

matter how difficult reliance on relatives could become, such new institutions as hospitals or orphanages did not yet replace such dependence.

Life for the unmarried woman, the widow included, also exhibited a certain fluidity. Some married, or remarried, the new men in their midst. Others made wills to provide for a future generation. In that manner they might have been like other southwesterners. But they remained Spanish-Mexican women speaking Spanish and not English, practicing Catholicism and not Protestantism, residing in neighborhoods several centuries old, with roots stretching far back. Their story differed fundamentally from the stories of women to whom they might be compared, including Mormon women, city women, or western women. . . .

At the end of the 1870s, when the railroad tracks had nearly reached Santa Fe, unmarried women stood at another critical juncture. Families and the community were changing; no longer did many groups reside on the periphery, isolated from the government or its institutions. Rather, Spanish-Mexicans were at the center of continuing colonization, their ways irrevocably altered. As immigrants became residents, the unmarried women faced difficult choices. They had persevered, but as the iron horse pushed toward their community, even more pernicious forms of intrusion threatened. They had little choice but to accommodate.

Chicano/a Frontier and Regional Communities in the Southwest

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When U.S. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearney marched into Mexican Santa Fe in 1846, his work was quick and nearly bloodless. He annexed New Mexico without firing a shot. But that was only the official victory. Achieving domination and cultural conquest took far longer. Even after the uprising of the following year failed, Hispanics had the advantage of numbers and an entrenched society and economy. And in the years following 1848 they thrived and even expanded their frontiers, settling new villages in southern Colorado and exploring new trade routes to gold fields. By 1880 the Hispanic frontier and the Anglo one interlocked rather than merely met. It was at this joint frontier that the Anglos arrived in force in the 1880s, with railroads, lumber mills, coal mines, and commercial agriculture and stock enterprises. This renewed Anglo assault posed an even greater challenge to the territory's Hispanics.

As they vied for survival and power, both Anglos and Hispanics formulated new strategies. The developments of these years, from 1880 to 1914, set for at least the next four decades the basic lines of contact and conflict in the region. They also exposed the enduring tensions between Anglo aims for both the land and its inhabitants, and Hispanic villagers' own visions. . . .

To encourage the settlement of their vast arid frontier and to buffer the empire against the depredations of Indians and other ambitious rival powers, the Spanish

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and later the Mexican government had bestowed communal grants on groups petitioning for land in northern New Mexico. . . . By the mid-nineteenth century, although the population seemed thinly scattered on the land, Hispanics filled the arable river beds and slopes and grazed their cattle on the grassy plateaus. Relatively short distances separated settlements, and the settlers exploited the land, through a mixed economy, to the maximum feasible extent.

Village size and society varied depending on access to grazing lands, ease of irrigation, and the proximity of trade routes, but the communal mountain villages had more in common than not. In most villages, each settler owned a small agricultural lot, a house, and the land immediately surrounding the house. The rest of the grant, the pasturage and water, was held and managed communally. . . .

As on most frontiers, also, the villagers' economy depended on the labor of each family member. Women's work, in particular, and the flexibility of the sexual division of labor were essential elements in allowing seasonal migration by men to herd or to trade. While the husband selected the crops for other fields, the wife had exclusive control over the garden plot which produced most of the food for the family table, and which she tended with the help of the entire family. When men were away on seasonal absences, women irrigated the land. If the garