckett romanticized it, to Sonora, to rescue his widowed niece Josefa Delgado and her Samaniego children from a recent attack by Apaches. And thus was established in the Paso del Norte area the well-known Samaniego family.

The El Paso del Norte census of 1842 provides valuable information about Ramón's new household. The census listed only males living in the household and does not include the priest's sisters. His household is composed of the following individuals:

Ramón Ortiz, age twenty nine, parish priest; José Antonio Ortiz, age twenty, familiar, a member of the family; Mariáno Samaniego, ten; Anizeto Pino, eight years; Fernando Samaniego, six years; Vicente Ortiz, eight years.<sup>29</sup>

The José Antonio Ortiz listed in this census is most likely a nephew to the Padre. Vicente Ortiz, the last child in the household listing, is recorded as a Tarahumara in a latter census. He was probably baptized and adopted by Padre Ortiz who gave him the Ortiz surname. The Samaniego brothers listed were Ortiz's grand nephews and the Pino boy is probably his nephew. A closer examination of Ramón's sisters will define the relationships of these nephews.<sup>30</sup> According to Puckett's biography, Ana María, the eldest sister, was widowed twice. From her first husband Fernando Delgado, she had a daughter Josefa who was the niece Ortiz supposedly rescued later in Sonora. Josefa Delgado was born in Santa Fe in 1814 in the same year as Ramón Ortiz, married don Florentino Samaniego and moved to Bavispe, Sonora. Their known children were Fernando Samaniego, Mariáno Samaniego, mentioned later, and a daughter, María Refugio Samaniego, who married into the wealthy Daquerre family of El Paso del Norte. Ramón's other sister, María del Rosario, mentioned in Puckett's research, married don Francisco Sandoval in Santa Fe in 1821.<sup>31</sup> A sister not mentioned by Puckett is María Josefa who in 1826 married Manuel Doroteo Pino, the grandson of Pedro Bautista Pino who is best known for being the first and only deputy from the province of New Mexico to the Spanish Cortes in 1810.<sup>32</sup>

This Pino couple apparently never came to El Paso del Norte, but the young boy Anizeto Pino, listed in 1842 census, is most likely their son. It appears that Padre Ramón patterned himself after his mentor and educator Father Rascón, rearing and educating the young men who occupied his home. Although Ramón's

sisters Ana María and María del Rosario are not included in the 1842 Mexican census, they do appear in the 1844 Mexican census as being members of his household with their mother doña Teresa Miera who is listed as being seventy years of age. Apparently she died a few years later for she does not appear in the 1852 census of El Paso del Norte. The 1852 census includes essentially the same family members found in the census of 1844, excluding the mother.

. . . Ramón Ortiz, head of household, age 38, single, born in Santa Fe, priest, and knows how to read; Ana María Ortiz, age 52, widow, born in Santa Fe; María del Rosario Ortiz, age 49, widow, born in Santa Fe; Jose Delgado 38, widow, born in Santa Fe; Mariáno Samaniego, 29, single, born in Babispe, student, can read; Fernando Samaniego, 17, single, born in Babispe, traveler, can read; María Concepción Samaniego, 11, single, Babispe; María del Rosa Saldaña, 10, S, born in El Paso; Bicente Ortiz, 21, single, Tarahumara, house keeper; Jesus Sandoval, 13, single, Paso; Juana Nuñez, 34, widow, Paso, servant.<sup>33</sup>

This census, with earlier enumerations, discloses that Ramón Ortiz did bring his sisters and their families to El Paso del Norte, and like his own father back in 1821, he opened his home to others who were not members of his family. It is important to note that though he was a priest and did not have any children of his own, Padre Ramón became the patriarch of a large family. In



*San José Mission in Juárez today. Photo by the author.*

addition he offered his home to many travelers. It is said that the Padre would often give up his own linen and blankets, for someone in need, leaving him to sleep on a bare *colchón*.<sup>34</sup>

His charity did not end with providing an education to the young men in his home, or offering his home to family members and other Paseños in need. It extended out to the greater community and even to those who would soon be the enemies of the nation of Mexico, the *Norteamericanos*. His hospitality towards numerous visitors, both Mexican and Anglo-American, to El Paso del Norte is immortalized in early Anglo literature of the Southwest.<sup>35</sup>

Following the defeat at the battle of San Jacinto, Texas in 1836, Mexican president Antonio López de Santa Anna was forced to sign the Treaty of Velasco which succeeded the Mexican department of Texas and soon became the Republic of Texas. It was

*After crossing the hot New Mexican desert known as the Jornada del Muerto and reaching El Paso del Norte, these prisoners were in sorrowful condition. It was then that Padre Ramón Ortiz, though intensely patriotic, gave comfort to the prisoners as it was his Christian and priestly duty.*

then that the Texans almost immediately intended to occupy New Mexico, for they believed that the Treaty of Velasco specified that the Texas border extended "up to the Rio Grande." To lay their claim to these boundaries, the Texans set out on the Texan-Santa Fe expedition of 1841. Before entering Ramón's native village of Santa Fe, the Texas troops, composed of 270 soldiers and fifty merchants who, it was believed, were actually militia, encountered fierce resistance from the Mexicans under the command of Governor Manuel Armijo. The 172 Texas survivors were taken prisoner and marched to Mexico City. Angered by this Texan invasion of Mexican soil, the New Mexican captors tortured, mangled, and starved these prisoners on the long march south. After crossing the hot New Mexican desert known as the Jornada del

Muerto and reaching El Paso del Norte, these prisoners were in sorrowful condition. It was then that Padre Ramón Ortiz, though intensely patriotic, gave comfort to the prisoners as it was his Christian and priestly duty. Ortiz provided relief in the form of food, wine, a bath, clothes, and medicine. Many *vecinos* imitated Padre Ramón's gesture.<sup>36</sup>

The cordial relationships shared by the Ortiz family, the other Paso del Norte Mexican families, and the early Anglo-American soldiers and travelers were chronicled in the diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, the wife of Samuel Magoffin who was the brother of the renowned James Wiley Magoffin. In her travels to El Paso del Norte, Susan wrote with much praise, although in a somewhat patronizing manner, of the kindness and generosity of their Mexican hosts, including the household of Padre Ortiz.<sup>37</sup>

The kind priest made long and lasting friendships with the Americans during this first conflict between the two neighboring countries, even though he was much aware that the war between the United States and Mexico was imminent and a United States invasion of his beloved Mexico was near. The Anglo-American belief of Manifest Destiny is what drove Americans into Texas and New Mexico, and ultimately to the generous care of the *cura* of El Paso del Norte, ironically resulting in his own imprisonment by them and the beginning of his political activities with the *Norteamericanos*. This trying episode unfolded with the military invasion of Mexico by United States. During the presidency of James K. Polk, Congress declared war with Mexico on May 13, 1846. The United States military soon entered northern New Mexico where the Governor of New Mexico, Manuel Armijo, after a meeting with James Magoffin,<sup>38</sup> was convinced or bribed to give no resistance to American troops. This allowed for the conquest of Santa Fe from which American troops marched south where they encountered a Mexican force composed largely of Paseños and commanded by Captain Antonio Ponce de León. This resulted in the Battle of Brazitos just up the river from El Paso del Norte, on December 25, 1846.

It was said that Padre Ortiz was responsible for inciting and promoting the armed resistance at the battle of Brazitos.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the Mexicans were defeated, and Padre Ortiz was taken prisoner with others for instigating the resistance and for their anti-American activities. As a prisoner he was offered his freedom in exchange for his word that his activities against the United States would cease. He responded that it was his duty to his country to bring about the defeat of her enemies. Colonel Alexander Doniphan decided to take Ortiz south to Chihuahua as a hostage. On the trail he was allowed to visit with the troops and administer the sacraments to the Irish Catholics among them. Upon entering the city of Chihuahua, Ortiz, still a hostage,



*Tomb of Padre Ramón Ortiz behind San José Mission. It is shown with the ornate stone which belongs to the Samaniego family. Photo by the author.*

pleaded with Colonel Doniphan to surrender to the Mexican forces. From a distance he watched the defeat of Chihuahua by the United States troops. Padre Ortiz was eventually released after administering to the wounded and dead on the battlefield.

Following his brush with the ravages of war, Padre Ortiz announced his candidacy for the next Congress in Mexico City and was elected unanimously, temporarily leaving his pastoral duties. As a congressman and in an effort to protect the interest of his country, he voted against the peace treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The votes, however, fifty-three in favor, thirty-six against, approved the treaty.<sup>40</sup> The Treaty of Guadalupe

Hidalgo resulted in the loss to Mexico of half of its national territory, including Ramón's birthplace of Santa Fe.<sup>41</sup> Because of his efforts in the war, Ramón Ortiz was appointed by the state government to head the commission to repatriate those Mexican citizens who wished to retain their national citizenship, in accordance with article eight of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Initially optimistic, he went to New Mexico, which at that time had the highest percentage of Mexican citizens living in the area recently acquired by the United States. Many citizens signed up to leave, but most could not relocate because of financial difficulties, concern over property rights, and pressure from New Mexican officials. In 1850 nearly three thousand people settled towns in Northern Chihuahua. Some of these towns, Mesilla, and Santo Tomás de Iturbide and Refugio de los Amoles which are now the Berino and Vado area, are in present day Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico.<sup>42</sup> Two other towns, which are located in northern Chihuahua, just downriver from El Paso are San Ignacio and Guadalupe del Bravo.<sup>43</sup> The number of repatriates was a smaller group than Padre Ortiz anticipated would agree to leave. Disappointed, the patriotic priest retired from his civil and politi-

cal duties and returned to pastoral work in El Paso del Norte.

Padre Ramón Ortiz soon suffered the loss of his sisters doña Ana María and doña Rosario, leaving his niece Josefa to take care of his household. He later became ill with cancer, which resulted in his death on March 11, 1896 ending more than fifty years of pastoral service to El Paso del Norte and El Paso, Texas. In his will, Ramón disclosed the following wishes:

1. that his funeral be conducted with out any pomp
2. that a small amount be left for "mandas" according to the law
3. that Doctor Mariáno Samaniego was to administer his will
4. that his "*El Puerto de Liverpool*" property be given to Mrs. Refugio García in payment of a debt
5. that one house be left to Sr. Antonio Ortiz, and another to Sr. José Ochoa
6. that the legacy left by Mrs. Concepción Samaniego de Ochoa, be left to Sr. José Ochoa
7. that it be declared that he did not possess any other goods and that no other will had been written before this one.<sup>44</sup>

The one wish that was not honored from his will was his desire not to have an extravagant funeral. El Paso historian, Cleofas Calleros, writes that the beloved priest's funeral was probably the largest ever witnessed in this area and was attended by thousands who crowded in and around the church in Ciudad Juárez. The rich and the poor were in attendance with his family and many dignitaries. His casket was covered with elaborate floral arrangements and a beautiful floral wreath. The long procession to the cemetery was composed of more then eighty carriages and over fifty horsemen. On this solemn day he was interred in the cemetery adjoining the chapel of San José located four miles south of Ciudad Juárez.<sup>45</sup>

Those whose lives were influenced by Padre Ortiz, who were cared for and loved by him, carried on his legacy. The most notable of these individuals were Dr. Mariáno Samaniego, Ramón's great nephew, and Father Carlos Pinto. Mariáno Samaniego spent most of his youth under the guidance and care of Padre Ortiz in his home in El Paso del Norte. It is most likely that through Ramón's own finances Mariáno Samaniego studied in Mexico City and in France, where he became a medical doctor. In 1860, Dr. Samaniego began his professional career in Ciudad Juárez where he soon became renowned for his charitable work with the poor. Esteemed by his fellow Paseños, he was selected to the post of *Jefe Politico*

*del Cantón* or local Mayor. He was also a congressman and was the Mexican vice-councilor to Franklin, now El Paso, Texas, in 1872-1873. Samaniego was later named itinerant governor of Chihuahua in 1876, but he was forced to leave this position because of his opposition to the Porfirio Díaz regime. He held several

*The unique contributions of service and charity to the community of Padre Ramón Ortiz became the force behind a new generation of political and ecclesiastical leadership.*

other offices in Ciudad Juárez, and later moved as a political refugee to El Paso where in 1895 he represented the small number of Mexican professionals and was one of the first dentists in the city.<sup>46</sup> Many of Mariáno's descendants also became prominent citizens of El Paso, thus continuing Ramón's legacy.

During Padre Ortiz's last years, the Reverend Carlos Pinto, S.J. was his valued assistant at the church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Together, they are credited with building the first Catholic Church in El Paso in approximately 1850. Near the old Fort Bliss, at what is now the corner of Rosa Street and Hammett Boulevard, they built

San José de Concordia el Alto, the ruins of which were demolished in 1930.<sup>47</sup> Reverend Pinto, an Italian American, was a parish priest at Sacred Heart Church and later at Immaculate Conception Church in El Paso, Texas. Pinto was soon named Vicar of the Diocese of Dallas and became Superior of all the Jesuits in the zone.<sup>48</sup>

So numerous are the individual deeds achieved by people who were influenced by Padre Ortiz's ministry in the El Paso/Juárez valley, that to list them all would result in too extensive a list. The unique contributions of service and charity to the community of Padre Ramón Ortiz became the force behind a new generation of political and ecclesiastical leadership.<sup>49</sup> His extended family and the political influences provided the framework for a lifetime of commitment towards all levels of society in El Paso del Norte. Historian Frank Halla said of the priest, "Around him revolved the social life of El Paso."<sup>50</sup>

From his background of shepherding in the city of Santa Fe and due to his relationships with prominent people in Durango, Chihuahua, and El Paso del Norte, Ramón Ortiz became a *Paseño* with a long and historically colorful life. He was a patriot, a shepherd, and a servant of humanity, and most importantly a committed priest. While expressing his desire to enter the seminary in

Durango, the young Ramón stated that it was his wish to enter the seminary "*Para mejor servir a Dios*"—to serve God better.<sup>51</sup> This was an ordinary statement for a not so ordinary man whose life-time dedication proved his desire to serve his God, his family, and his country.

---

**SAMUEL SISNEROS** is a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico. He earned his undergraduate degree in Art Education at the University of New Mexico. During his undergraduate years he spent three years as a volunteer in a paramedic organization in Latin America. He has worked both as a graphic artist and digital imaging artist and has traveled extensively in Mexico and Latin America. Mr. Sisneros taught art and Spanish in the Albuquerque Public Schools, and is now working toward a master's degree in Border History at the University of Texas at El Paso. He has completed an internship with Special Collections Library in which he inventoried the Juárez Municipal Archives, and has another internship with the specific task of digitalizing the photo archives in the Special Collections Department of the University of El Paso Library.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Paseño: A citizen from El Paso del Norte. The modern and correct word is *pasense*, which was not used until this century.
2. Halla, Frank L., "El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico: A Study of a Bi-Ethnic Community, 1846-1881." Ph.D. diss., University of Austin, 1978. Halla writes of Ortiz, "Of Renaissance men there was in El Paso del Norte surely one."
3. *El Paso Daily Herald*, March 6, 1896, p.4, col. 2.
4. Archivos Históricos del Arzobispado de Durango 1606-1899, (microfilm, New Mexico State University, roll #0353, frames 0512-0539). Hereafter referred to as AHAD.
5. Nicolas Ortiz was the progenitor of the prominent Ortiz family in New Mexico. A native of Mexico City, he came to Santa Fe in 1694 with don Diego de Vargas. The progenitor of Ramón's maternal family was don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco; Ramón's great grandfather.
6. Personal conversation with Felipe R. Mirabal, Art Historian, Masters candidate in the Art and Art History Department, University of New Mexico, and Fellow at the Center for Southwest Research, July 1998.
7. Puckett, Fidelia Miller. "Ramon Ortiz: Priest and Patriot." *New Mexico Historical Review*, 25 (October 1955).
8. Puckett, 269.
9. KTSM Collection, (Manuscripts, Special Collections, University of Texas at El Paso Library, MS 039, folder 2).
10. Fray Angélico Chávez, the renowned genealogist and historian who edited Puckett's monograph interjected his own footnotes making corrections to her text. It appears that at the time neither he nor Puckett had access to certain documents used in this study.
11. New Mexico Province, Santa Fe Parish, Census of 1821, compiled from AHAD by Patricia Black Esterly, New Mexico Genealogical Society, 1994.

12. The age of nine given would mean that Ramón was born in 1812 not 1814. Censuses are less reliable than parish sacramental registers. In addition Ramón gives his age as twenty-one and almost five months on June 9, 1835, in the papers of his ordination, thus, making his birth year 1814, which correlates to the aforementioned baptismal date.
13. Fray Angélico Chavez, *Origins of New Mexico Families in the Spanish Colonial Period In Two Parts: the 17th (1598-1693) and the 18th (1693-1821) Centuries*. (Santa Fe: Historical Society of New Mexico, 1954). 13. Chávez presents a marriage record that indicates that Francisco de Paula was the first born of Ramón's parents.
14. Ramón was not the only man in the Ortiz Family to be ordained a priest. Nine members of his extended New Mexico family were priests in New Mexico. See Chávez's chart in Puckett's Biography of Ortiz for this history.
15. Blake, Robert Neal "The Catholic Church in El Paso," (masters thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1984), 23.
16. AHAD, #0353, New Mexico State University. The godparents at confirmation were don Antonio Melquiades Ortega, a native of El Paso del Norte and living in Santa Fe, and his wife doña María Concepción Maroni, a native of Cosgüiriachic, Chihuahua. The sacrament was administered by Bishop don José Zubiria of Durango.
17. José María de Lachaga, *La Mision de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Paso del Norte en Ciudad Juárez (Libreria Parroquial, Juárez Cathedral, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, 1991)*. Bachaga notes that Father Rascón was also a Parish priest at Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Church (1814-1830) in El Paso del Norte.
18. AHAD, #0353, NMSU, (Ortiz's ordination papers). Administering this test was Guadalupe Miranda, Rascón's lay secretary, who became a political colleague of Ramón in the Mexican consulate in El Paso, Texas in the 1850's and was from a prominent Paseño family.
19. Ramón was among many New Mexicans who entered the seminary in Durango.
20. AHAD, #0353, New Mexico State University.
21. AHAD, #0353.
22. AHAD, #0353.
23. Fray Angélico Chávez, states that in don Antonio Ortiz's will, his wife Teresa was listed as living at this time along with his son the "the priest." Therefore, both of Ramón's parents lived to the time of Ortiz's ordination.
24. Puckett, Fidelia Miller. "Ramón Ortiz: Priest & Patriot." *New Mexico Historical Review* 25, October 1950. 272.
25. José María de Lachaga, *La Misión de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Paso del Norte en Ciudad Juárez (Libreria Parroquial, Juárez Cathedral, Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, 1991)* 19.
26. Catholic Parish records from the microfilm collection of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon).
27. The Chamizal is the 400 acres of land that Mexico lost in 1864 to the United States because the Rio Grande had changed its course into the Mexican territory. This land dispute was not resolved until the time of the John F. Kennedy administration when the land was reapportioned and national parks were created on both sides of the border.
28. Juárez Municipality Archives, (microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso Library, MF513, part II roll 42, Book 1, frames 0326-0330).

29. Juárez Municipality Archives, roll 32, f. 0338.
30. Fray Angélico Chávez, 331 for additional family information.
31. "New Mexico Marriages Santa Fe, Saint Francis Parish: 1728-1857," New Mexico Genealogical Society, extracted by Marie Roybal and Lila Armijo, 1997.
32. "New Mexico Marriages Santa Fe." Fray Angélico Chávez, 331.
33. Juárez Municipality Archives, University of Texas at El Paso, mf 513, pt2, r.37, 0203.
34. Puckett, 274-275.
35. Halla, Frank L. "El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico: A Study of a Bi-Ethnic Community, 1846-1881." Ph.D. diss., University of Austin, 1978.
36. Timmons, W. H., *El Paso—A Borderlands History* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1990) 87.
37. Drumm, Stella, ed. *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin 1846-1847* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 207-233.
38. James Wiley Magoffin, who became a naturalized citizen of Mexico was one of the first Anglo-American Santa Fe traders into Chihuahua, Mexico.
39. Puckett, 8.
40. Olavarri y Ferrari, Enrique, *México a través de los siglos*, (Editorial Cumbre, S.A., Mexico, D.F., 1953) 710-711.
41. Padre Ortiz is one of the fifteen liberal writers of *Apuntes Para la Guerra con los Estados Unidos*, which was printed in 1848 and was the first Mexican account of the United States invasion of Mexico.
42. Bowden, J. J., *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in the Chihuahuan Acquisition*. (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1971) 27-56.
43. At present, oral histories from people living in these two towns in Chihuahua are being compiled by the author. This episode of repatriation from New Mexico to northern Chihuahua is the topic of a forthcoming master's thesis by the author of this article.
44. *El Paso Times*, December 28, 1952.
45. *El Paso Times*, December 28, 1952.
46. Garcia, Mario T., *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981) 83. Francisco R. Almada, *Gobernadores del Estado de Chihuahua*, (Mexico, D.F., Imprenta de la H. Camara de Diputados, 1950), 338-342.
47. Calleros, Cleofas, *El Paso—Then and Now*, (El Paso, Texas: American Printing Company, 1954) 23.
48. McKee, Okla M., *History of the Catholic Diocese of El Paso: The Fusion of Two Peoples, Two Cultures*. (Special Collections Department, University of Texas at El Paso Library) 2.
49. Padre Ramón's tombstone is now at the San Jose cemetery in Ciudad Juárez. Another memorial is a street named after him known as Calle Ramón Ortiz in the colonia Obregón just southwest of the Cathedral of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Ciudad Juárez.
50. Halla, Frank L. "El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico: A Study of a Bi-Ethnic Community, 1846-1881." (Ph.D. diss., University of Austin, 1978) 53.
51. AHAD, #0353, frames 0512-0539.

## Business/Professional Members

### THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AMIGO PRINTING  
5738 Trowbridge

BANK OF THE WEST  
500 North Mesa

BROWN, ALCANTAR  
& BROWN  
9630 Plaza Circle

CHARLOTTE'S INC.  
5411 North Mesa

CONTINENTAL  
NATIONAL BANK  
601 North Mesa

COMCORP OF EL PASO, INC.  
Lafayette, LA

CREATIVE STAFFING  
SOLUTIONS  
1533 N. Lee Trevino, Suite B-2

CURREY, ADKINS, COOK & CO.  
6633 North Mesa, Suite 605

DAVE'S LOAN COMPANY  
216 South El Paso

DIAMOND, RASH, GORDON  
& JACKSON, P.C.  
300 E. Main, 7th Floor

DISCOVER EL PASO  
ASSOCIATION, INC.  
3503 Volcanic

EL PASO HEART CLINIC  
1300 Murchison, Suite 200

GADDY CONSTRUCTION  
COMPANY  
5875 Cromo Drive, Suite 100

INTERNATIONAL DATA, INC.  
6633 N. Mesa, Suite 601

JAXON'S RESTAURANTS  
6927 North Mesa, Suite C

SYLVIA J. KELLEY,  
FINANCIAL SERVICES  
5959 Gateway West, Suite 250

LAWYERS TITLE OF EL PASO  
301 E. Yandell

LIFT TRUCK SERVICES  
10016 Odessa

DENISE K. MANKIN  
Freelance Graphic Artist  
5459 Soledad Lane

MARTIN FUNERAL  
HOME, INC.  
Box 3895, 79903

MOORE NORDELL KROEGER  
ARCHITECTS, INC.  
1301 North Oregon, Suite 100

MORENO & FRY,  
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW  
701 Magoffin Ave.

NILAND COMPANY  
320 North Clark Drive

NORWEST BANK OF EL PASO  
Box 1072, 79958

PHELPS DODGE  
REFINING CORP.  
Box 20001, 79998

# The Irish/English Conflict of New Mexico's Lincoln County War

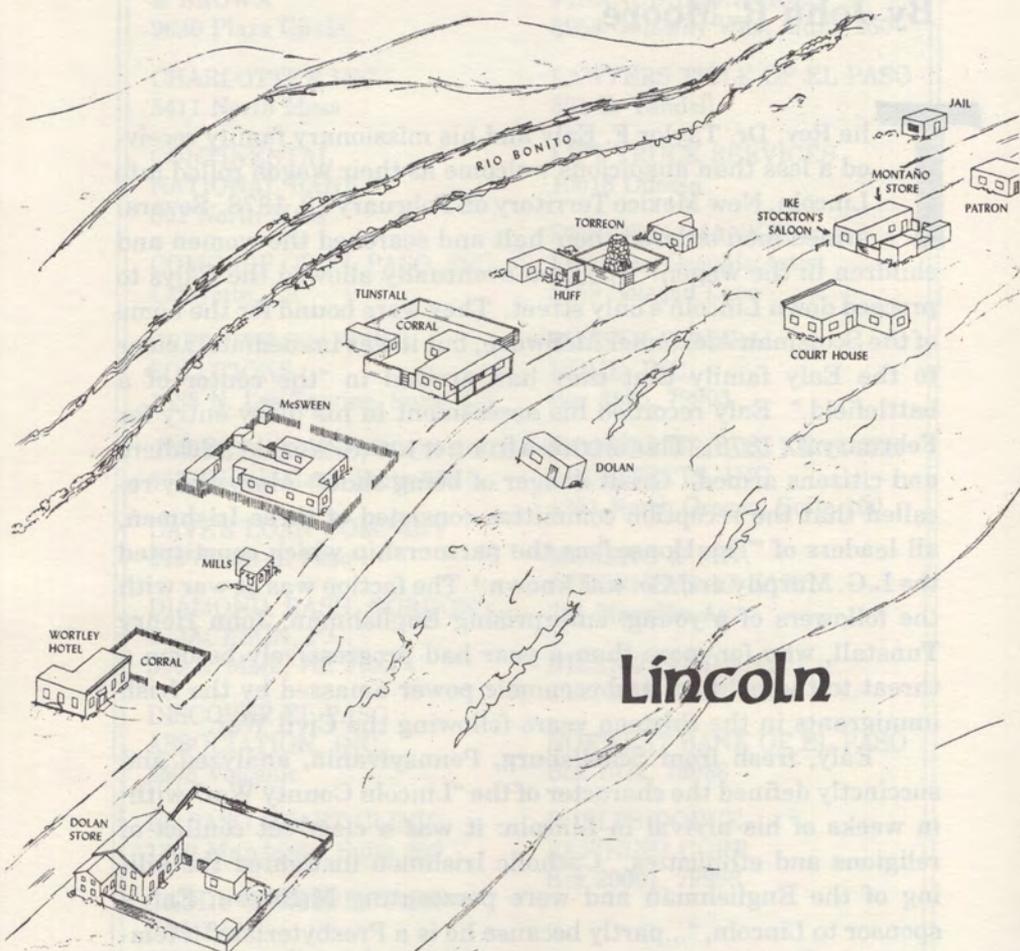
By John R. Moore

**T**he Rev. Dr. Taylor F. Ealy and his missionary family received a less than auspicious welcome as their wagon rolled into Lincoln, New Mexico Territory on February 19, 1878. Several armed men ordered their halt and searched the women and children in the wagon. The men eventually allowed the Ealys to proceed down Lincoln's only street. They were bound for the home of the Scotsman Alexander McSween, but it was immediately clear to the Ealy family that they had arrived in "the center of a battlefield." Ealy recorded his assessment in his diary entry for February 20, 1878: "This is truly a frontier town – warlike. Soldiers and citizens armed. Great danger of being shot." Mary Ealy recalled that the reception committee consisted of three Irishmen, all leaders of "The House," as the partnership which constituted the L.G. Murphy and Co. was known.<sup>1</sup> The faction was at war with the followers of a young, enterprising Englishman, John Henry Tunstall, who for more than a year had progressively become a threat to the political and economic power amassed by the Irish immigrants in the thirteen years following the Civil War.

Ealy, fresh from Schellsburg, Pennsylvania, analyzed and succinctly defined the character of the "Lincoln County War" within weeks of his arrival in Lincoln: it was a clear-cut conflict of religions and ethnicities. Catholic Irishmen instigated the killing of the Englishman and were persecuting McSween, Ealy's sponsor to Lincoln, "...partly because he is a Presbyterian." Members of a sheriff's posse had shot and killed Tunstall, McSween's business partner, the day before the Ealy's arrival. The Irish faction, led by Murphy and his protégé, James J. Dolan, was

harassing McSween, bent on getting him out of the county.<sup>2</sup>

Ealy learned in his first days in Lincoln that the conflict was partly economical and partly political. Ealy's diary and letters indicate that he placed a much deeper significance on the combat and bloodshed that welcomed him to New Mexico. Ealy surmised, as he wrote a month after his arrival in a March 19 letter to Sheldon Jackson, superintendent for Presbyterian Mission work in the Rocky Mountain west, that his sponsor's antagonists "... are a dirty set of Irish cut throats, and you know what their religion is. They drink whisky, gamble and nothing is too bad for them."<sup>3</sup>



*Adapted from Maurice G. Fulton,  
History of the Lincoln County War.*

Ealy concluded that the Irishmen instigated Tunstall's murder, partly because he was English and particularly because he was a threat to the House's economic and political power structure. Ealy, perhaps unknowingly but significantly, drew an immediate on-the-scene conclusion that 121 years later lends support to the premise that ethnic animosity between the Irish and English was as major a factor in the Lincoln County War as economics and politics.

Documentary proof to support this theory is slim, but there is sufficient evidence to argue that ethnicity and historical Irish/English antagonism provided a subtle, albeit unrecorded, motivation for the conflict that engulfed practically the whole of Lincoln County. Numerous historians, particularly since the 1950s, have collected and analyzed the evidence detailing the causal effects and the events of the Lincoln County War. All agree that the Englishman Tunstall threatened the economic and political power held by the Irishmen.<sup>4</sup>

Tunstall, at age 25, was intent on making his fortune in New Mexico and returning to England to live a life of ease. He financed his Lincoln County venture with capital regularly supplied from London by his well-to-do father. Tunstall's empire-building efforts included direct competition with "The House" in acquiring cattle and range and farm land with the intention of bidding for the county's government beef and forage contracts—contracts held by Murphy & Company. Tunstall, with lawyer McSween as his advisor and assistant, further tempted fate by constructing and stocking a large mercantile store a short distance down Lincoln's street from the imposing two-story Murphy & Co. store. Tunstall similarly was becoming more politically involved in county affairs, writing letters for publication in territorial newspapers that were critical of the dominance that the Murphy/Dolan clan imposed in Lincoln.<sup>5</sup>

Historians agree that these factors were the impetus for the war. None, however, have attempted to link the negative aspects of social identity—ethnicity—and the historically well-documented Irish/English animosity as another causal effect.<sup>6</sup>

Norman J. Bender, editor of Ealy's letters and diary, comments on Ealy's March 19 anti-Irish observation:

The distortion of Ealy's perspective by his Presbyterian antagonism toward Catholicism was common for the spirit of the time. For a zealous Presbyterian missionary, the formula was quite simple: Irish equals Catholic equals wicked men.



*Taylor F. Ealy*  
(courtesy Special collections,  
University of Arizona Library).

Certainly McSween would also have subscribed to this form of stereotyping. From Ealy's observations, it would appear that religious differences between the leaders of the factions in the Lincoln County War should be given a place, not previously allotted by historians, among the factors contributing to that conflict.<sup>7</sup>

The arrival of the Ealy family in Lincoln coincides with the historically accepted commencement of the Lincoln County War. It had brewed for most of a year since Tunstall's intrusion into the Irishmen's domain. It became, during its four-month life, one of New Mexico's bloodiest conflicts.<sup>8</sup>

The mercantile company founded by Irish immigrant and Civil War veteran Lawrence Gustave Murphy had grown since 1866 to be both the political and economic power in the county. Murphy, through his long-term service first in the United States Army, then during the Civil War as a quartermaster officer in the New Mexico Volunteers under Colonel Kit Carson, established connections and know-how that enabled him to monopolize the only source of economic power-gathering in Lincoln County: beef, forage, and produce contracts to supply the Fort Stanton Army Post, located ten miles southwest of Lincoln. Murphy, through his military experience, had formed an alliance with several fellow Irish immigrants who played key roles in the conflict.

Murphy controlled extensive enterprises in the county by 1878. In addition to his mercantile business and government contracts, he operated a ranch and at an earlier time, a brewery near Fort Stanton. His original sutler's business was at Fort Stanton, but he moved the general store and his personal headquarters to a new adobe building on the west end of Lincoln's only street in June 1874. Murphy intended to direct the economic and political fortunes of the county from this two-story edifice, known locally as "The House." He had help from James J. Dolan, William Brady, and John Riley, all Irish immigrants. Dolan and Brady, like

Murphy, were Army veterans. Their alliance, bolstered by mutual interests as well as self interests, lead to the bloody conflict that was launched with the February 18th killing of the Englishman Tunstall. Lincoln County's Irish-led power structure had no use, or tolerance, for an upstart Englishman who threatened to overturn their power and weaken their enterprises as had been the case in their homeland for centuries. The war technically ended with a five-day gun battle on the Lincoln street in June 1878 that culminated in McSween's death.

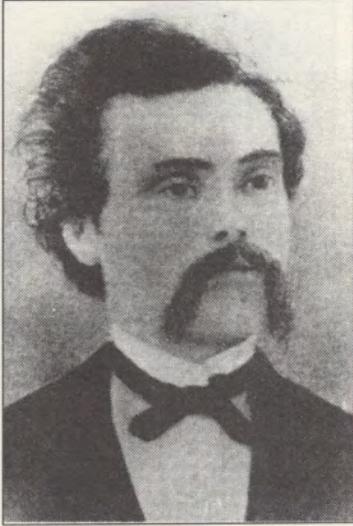
No immigrants to America maintained as long and as consistent an attention—and resentment—to the problems of the old country as did the Irish. Between 1846 and 1860, more than 1.6 million Irish had immigrated to the United States. They brought with them a cultural connection that was to be unsevered by the trans-Atlantic, even transcontinental, distance from Ireland. The Irish also brought "a legacy of rancor toward England, seeing her as the visible cause of their exile." The 1875 Irish American Almanac published a poem by T. D. Sullivan that epitomized the symbolic and state-of-mind connection to the homeland:

Columbia the free is the land of my birth  
and my paths have all been on American earth  
but my blood is as Irish as any can be,  
and my heart is with Erin a far o'er the sea.<sup>10</sup>

The English invaded Ireland in 1170, sparking a cultural conflict that through the centuries saw Irish antagonism mount with the growing confiscation of Irish land, importation of foreign gentry, and English attempts to change Irish Catholicism. By the 19th century, 800 years of English domination had reduced the old country Irishmen to a state of landless, illiterate peasants. English penal laws enacted between 1695 and 1746 had made the Irish virtual slaves in their own country.<sup>11</sup>



*Mary E. Ealy*  
(courtesy Special Collections,  
University of Arizona Library).



*Alexander A. McSween*  
(courtesy Special collections,  
University of Arizona Library).

The Irish in America became intensely American, but whenever an Anglo-Irish issue arose, such as in Lincoln County in 1878, the Irish remained "... a foreign people with foreign aspirations. They insisted that they hated England for the good of the United States."<sup>12</sup> The 1845 Irish potato blight created a national crisis that made it necessary that hundreds of thousands of Irish emigrate or perish. Irish, fleeing the prospect of unending oppression and potential starvation, felt that the English had abandoned Ireland in 1847 when the famine was at its most acute and when survival aid was most drastically needed.

Unbending English arrogance in a time of turmoil fueled the Irish hatred: "The great evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the famine," said Sir Charles Trevelyan, an Englishman, "but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the (Irish) people."<sup>13</sup> John Tunstall's Lincoln County correspondence with his family in England provides hints of his ethnic prejudices—toward Catholics particularly—but it does not specifically mention an anti-Irish sentiment. Neither does it dispel the notion that he may have adhered to Trevelyan's position.<sup>14</sup>

The Irish and English continued their antagonism once they arrived in the United States. While Irish were emigrating for survival, with the hope of a better, freer life, Englishmen also were looking for trans-Atlantic enterprise. British Dr. William Bell wrote: "... while emigration is actually being opposed in some of our colonies, the Americans are demanding with greater force than ever more hands and more brains." Bell reasoned that English emigration would be good for England. A depopulation might alleviate the "long-continued misunderstanding between capital and labour" that existed in England.

The depopulation coincidentally would serve to keep America strictly English and would prevent the Irish from gaining the

ascendancy in the new country. Bell even warned that war would be the result of a Celtic preponderance in America. He wrote: "It would therefore be our aim to maintain the ascendancy of the Saxon and the Teutonic elements in the states."<sup>15</sup>

America's Civil War contributed to the immigration of more Irish, provided fuel for continued anti-English sentiments among the sons of Erin, and increased the dispersal of Irish across the continent, even to the far corners of New Mexico Territory. Irish-Americans rushed to assist in the effort to curtail rebellious Southern states, for striking a blow against the Confederate States also assaulted southern-sympathetic Great Britain. The Civil War, for the Irish-American, assumed the character of a good scrap with an ancient enemy.<sup>16</sup>

Bounties amounting to \$500 or \$600 were paid for enlistment in the Northern army. The bounties enticed many Irish to join the fray. There is no documentary evidence that any of Lincoln County's Irishmen were enticed to enlist for bounty money or in the hope of striking any indirect blow on England, yet three of them—Murphy, Dolan and Brady—had notable Union Army careers.

The North actively recruited immigrant enlistees in both Ireland and Germany, suggesting that the experience they would receive from American military training and service could be useful in the "coming struggle" for Irish freedom. The Northern tactic proved worthy; an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Irish enlisted and served in the Union army. The Confederacy similarly sent envoys to recruit in Ireland, propagandizing that Irish Catholics would not fit in the Northern social structure, and contrasting the materialism of the North with the Christian civilization of the South.<sup>17</sup>

With the conclusion of the Civil War, Irish soldiers from both sides of the conflict dispersed into the nation's Reconstruction society. The comparatively small contingent of Irish in New Mexico was no different, although rather than migrating to the large eastern cities where substantial Irish conclaves formed, many of the Irish in Lincoln County elected to stay in the territory to make their civilian livelihoods. They were among the minority of Irishmen who chose to stay away from the cities. An Irish immigrant guide published during the era encouraged settlement in the American countryside and warned of the snares, particularly for newcomers, that awaited them in the cities.

Immigrant historian Carl Wittke speculates on what might have been had Irish continued to live on the land in America as they had in the old country:

What a difference it might have made, and what an excellent investment it might have turned out to be, had the government used its funds to transport the Irish into the West and helped them to become established farmers of the public lands.<sup>18</sup>

The Irishmen of Lincoln County were not among Wittke's case studies, obviously. They opted to stay with the countryside and the land. They remained and became a significant part of the foundation upon which the Anglicized county was built. Hispanic farmers settled Lincoln County in the 1850s, having migrated from elsewhere in the territory to establish new homes and farms in the area's promising agricultural locations. It is uncertain when the first Anglo-European settlers arrived to build on the bottom lands of the Rio Bonito and the Ruidoso and Hondo Rivers. It is likely they came close on the heels of the establishment of Fort Stanton on the Rio Bonito in 1855.

*Fort Stanton's mission was to protect much of southern New Mexico from the Mescalero Apaches whose homeland was in the same mountain range.*

Military officials believed some of the best grazing and agricultural lands in the territory were in the vicinity of Fort Stanton. The officials of Fort Stanton encour-

aged the settlers to increase farm production, particularly forage and subsistence crops, in order to reduce costs of transporting supplies needed to maintain the Army post. Fort Stanton's mission was to protect much of southern New Mexico from the Mescalero Apaches whose homeland was in the same mountain range. The presence of Fort Stanton provided local farmers a ready, and close, market for surplus crops.<sup>19</sup>

An act of the Territorial Legislature created the county in 1869 as the result of a petition from "substantial" Lincoln citizens who argued that the incorporation was necessary to provide adequate law and order. The citizens' committee that lobbied for the county designation included Murphy, who at the time was post trader at Fort Stanton, and Brady. Both mustered out of the Army at Fort Stanton soon after the end of the Civil War. The territorial governor appointed Brady as the first Lincoln County

sheriff. Brady also was building a small ranch and farm downstream from Lincoln.

The territorial legislature changed the county's boundaries in 1878, enlarging it so that its mass stretched across the entire southeast quarter of New Mexico. The boundary enlargement made Lincoln County the largest county in the United States. It encompassed seventeen million acres, amounting to one-fifth of the territory's total seventy-eight million acres.<sup>20</sup>

Itinerant newspaper reporter and editor, Ash Upson, moved from Las Vegas, New Mexico, to Lincoln in late 1871. He found the valley of the Rio Bonito "... very pretty, well settled by American rancheros, and most of them are married to Mexican women."<sup>21</sup>

Irish immigrant Amelia Bolton Church, at the age of nine, arrived at Fort Stanton the same year. Church's life in Lincoln County illustrates succinctly the means through which many Irish arrived in this faraway section of New Mexico: the United States Army. Church was born in 1862 in Wexford, Ireland, where L.G. Murphy also had also been born thirty years earlier. Church's father, John Bolton, preceded his family in immigrating to the United States. He joined the Army and was assigned to Fort Stanton to protect settlers from Indians.

The family moved to nearby Lincoln in 1873 when John Bolton completed his military enlistment and took the position of postmaster.<sup>23</sup> Bolton doubled as a bookkeeper for L.G. Murphy and Company mercantile, the result, probably, of the common experience he shared with Murphy and his partner Dolan in emigrating from Ireland and becoming acquainted at Fort Stanton. He played no major role in the Lincoln county troubles, however.<sup>24</sup>

Both Murphy and Dolan had preceded Bolton in immigrating to the United States. Murphy, at approximately the age of twenty, arrived in July 1851. Dolan, as an eight year old, immigrated with his family in 1856. By 1867, he was assigned as a soldier to Fort Stanton where Murphy already had mustered out of the Army and remained to establish a brewery and his mercantile company. Dolan joined Murphy as a mercantile clerk, and by 1878, he was the company's senior partner, changing its name to J.J. Dolan and Company. Since both had left their homeland following the potato blight, it is likely they did not forget the famine they had escaped. Nor were their thoughts expunged of the cultural hatred for the English once they departed Ireland.

William Brady emigrated from Ireland in 1851 shortly after the peak of the potato famine. Upon arriving in the United States, he joined the army, serving in Texas and New Mexico, where in 1861 he was discharged and re-enlisted as a junior officer in the Second New Mexico Volunteer Infantry. Brady was breveted major in the volunteers in October 1865 for gallantry against the Navajo Indians the preceding summer. Murphy was breveted major on the same day for his lengthy successes in fighting the Mescaleros when Fort Stanton was reoccupied by the Volunteers in 1861. His two years of duty guarding the Navajos and Mescaleros confined at Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River also contributed to the promotion.<sup>25</sup>

Emil Fritz, an immigrant from near Stuttgart, Germany, also was on the brevet list. The 1849 California gold rush lured him to the United States. He received an officer's commission in the California Volunteer Cavalry in 1861 and soon was headed to New Mexico with Carleton's California Column. Fritz re-enlisted in 1864 at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, and concluded his military service as brevet lieutenant colonel and commander of Fort Stanton shortly after the Civil War. He allegedly refused a commission in the regular army in order to enter the partnership with Murphy & Company.

Fritz was not Irish, but he shared the immigrant experience with his Irish partners. In Murphy and the collection of Irishmen surrounding him, Fritz likely saw more economic and political potential in blossoming Lincoln County than he could foresee as a career Army officer. Perhaps he foresaw opportunity for personal economic success that had not been realized in the California gold fields.

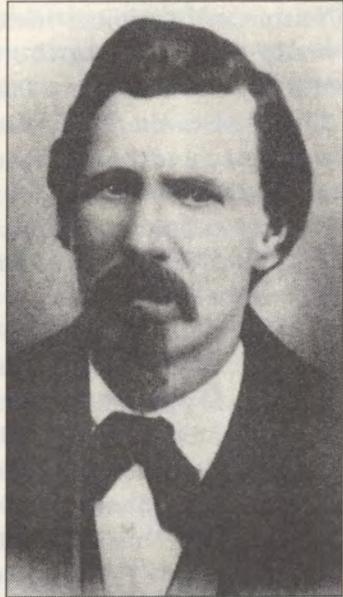
And yet another Irishman arrived on the scene and became a cog in the growing coalition and the power structure that was building. John Henry Riley immigrated to the United States from Ireland about 1862, settling with his family in Baltimore. He had moved to Colorado by 1865, but in the succeeding years, he appeared in New Mexico as a clerk for a beef contractor operating near the Mescalero Apache Reservation. The United States government established the reservation in 1873 on 600,000 acres virtually in the center of Lincoln County. Riley was a full-fledged partner in L.G. Murphy and Company by 1876.<sup>26</sup>

This collection of Irishmen had joined a number of former old world countrymen in New Mexico Territory by the mid-1870s.

The ninth census of 1870 officially listed 543 native-born Irish living in New Mexico, compared to only 120 English-born residents. The four natives of England and Wales in Lincoln County were outnumbered nearly ten to one by the thirty-nine Irish.<sup>27</sup> The territory's Irish population grew to 795 by 1880, compared to 339 English, 110 Scots and 28 Welsh. The 1,272 immigrants from British holdings, including Ireland, still ranked as the second largest ethnic group in New Mexico, preceded only by Mexico-born residents.<sup>28</sup>

The Irish question remained a constant irritant in Anglo-American relations, carrying over into many facets of the development of the post-war United States, even in the West. The hatred of England that was brought to America, and arguably to Lincoln County by first generation Irish such as Murphy, Dolan, Riley and Brady, was to become the legacy of succeeding generations. Such was the condition of affairs in America when on November 6, 1876, John Henry Tunstall arrived in Lincoln County. His intent was to turn the investment of his father's money into a profitable land, sheep, and cattle enterprise that, when improved and established, would return a profit substantial enough to return him to his English home and a genteel life. The collection of Irishmen was in his way, and although they did not begrudge Tunstall returning home, they were set on not allowing him to do it at their expense.<sup>29</sup>

Lawyer McSween, meeting Tunstall in Santa Fe in the fall of 1876, pointed the young Englishman to Lincoln County. McSween had resided in the county since March 1875. He convinced Tunstall that if money-making opportunities in land and livestock were to be had in the territory, they were in Lincoln County. Many Lincoln County residents were of the belief that McSween had been, or at least had studied to be, a Presbyterian minister. It was similarly believed in Lincoln that Murphy had studied for the Catholic priesthood before immigrating to the United States.



*William Brady*  
(courtesy Special Collections,  
University of Arizona Library).

Neither ordination is historically confirmed, but if correct, they would contribute to the antagonism that developed between Murphy and McSween. It is clear that McSween was significantly connected to the Presbyterian Mission in the West. He was the impetus behind the Reverend Dr. Ealy's posting to Lincoln. McSween, ordained or not, opted for a law career before migrating to New Mexico via Kansas. Before Tunstall's arrival, McSween performed legal work for Murphy and Company and its partners, especially Emil Fritz.<sup>30</sup>

McSween's handling of the collection of a life insurance policy on Fritz, who died while visiting his German homeland in 1874 and which was still unresolved in 1878, became a focal point of the Irish animosity toward the Scotsman and his newly acquired English associate. Fritz's partners, chiefly Dolan, argued that the insurance payment should go to J. J. Dolan & Company to pay debts owed to the partnership. Murphy, because of "health" prob-

lems caused by alcohol, moved to Santa Fe and turned his business over to Dolan, who renamed it. McSween argued that the insurance should go to Fritz's surviving siblings, yet the lawyer and the Fritz family never agreed on the manner of turning over the funds. Dolan's contention that McSween was attempting to steal the insurance money and McSween's countercharges that Dolan and Company was corrupt and fraudulent in its dealings with the Mescalero Agency contract drew Tunstall further into the fray.

County residents were of the impression that McSween had formally entered a partnership with Tunstall in Tunstall's land and livestock ventures and in the new mercantile store the Englishman had built in

Lincoln. The partnership was not legally cemented, but Dolan argued it was binding enough to make Tunstall liable for any judgements against McSween. The district court, at Dolan's urging, issued a writ of property attachment against McSween. A posse dispatched by Sheriff Brady, whose allegiance lay with Murphy and Dolan, attempted to serve the writ and attach livestock believed owned jointly by McSween and Tunstall. The posse confronted Tunstall and the Englishman was killed.<sup>31</sup> Tunstall's followers—

*The hatred of England that was brought to America, and arguably to Lincoln County by first generation Irish such as Murphy, Dolan, Riley and Brady, was to become the legacy of succeeding generations.*

ranch hands and small farmers who felt that first Murphy and Company, then Dolan and Company, were unfair in business dealings with the county's citizens—took up arms to protect McSween from what they feared would be a Tunstall-like assassination.<sup>32</sup>

Although Murphy no longer resided in Lincoln County, he continued to counsel Dolan, his protege and current operator of "The House." Murphy, under medical care in the territorial capitol city of Santa Fe, also maintained close contact with Thomas Benton Catron, the territory's United States attorney since 1872. Catron, it was commonly believed, was a leader of the nebulous "Santa Fe Ring" that pulled political and economic strings throughout New Mexico, including Lincoln County. Though Catron was not a partner in the Murphy/Dolan enterprises, he had loaned the partners financial support and had a vested interest in the outcome of the Tunstall/McSween—Murphy/Dolan conflict.<sup>33</sup>

Historical evidence indicates that Catron was neither pro-Irish, nor anti-English. He did business with both.<sup>34</sup> Some territorial residents considered him the "most noted land-grabber of the day."<sup>35</sup> Catron's interests lay in return on investments, whether with Irish, English or others, and the return on his Lincoln County dealings had soured when McSween and Tunstall launched their ventures in direct competition with "The House." George Curry, who arrived in Lincoln County in 1879, knew many of the conflict's survivors and formed impressions about those killed in the war, such as McSween. Curry wrote: "It appears that almost from the day of his arrival in Lincoln County, McSween began efforts to stir up feelings against Murphy and his associates. McSween was jealous of Murphy's popularity and political leadership and sought to replace him as a political power."<sup>36</sup>

Frank Warner Angel interviewed Murphy before his death from alcoholism in October 1878. Angel was a special investigator dispatched to New Mexico jointly by the United States Departments of Justice and Interior to investigate the circumstances of Tunstall's death since the British Embassy in Washington was demanding further explanation. He also inquired into conditions surrounding the four-month war and the killing of McSween in June 1878. Angel returned to Washington about the time that President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed General Lew Wallace as the new territorial governor. Wallace met with Angel before his departure for New Mexico and took notes on Angel's assessment of the civil unrest in



*John Henry Tunstall*  
(courtesy Special Collections,  
University of Arizona Library).

the territory. Among the notes Wallace recorded was a mention of Murphy: "Murphy, L.G. Santa Fe. Mixed up in Lincoln Company. Now a drunkard. No reliability. He believes himself a martyr and McSween the Devil—Handle him with gloves."<sup>37</sup>

Wallace had every indication that he was assuming governorship of a violent territory. It is possible he was familiar with a May 2, 1878, communication concerning Lincoln County from Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan, commanding the Military District of Missouri which included New Mexico, to the Adjutant General of the Army:

The population of that section is divided into two parties, who have an intense desire to exterminate each other, and are only prevented from accomplishing their purpose by the presence of a small military force (at Fort Stanton). It is said that one of these parties is made up of cattle and horse thieves, and the other party of persons who have retired from the business.<sup>38</sup>

The two parties, General Sheridan said, were each bent on the destruction of the other. The cattle and horse thieves Sheridan mentioned were McSween followers; the "retired" thieves were of the Murphy/Dolan contingent. It is debatable who was retired and who was active. Sheridan's remarks are significant because they cut to the heart of the issue then present in Lincoln—each party wanted to exterminate the other. Sheridan's observation fits into the premise of ethnicity as a motivator of the war. Only Murphy, Dolan, Riley, or Brady could verify whether hatred of the English was a factor driving their actions. Only Tunstall and McSween could certify that their ethnic, or more particularly religious, biases were in play as they tried to bring down The House of Murphy. Yet the circumstances of the time and place continue to indicate that their ethnic animosities were simmering.

None of these antagonists chose to record their perspectives on the ethnic issue. Murphy succumbed to alcoholism without leav-

ing a record of his thoughts. Brady was killed by McSween supporters during the war, while Riley moved to Las Cruces and later to Colorado, where he prospered. None left records that clarified their motivations. Dolan remained in Lincoln County, eventually becoming owner of Tunstall's store and the Feliz River ranch. He served as county treasurer for two terms and was a member of the territorial senate before he too died of alcohol-related illnesses.<sup>39</sup> Tunstall and McSween lost their lives in the war, but they left correspondence that details their roles before and during the war. Their references to ethnic prejudices—either theirs or those of the Irishmen—are guarded.

How, then, may any strong case be made for the contention that ethnic prejudice was a major cause of the Lincoln County War? If these bits and pieces of historical evidence are taken as a whole and examined from psychological and sociological perspectives, the contention of ethnically-motivated antagonism is made plausible.

Developments in social science in the 20th century lend support, through a broad, multi-definition concept of social identity, to the argument that underlying the political and economic frictions of 1878 Lincoln County was a centuries-old ethnic bias. This bias particularly was characteristic of the Irishmen, who like their cultural kinsmen throughout the United States "... identified English with tyranny, bigotry, and heartlessness. They hated fiercely."<sup>40</sup> Regardless of the distance from their homeland and regardless of their involvement with New World enterprises, the Irish doggedly held on to their anti-English prejudices.

Historian Dennis Clark contends the most impressive single feature of the Irish immigrant to the United States is "... the resourcefulness of the group in sustaining its identity amid differing regional conditions." Clark wrote:

It cannot be easily conceded that a group over the entire span of American history has continuously interwoven itself with the regional dramas of national development and yet persisted in its own subcultural definition and influence. Yet, this group did it.<sup>41</sup>

Clark's view of the Irish-American aptly fits Lincoln County's Irishmen. The mere fact of the long-time business partnership between Murphy, Dolan and Riley, supported by compatriot Sheriff Brady, arguably places them in Clark's resourceful, identity-retaining group. Anthropologist Ronald Reminick, in discussing

"macrosocial units" of society, maintains that groups of people preserve "primordial ties" involving a consciousness of a kind that unites them through group identification. Reminick states:

These social units . . . have within them mechanisms that arouse sentiments, mobilizing and channeling them into thought and behavior appropriate to a particular unit and context.... The nature of the cause or adversary, or the type of challenge, threat, or problem that an individual or group encounters can determine which boundary of identification and attachment would become salient, thereby generating a form of political organization and political sentiment that would be required to meet a challenge or solve a problem.<sup>42</sup>

These sociological and anthropological dictums are appropriate for application to the Murphy/Dolan Irish. They found strength in the common bonds of Irishness; they saw Tunstall as an historical cultural threat. Their resentment of the Englishman lay initially within the economic realm where socialists see the root of most ethnic and racial antagonism.<sup>43</sup> The social identity developed in the old country and brought with them to the new inspired their actions. They attacked the Englishman economically, politically, legally and, when these had failed, violently. Perhaps they would have heightened their antagonism if they had read a March 7, 1877 Tunstall letter in which he commented to his father on the nature of persons he found on a trip west of Lincoln:<sup>44</sup>

I don't like this Rio Grande country at all, it is a complete waste (land) & in my opinion one long den of thieves & cut throats, at the present time they are getting somewhat scourged with smallpox & by that means a number of the young male fry are being prevented from developing into horse thieves & the female fry from developing into fit mares for the same.<sup>45</sup>

Tunstall was not without his prejudices. Although he was a middle-class Englishman, his cultural background endowed him with an ego that did not allow him to stoop to what he perceived as the commonness of an Irishman.<sup>46</sup> The Englishman intended to return home—rich. The Irish were in America to stay. Tunstall planned to declare for American citizenship only to enable him to acquire Lincoln County property under provisions of the Desert Land Act.<sup>47</sup>

The Irishmen, though clearly retaining much of their cultural identity and unity, had adapted to aspects of American West culture that remained foreign to Tunstall. On February 6, 1878,

barely two weeks before his death, Tunstall met Dolan in one of their few face-to-face confrontations. Dolan, holding a Winchester carbine on Tunstall, demanded that Tunstall fight him and settle their differences.

"Do you want me to fight a duel?" the Englishman asked.

"You damned coward, I want you to fight and settle our difficulties," replied Dolan.

The pair was separated and Tunstall walked away as Dolan muttered, "You won't fight this morning, you damned coward, but I'll get you soon."<sup>48</sup>

At play was a crucial cultural distinction that encouraged Dolan's aggression and soon contributed to Tunstall's death. Under English common law, the right of self defense is precarious. A person is required to "retreat to the wall" before defending himself. He then must prove to an English court that any bodily harm or killing resulting from the defense was the "only and last resort." English jurist Sir William Blackstone was of the opinion that "the right to defend may be mistaken as right to kill."

American law is based on English common law, but it has undergone significant adaptations to fit typically American circumstances. Historian Richard Brown analyzed how 19th century America—the nation as a whole—repudiated the English common law tenet of "duty to retreat" in favor of the theme of "no duty to retreat." Under this adaptation, a person is legally justified in standing his ground and killing in self defense. Eastern legal authorities and western judges viewed the English law as upholding "cowardice," while American law verified the bravery of the "true man."<sup>49</sup>

Dolan's actions on February 6th illustrate his tacit acceptance of the American legal interpretation. Tunstall's actions that day, and again on February 18th when he took no steps to defend himself against a pursuing posse that killed him, illustrate his adherence to his cultural law and his ignorance, perhaps his flaunting, of the American way. Other Englishman who ventured into the West assumed the Westerner's traits. Many believed the Colt revolver was not only a necessary article of wearing apparel but that it was essential to personal safety. "Every man in the West goes always armed," wrote the Rev. Foster Zincke in the 1860s.

And it is one of the most imperative laws of Western society, that, if a man insults you in any way, you are bound to then and there shoot him dead. Society requires you to do it, and if you do not, you will be shot yourself; for the man who has insulted you, supposing that you can only be waiting for an opportunity, will think it better to be beforehand with you.<sup>50</sup>

Tunstall must not have read Zincke before coming to New Mexico Territory; else he ignored Zincke's counsel.

**JOHN R. MOORE**, a native New Mexican, resided in El Paso for twenty years before moving in 1997 to Wetumpka, Alabama, where he lives with his wife Paula, executive editor of the Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser. A "retired" journalist and newspaper editor, Moore received his undergraduate degree in journalism and history from Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, his hometown in 1969. After a stint in the United States Army, including a tour in Vietnam, Moore reported for and edited newspapers in Clovis and Artesia, New Mexico, before locating in El Paso in 1977 where he later became co-managing editor of the El Paso Times.

Long a part-time student of Southwest history, Moore in 1992 enrolled in the graduate program in history at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he delved into the topic full time and received his master's degree in 1996. His life-long connections to the history of New Mexico and West Texas led him early in his studies to Lincoln County, and his interest in ethnic and cultural relations prompted this examination of the Irish-English aspects of the Lincoln County War. In Alabama, Moore continues to pursue research on several Southwest topics, but with the added opportunity of uncovering their frequent origins in the Deep South.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Mary Ealy, "Recollections of Old Lincoln," *New Mexico Magazine*, 32, March 1954, 17; Ruth Ealy, *Water In A Thirsty Land* (Privately printed, 1955, in University of Arizona Special Collections Library), 37, 76.
2. Frederick Nolan, *The Lincoln County War: A Documentary History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 10-11, 201-212. Robert M. Utley, *High Noon In Lincoln: Violence on the Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 8.
3. Norman J. Bender, ed., *Missionaries, Outlaws & Indians: Taylor F. Ealy at Lincoln & Zuni 1878-1881* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 3, 4, 6, 28, 35, n-175. Ruth Ealy, 48.
4. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, chapters 9, 11, 12, 17, 18 passim. Utley, *High Noon in Lincoln*, chapters 2, 3, 4 passim.

5. Frederick Nolan, *The Life & Death of John Henry Tunstall* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1965) 185. Maurice G. Fulton *History of the Lincoln County War*. ed. Robert N. Mullin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968) 105-106.
6. Rodney Stark, *Sociology* 3rd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989) 41. Vernon L. Allen, David A. Wilder and Michael L. Atkinson, "Multiple Group Membership and Social Identity," in *Studies In Social Identity* ed. Theodore R. Sarbin and Karl E. Scheibe (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), 94.
7. Bender, 5, 28.
8. John P. Wilson, *Merchants, Guns & Money, The Story of Lincoln County and Its Wars* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1987) 83. Rev. Ealy conducted thirty funerals during his five months in Lincoln. Only one of the deaths had resulted from natural causes.
9. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War* 32-55.
10. John B. Duff, *The Irish In The United States* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971) 10, 65.
11. William J. Whalen, *The Irish in America* (Chicago: Claretian Publications, no date) 4-7.
12. Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956) 161.
13. Duff, 6-11.
14. Nolan, *The Life & Death of John Henry Tunstall*, 192.
15. Robert G. Athearn, *Westward the Briton* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) 157, citing Dr. William Bell, *New Tracks in North America* (1970); Nolan, *The Life & Death of John Henry Tunstall*, 201, 213.
16. Duff, 20.
17. Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 136-148.
18. Duff, 15.
19. Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, *New Mexico Women: Intercultural Perspectives* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986) 169-172.
20. H.B. Hening, ed., *George Curry, 1861-1947, An Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958)
21. Other members of the citizens' petition committee were Florencio Gonzales, a Ruidoso Creek rancher, Capt. Saturino Baca, a Civil War veteran, like Murphy, of the New Mexico Volunteers, and Dr. J. H. Blazer, who owned Blazer's Mill on the upper Tularosa River. The land mass that became Lincoln County formerly had been part of Socorro County.
21. Marshall Ashley Upson, "The Hondo Valley and Roswell in the 1870s and 1880s," in *Reminiscences of Roswell Pioneers*, ed. James D. Shinkle (Roswell, N.M.: Hall-Poorbaugh Press, Inc., 1966) 11. Upson was perhaps the first school teacher in Lincoln County.
22. Amelia Bolton Church, "Notes for Informal Talk on Her Recollection of Life," in *Lincoln, N.M.: A Plan for Preservation and Growth*, eds. J.R. Beauvais and T.W. Merlan (Santa Fe: State Planning Office, 1974), 135. Jensen, *New Mexico Women*, 174.

23. Amelia Bolton Church, "Early Days in Roswell and Southeast New Mexico," in *Reminiscences of Roswell Pioneers*, 11, 88-91.
24. Church, "Notes for Informal Talk," 135-38.
25. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 36-37.
26. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 32-38, 445, 462, 481-482.
27. Department of the Interior, *The Ninth Census, June 1, 1870, New Mexico Territory*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 392, 427.
28. Department of the Interior, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census. June 1, 1880*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), Table XIII, 494. Compared to the English/Irish group, Mexicans accounted for 5,173 of the foreign born, Germans numbered 729, there were 167 French and 280 British Americans.
29. Utley, *High Noon In Lincoln County*, 1-10.
30. Fulton, *History of the Lincoln County War*, 45. Georgia Redfield, "Lincoln Was Once Most Important," *El Paso Times*, 28 December 1947. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 32-33.
31. Utley, *High Noon in Lincoln County*, 38-50
32. Lily Casey Klasner, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws*, ed. Eve Ball (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972) 95-98.
33. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 450.
34. Hening, 38.
35. Cheryl J. Foote, *Women of the New Mexico Frontier. 1846-1912* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1990) 107.
36. Hening, 29.
37. Lee Scott Theisen, "Frank Warner Angel's Notes on New Mexico Territory, 1878," *Arizona and the West*, Winter 1976, 333.
38. Adjutant General's Office, Letters received, 1871-80, "Papers Relating to the Use of U. S. Troops to Suppress Lawlessness in Lincoln County, N.M.. 1878-81," Call No. 33122, Record Group 94, Micro Copy 666, Roll 397.
39. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 351, 427-28, 482.
40. Duff, 66.
41. Dennis Clark, "Irish-Americans," in *Multiculturalism in the United States: A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity*, ed. John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992) 79.
42. Ronald A. Reminick, *Theory of Ethnicity: An Anthropologist's Perspective* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983) 2-3.
43. Stark, 303, 328.
44. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 130, 293. Bender, 45-46.
45. Nolan, *The Life and Death of John Henry Tunstall* 198.
46. Stark, 51.
47. Nolan, *The Lincoln County War*, 108.
48. Fulton, *History of the Lincoln County War*, 104.
49. Richard Maxwell Brown, *No Duty To Retreat* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 3-5.
50. Robert G. Athearn, *Westward the Briton* (New York, Scribners, 1953) 141.



# Río, Mesa, and Sierra: An Environmental History of the Greater El Paso Area

## PART II

By Dan Scurlock

*In Part I of this article, the author discussed the geology-physiography and the climatology of the greater El Paso area and of the Rio Grande Valley. Mr. Scurlock also discussed the floods and the droughts which have afflicted the area as well and the effects of woodland and grassland wildfires.*

### Flora: Plant Communities

The El Paso study area lies within the warm-temperate Chihuahuan Province.<sup>38</sup> Within this province five major vegetative communities or units have been recognized and described 1) riparian: valley cottonwood, willow, tamarisk, 2) desert grassland: various short, bunch grasses, creosote bush, and tar bush, 3) savanna-like oak-juniper scrublands: scattered stands of small oak and juniper in a grassland, 4) plains-mesa scrubland dominated by sand-loving oak, sagebrush, saltbush, and bunch grasses, and 5) mixed woodland: tree stands dominated by scattered pines, juniper, and oak species. Within each of these major communities are smaller plant units, such as the Rio Grande bosque; cottonwood, salt cedar, Russian olive, willow scrublands or sparse woodlands; or succulent-scrub upland; ocotillo, coldenia, and cat claw.<sup>39</sup>

All five of these major vegetative communities in the area have been variously impacted by human activity, including grazing, logging, water control, and fire suppression. These activities have interacted over time with floods, droughts, fire, and other natural environmental agents. Although these impacts and their effects have been briefly discussed in previous parts of this section, more specific impacts and effects on the vegetation will be addressed here.

As previously noted, the flood plain of the Rio Grande and the adjacent uplands have experienced the most severe impact in the region due to a long history of intensive human settlement and resource exploitation. In the early Spanish colonial period, A.D. 1540 to 1700, the flood plain vegetation was dominated by open, but discontinuous, stands of valley cottonwood and willows; *charcos* [small lakes] with associated aquatic vegetation such as cattail and bulrush; and *ciénegas* [marshes] with associated semi-aquatic vegetation such as rush, sedge, and salt grass. These riparian plant communities were maintained, in part, by periodic flood disturbance.<sup>40</sup> One beneficial aspect of the flooding on riparian vegetation is the deposition of large particulate, organic debris.<sup>41</sup> Another benefit is the deposition of rich, alluvial sediments which are a prime habitat for the establishment of seedlings of pioneer, native tree species such as cottonwood seedlings.<sup>42</sup>

Native Americans and Hispanics, as well as Anglo-Americans, used cottonwood and willow for construction, fuel, crafts, and medicine. Nevertheless, relatively extensive stands of cotton wood-

*The changing composition and stages of the indigenous river-bank plant community resulted in change in composition of the fauna.*

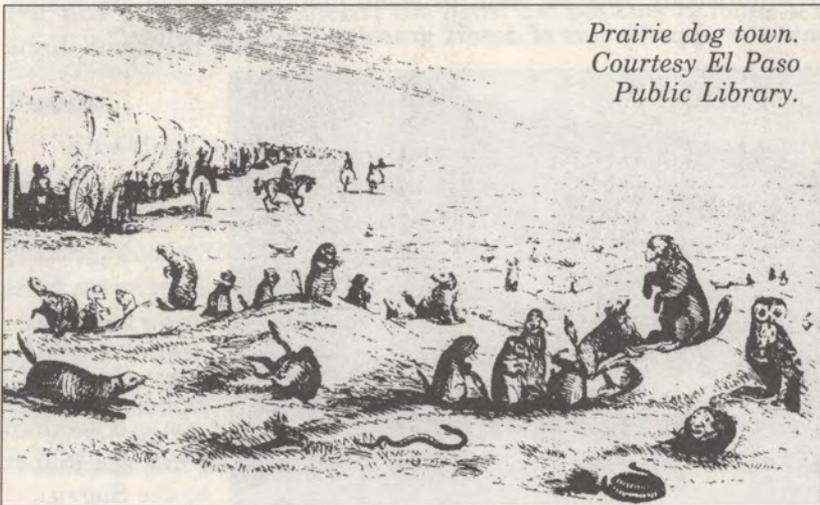
dominant bosques were probably found along the river as late as the early part of this century. George F. Ruxton in 1846 wrote, "The river bottom is timbered with cottonwoods, which extend a few hundred yards on each side of the banks."<sup>43</sup> Three years later, another observer wrote, "the River is skirted with a heavy growth of timber, principally Cotton Wood. . . ."<sup>44</sup> Honey mesquite and tornillo also occurred on the flood plain, but farther from the river.<sup>45</sup>

In 1903 the exotic Russian olive was introduced into the Mesilla Valley, and was soon followed by another exotic plant, salt cedar, or tamarisk. The spread of these two species was, at first, probably slow, but in the 1930s, with channel rectification, the increased alkalinity in flood plain soils, the lowering of the shallow water table, and other changes, the two competitive plants, especially salt cedar, began to increase rapidly along the Rio Grande Valley. The changing composition and stages of the indigenous river-bank plant community resulted in change in composition of the fauna. In an unsuccessful attempt to control or eradicate the tamarisk along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, the Bureau of Reclamation sprayed herbicides on those trees. Within recent

years, the tamarisk has all but replaced native cottonwood and willow in the Rio Grande Valley south of Socorro, New Mexico.<sup>46</sup>

In the historic period, the Chihuahuan desert grassland, now partly desert scrub, dominated the ancient Rio Grande terraces, *bajadas*, mesas, and foothills in the area. Common grasses included black grama, fluff grass, burro grass, and *tobosa* grass. Shrubs here were more common than in the Great Basin grasslands, such as creosote bush, which grew on benches or ridges of gravel or rock; mesquite, tarbush, and viscid acacia. A number of cacti and yucca were present also. In arroyos there were mesquite, creosote bush, Apache plume, white thorn, desert willow the burro brush.<sup>47</sup>

Probably as early as the late 1600s, some of the area grasslands had already been impacted by intensive grazing. As area communities and ranches grew, overgrazing expanded. Just south of El Paso, Spanish engineer Nicolas Lafora crossed an area of rolling hills and arroyos vegetated with "much mesquite but little pasture" in 1766.<sup>48</sup> This expansion of grazing affected the grasslands between San Elizario and Hueco Tanks which had been adversely impacted by overgrazing before 1850, the year in which Boundary Commissioner John Bartlett described the area as having "low mezquit chaparral" and scattered "tufts or patches" of grama grass.<sup>49</sup> This was probably the same environmental condition for other area grasslands intensively grazed in the colonial, Mexican, and early Anglo-American periods, which, along with the effects of periodic droughts, were invaded by forbs [any herb that is not a grass or grasslike] and shrubs such as lechugilla, soap-



*Prairie dog town.  
Courtesy El Paso  
Public Library.*

weed yucca, broomweed, mesquite, creosote bush, and tarbush. Fire suppression was later a probable factor in the spread of these semi-woody and woody species. Coppice [cutover area] dunes with associated mesquite had formed over much of the area by the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>50</sup> This successional phenomenon in the area has also been documented by Dick-Peddie, Gardner, Humphrey, and others.

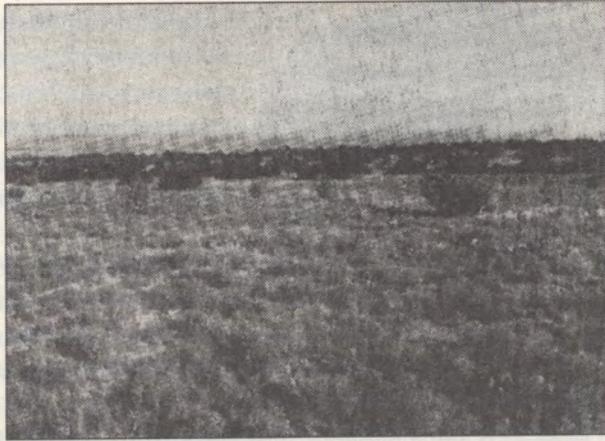
As fuel wood from the *bosques* and the sparse juniper and oak from the uplands were depleted, El Paso area residents began to dig mesquite roots as a source of fuel for cooking and heating.<sup>52</sup> In the 1860s and 1870s, army contracts for mesquite root and other fuel woods such as oak, juniper, and pinyon impacted the upland plant zones.<sup>53</sup> Fort Bliss and other military posts also required a large amount of native "hay," which caused further removal of vegetative cover. As a result of this and the periodic droughts and intensive rains, severe gullying began during that time, and topsoil was sheet-eroded.<sup>54</sup> Mesquite, creosote bush, and other less desirable species for livestock spread dramatically.<sup>55</sup>

Above 5,500 feet in elevation the desert grasslands are replaced by savanna-like open oak-juniper. Gray and Emory oaks, one seed juniper, and redberry juniper are the dominants with common associates such as mountain mahogany, skunkbush sumac, datil yucca, threeawn grasses, muhly grasses, and some of the grasses found in the grassland communities at lower elevations. Overgrazing, fire suppression, and discontinuance of fuel-wood harvesting have caused the increase in density of these woody or semi-woody species, and, in some instances, their expansion onto the upper levels of desert grassland located below.<sup>56</sup>



*Scattered scrub oaks: three-leaf sumac. Photo by the author in From the Rio to the Sierra.*

*Overgrazed  
rangeland:  
broomweed,  
prickly pear  
and walking-  
stick cholla.  
Photo by the  
author in  
From the Rio  
to the Sierra.*



Also found in this upland zone is plains-mesa scrubland, dominated by shinoak, sand sagebrush, white ratany, low yucca, fourwing saltbush, broomweed, and several bunch grasses, such as grama, alkali sacaton, and sand bluestem.<sup>57</sup> This plant community was created from the above-mentioned zone by intensive grazing and fire suppression, interacting with periodic droughts.<sup>58</sup>

The mixed woodland zone generally occurs above 8,000 feet; this plant community was utilized for hunting, fuel-wood gathering, grazing, and mining in the historic period. Gray and Emory oaks, pinyon, and alligator juniper are found here also, as are yucca, mountain mahogany, three-leaf sumac, and Wright silk-tassel, all ethnobotanically important species. Common bunch grasses include muhlys and grama. Fire suppression, intensive tree harvesting, and grazing have altered the plant composition to more of a scrub dominant community.<sup>59</sup>

## **Fauna**

Like the flora, the area fauna were severely impacted in the late historical period, 1850-1930, by loss or modification of habitat; trapping, poisoning, unregulated hunting and fishing; intensive grazing, and/or the introduction of competitive exotic species. At least seven medium to large mammal species or subspecies in the study area were exterminated: 1) the bison, or buffalo, 2) pronghorn antelope, 3) desert bighorn sheep, 4) jaguar, 5) gray wolf, 6) Mexican wolf, and 7) grizzly bear. Populations of a number of other mammals such as white-tailed deer, beaver, and prairie dog were greatly reduced in the area during the same period.

The chronicles of early European explorers, such as Espejo and Oñate, commented on the abundance of game mammals, birds, and fish in the area.<sup>60</sup> Later observers, such as Benavides, noted in 1620 that “the abundance of game appears infinite. . .” and “fish in abundance,”<sup>61</sup> as did Lafora, who commented on the variety of furbearing animals, birds, and fish found in the El Paso area in 1766.<sup>62</sup>

The Spanish traded relatively moderate numbers of animal hides and skins, acquired primarily from Native American groups. These were primarily elk, deer, pronghorn, and bison hides. *Ciboleros* from virtually every settlement in the region went onto nearby grasslands in the fall to hunt buffalo, which ranged across west Texas and southeastern New Mexico into northern Chihuahua in the 1700s and the 1800s. The jerked meat was a winter staple, and the hides were important as bedding or as a trade item. By the early 1800s bison had been “pushed back” across the lower Pecos River.<sup>63</sup>

Wild horses were reported to be abundant in the region during the late colonial and Mexican periods, and they were hunted by nomadic Indians and Hispanics for mounts or for food.<sup>64</sup> Anglo-American and Franco-American trappers reached the El Paso area by 1822. Within a couple of years, beaver populations in the Rio Grande drainage had been decimated, prompting Mexican officials to pass laws regulating their trapping activities. These were only half-heartedly enforced, and by 1838, El Paso authorities warned higher officials in *Ciudad Chihuahua* that the beaver was nearing extinction in the region.<sup>65</sup>

Wild horses were reported to be abundant in the region during the late colonial and Mexican periods, and they were hunted by nomadic Indians and Hispanics for mounts or for food.<sup>66</sup> Deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and smaller game mammals, such as prairie dogs, were still common in the area in the mid-1860s.<sup>67</sup>



*Desert grassland:  
four-wing salt-  
bush, broomweed.  
Photo by the  
author in From  
the Rio to the  
Sierra.*

John Russell Bartlett, during his 1851-1852 boundary survey, recorded wolves, grizzly bears, and black bears as common; jaguars and ocelots were also present, especially to the west of El Paso-Fort Bliss.<sup>68</sup>



As intensive hunting sharply reduced wild prey species over the next three decades, these wolves, bear, and the cats became more dependent on the ever-increasing livestock populations. In response, ranchers and government trappers increased their taking of these animals. The United States Department of Agriculture began its predator control program in 1885; the County Commissioners' Court at San Elizario began to pay bounties on the "scalps" of wolves and other wild animals in 1889. The last grizzly in west Texas was killed around 1890; a few were left in the Sacramento and other southeastern New Mexico ranges at that time, but they, too, were exterminated by the early part of this century. Resident mountain lion populations decreased, and wolf numbers dropped to a hundred or less by the early 1600s. The last two wolves were killed in west Texas in 1970, but these were roamers from remote mountains in northern Mexico.<sup>69</sup>

The last desert bighorn sheep in the region succumbed to ongoing hunting pressure and diseases transmitted by domestic sheep at the turn of the century in the Guadalupe Mountains.<sup>70</sup> Merriam elk in the Guadalupe and Sacramento mountains, and pronghorn on the area bajadas, mesas, and foothills were also exterminated about this same time.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the feral horses or mustangs, escaped or freed burros became feral, but hunting, capture and removal, and mountain lion predation in the region took all but the few still surviving in Lincoln County, New Mexico. Historically, wild horses and burros competed with wild grazers and browsers, and adversely impacted water holes and springs.<sup>72</sup> Other introduced mammals which became naturalized include the black rat from Europe which may have been introduced to the coast of Mexico accidentally on Spanish ships. They came north with the cargo. The Norway rat probably came west with Americans, arriving as early as 1851.<sup>73</sup> Both rats carry human diseases, such as bubonic plague and

typhus, consume large amounts of grain, and prey on poultry.<sup>74</sup> The common house mouse probably came with Spanish colonization.<sup>75</sup>

Two exotic birds which have naturalized, the European starling and house sparrow, were late arrivals from populations introduced on the east coast in the mid to late 1800s. The sparrow appeared in the 1890s, while the starling reached the El Paso area in the mid to late 1930s. Of the two, the populations of starlings, which consume substantial amounts of grain and fruit, have increased dramatically in the region over the past twenty years. Both species do eat noxious insects and are generally found in and around locations inhabited by humans.<sup>76</sup>

### Summary

Over the past four centuries, the environment of the greater El Paso area has experienced relatively severe impacts by such human activities as agriculture, livestock raising, water resource use, fire suppression, hunting, trapping, and the introduction of a number of exotic animal and plant species which have naturalized and successfully competed with, and sometimes out-competed, native biota. These impacts, in general, have been exacerbated by floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, and fire.

One of the more significant changes in the floodplain flora occurred due to the introduction of salt cedar and Russian olive in the early part of this century. Floods have caused property damage and loss of human life, but historically floods were important in maintaining dynamic plant communities and providing rich alluvial deposits important to farmers on the Rio Grande floodplain. Indigenous vegetation and resident or transient fauna, which had evolved with periodic floods and droughts over time, provided food, shelter, and forage for both humans and their livestock. Construction of major flood control dams and drainage canals in this century, intensive exploitation of resources, and the introduction of exotic vegetation which usurped large amount of groundwater, severely impacted or exterminated various riparian components, including the animals.



The area has been slowly warming, with moderate to severe periodic droughts since the mid-19th century. These climatic changes, combined with various

human activities, have resulted in a variety of environmental impacts. Intensive agriculture and cattle grazing brought increased soil erosion, increased alkalinity, waterlogging, and silt build-up in the Rio Grande. Channelization, drainage, and construction of dams "corrected" some of these problems, to a degree; but generally, these have had adverse effects on the dynamic equilibrium of the hydrology and riparian flora and fauna of the region. Lightning and incendiary fires helped maintain stable and self-perpetuating plant communities in the upland grasslands, savannah, and woodlands, but with fire suppression beginning in the late 19th century, the species composition of these communities has changed; and they have become less productive from an economic standpoint. Intensive grazing and suppression of range and forest fires have resulted in relatively recent changes of the composition and distribution of early historic plant communities.

Destruction or modification of wildlife habitat, intensive hunting, poisoning, and trapping between 1870 and 1930 decimated or exterminated several species of mammals and sharply reduced a number of others, as well as a variety of bird species. There are efforts underway to restore some of the former ecological components to the area. The success of these efforts remains in doubt at present. If current population growth rates and current land/water uses continue in the area over the next few decades, adverse environmental impacts of area ecosystem can be expected to continue, perhaps causing even more severe ecological and economic consequences.

---

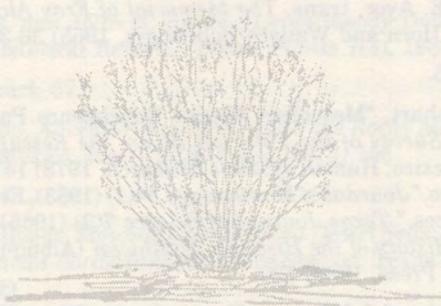
**DAN SCURLOCK**, a native of the southwest United States, is currently a consulting naturalist, archeologist, and environmental-cultural historian. He has worked for universities, public schools, government agencies, private organizations, and businesses as a researcher, instructor, planner, writer, photographer, and trip leader for more than thirty years in the American Southwest and the Southeast, Mexico, and Canada. His more than one hundred academic and popular publications in archeology, history, architectural history, and natural history range from articles to book-length reports. He holds an Associate Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in anthropology. He has engaged in post-graduate work in Environmental Studies.

## ENDNOTES

38. Dan Scurlock, "Through Desierto and Bosque: The Physical Environment of El Camino Real from Ciudad Chihuahua to Santa Fe." *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro*, compiled by Gabrielle Palmer. Camino Real Project, Santa Fe, 1993. 1.
39. David E. Brown, 174. Fred Gross and William A. Dick-Peddie, "A Map of Primeval Vegetation in New Mexico." *Southwestern Naturalist* 24(1): 113-120. Valerie C. Hink and Robert D. Ohmart "Middle Rio Grande Biological Survey," (Tempe: Center for Environmental Studies, Arizona State University, 1984). 4-6.
40. William A. Dick-Peddie, *New Mexico Vegetation: Past Present and Future* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 151-155. Hammond and Rey 80,170,218. Hink and Ohmart 33-34,66. Marjorie Van Cleave, "Vegetative Changes in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District," (Master of Arts thesis, Department of Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1935)1, 6-11,21, 23-24.
41. W. L. Minckley, and John N. Rinne, "Large Woody Debris in Hot-Desert Streams: An Historical Review," *Desert Plants* 7(3), 1985: 142-153.
42. Hink and Ohmart, 67.
43. George F. Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains* (reprint; Glorieta, New Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1973) 168.
44. Weniger, 42, 148.
45. Frederick R. Gellbach, *Mountain Islands and Desert Seas: A Natural History of the U. S. Mexican Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981) 109.
46. Dick-Peddie 151-152. Michael D. Freeling, *Riparian Woodlands of the Middle Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico: A Study of Bird Populations and Vegetation with Special Reference to Russian-olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque) 10. Scurlock 1988, 138
47. Brown, 1982, 169-174. Dick-Peddie, 107-108. 93, 151-152. J. L. Gardner, "Vegetation of the Creosote Bush Area of the Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico," *Ecological Monographs* 21(4):379-403. Robert R. Humphrey, *90 years and 500 miles: Vegetation Changes Along the Mexican Border* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987)
48. Lawrence Kinnaird, *The Frontiers of New Spain: Nicolas de Lafora's Description 1766-1768* (New York: Arno Press, 1967) 82.
49. Weniger, 23-24.
50. Brown 1982 169, 173-175. Stephen A. Hall, "Historic Vegetation of Hueco Bolson, Texas" *Texas Journal Of Science* 42(4) 402.
51. Dick-Peddie, 129. Robert R. Humphrey, "The Desert Grassland: A History of Vegetational Change and an Analysis of Causes," (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968).
52. C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968) 132.

53. Darlis A. Miller, *Soldiers and Settlers: Military Supply in the Southwest, 1861-1885*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989) 92, 94, 122.
54. Luna B. Leopold, *A View of the River* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994) 17.
55. Farrel A. Branson, "Vegetation Changes on Western Rangelands," *Society for Range Management, Monograph No. 2* (1985) 67.
56. Brown, 95,98. Dick-Peddie, 19-21, 91-93.
57. Brown, 55-56. Dick-Peddie, 19-20, 91-93, 128-129.
58. Scurlock, "An Overview of the Environmental History of the El Paso Valley" (Ms., Office of Contract Archeology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque).
59. Brown, "Biotic Communities" 59-61. Dick-Peddie, 90.
60. Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed. *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest 1542-1706* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1946) 217. Hammond and Rey 168-170,218.
61. Mrs. Edward E. Ayer, trans. *The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides* (Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace Publishers, 1965) 36-37.
62. Kinnaird 94-95.
63. Harry W. Basehart, "Mescalero Apache Subsistence Patterns" *Technical Manual: 1973 Survey of the Tularosa Basin, the Research Design* (Three Rivers, New Mexico: Human systems Research, 1973) 147. J. Frank Dobie, "Bison in Mexico," *Journal of Mammalogy* 34(1) (1953), Erik K. Reed, "Bison Beyond the Pecos." *Texas Journal of Science* 7(2) (1955), David J. Weber, *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988) 126.
64. H. Bailey Carrol and J. Villasana Haggard, eds., *Three New Mexico Chronicles* (Albuquerque: the Quivira Society, 1942) 100.
65. David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest 1540-1946* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971) 29,35,68, 157, 224-255.
66. Gregg 1: 194. LeRoy R. Hafen, editor, *Ruxton of the Rockies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950) 129-130.
67. John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents and in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua*, II. (Glorieta, New Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1965) 55. David E. Brown, ed. *The Wolf in the Southwest: The Making of an Endangered Species* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1988) 15. Brown (1988) 30-32.
68. Vernon Bailey, *The Mammals of the Southwestern United States*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1971) 363. Brown (1983) 31. David E. Brown and John A. Murray, *The Last Grizzly and Other Southwestern Bear Stories*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988) 30-32. Thomas R. Dunlap, *America's Wildlife: Ecology and the American Mind: 1850-1990* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) 143. Lockhart 57.
69. Bailey 21. Gellbach 94.

70. Bailey 22-23, 40, 42, 441. James S. Findley, *The Natural History of New Mexican Mammals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987) 141-145.
71. Charles E. Roth, *Walking Catfish and Other Aliens* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1973) 46-47.
72. Findley 107-108, 150.
73. Alfred Crosby, "The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492" *Contributions in American Studies No. 2* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972) 97. Roth 34.
74. Findley 109.
75. John P. Hubbard, "Revised Check-list of the Birds of New Mexico," *New Mexico Ornithological Society Publication No. 6*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1961) 242-243, 256-257.



The version of "The Guns of Valverde Revisited" published in the Summer 1999 edition of *Password* was incomplete. Copies of the full text and notes can be requested from:

Barbara Rees, Curator  
Jane Burges Perrenot Research Center  
El Paso County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 28  
El Paso, Texas 79940



## Book Review

**THE ROYAL ROAD: EL CAMINO REAL FROM MEXICO CITY TO SANTA FE.** Photographs by Christine Preston, text by Douglas Preston and Jose Antonio Esquibel. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. \$55.00 Cloth; \$26.95 Paper.

This work blends the magnificent photography of Christine Preston with the writings of Douglas Preston, a husband and wife team, in a book that celebrates the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, or Royal Road of the Interior Lands, that ran from Mexico City to Santa Fe during the Spanish colonial era. The original trail was blazed by Don Juan de Oñate during his expedition to colonize New Mexico in 1598. By the 17th century, the Camino Real was a regularly traveled route that saw caravan trade, military expeditions, and thousands of colonists, slaves, and Native-Americans travel its length. It remained in use as major transportation system for the next three hundred years.

Only very recently has there been an effort to document and preserve the original trail. Although most of it has been obscured by modern highways, agriculture, and urban sprawl, the Prestons traveled much of the original path and explored some quite remote sections. The Camino Real was actually a complex series of trails some of which are still in use in remote parts of Mexico. The Prestons followed the trail as accurately as possible and their work presents a rich assortment of geographic sites, historic and religious sites, and people along the trail.

Douglas Preston's essay gives an overview of the development of the trail the historic background of many towns and cities, and incidents from the Oñate expedition. Much of the narrative, however, recounts the adventures that the Prestons had during their journeys and describes the many people that they encountered. The heart of the book is the collection of photographs by Christine Preston which give us a closer look at life along the Camino Real today. Her works show not only prominent landscape features and historic sites, but also the people who populate the trail. The color photographs were made with large format equipment and are richly reproduced in this book. They capture the seasons, natural environments, and man-made structures along the trail. One interesting image was made near Lava Gate, in the Jornada del Muerto. It shows not only the desolate landscape of the Jornada but also one of the few areas

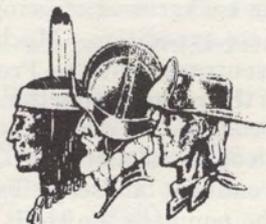
where trails ruts can still be seen. Another is a beautiful cityscape of Zacatecas at dawn showing buildings that glitter like the gold and silver that the Spanish encountered in the New World. Ornate churches, mission ruins, and simple chapel interiors are also featured. Other images show the remote, haunting beauty of parts of the trail through such areas as rural Durango, the dunes of Samalayuca, and the Galisteo Basin.

Of course, the Camino Real played an important role in the development of El Paso and a photograph of our downtown area is featured in the book. What the Prestons may not be aware of is that a spur road off the Camino Real passed through the missions of our lower valley. Images of our mission sites would have been a worthy addition to this work.

The book closes with a fascinating account of the people who traveled the Camino Real during the colonial period. Researched and written by geneologist Jose Antonio Esquibel, the prominent families, fears, and soldiers are chronicled and the major migrations north into New Mexico are detailed. Some of the most interesting entries deal with the women who colonized New Mexico such as doña Eufemia who helped rebuke the soldiers who tried to abandon the Oñate expedition in New Mexico.

The Prestons' book is a terrific starting point for anyone interested in the Camino Real and hopefully will inspire more detailed studies in the future of one of America's oldest and most historic transportation corridors.

Dr. George Torok  
El Paso Community College



**OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 1999  
THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

President	Frank McKnight
First Vice President	Carolyn Breck
Second Vice President	Joy Ferguson
Third Vice President	Robert Axelson
Recording Secretary	Margaret Jackson
Corresponding Secretary	Ruth Park
Treasurer	Bill Squires
Historian	Marta Estrada
Membership	Grace and Al Adkins
Curator, Jane Burges Perrenot	
Research Center	Barbara Rees

**MEMBERS EX-OFFICIO**

Editor, PASSWORD	Marilyn C. Gross
Editor, EL CONQUISTADOR	Betty Ligon
Chair, Burges House Commission	Lea Vail
Director, El Paso Museum of History	René Harris
Immediate Past President	Frank Gorman

**DIRECTORS**

**1997 - 1999**

Margaret Marsh  
Rudy Miles  
Richard Field  
Josefina Salas-Porras  
Patricia Bruce  
Alicia R. Chacon

**1998 - 2000**

Michael Hutson  
Nina Sambrano  
Hughes Butterworth  
Jackson Curlin  
Juan Sandoval  
David Florez  
Margery Loiselle

**1999 - 2001**

Bebe Coonley  
Alex Gonzalez  
Frank Mangan, Jr.  
Jack Niland  
Carl Ryan  
Virginia Shapiro  
Ann Wainwright

**ALL PAST PRESIDENTS ARE HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS**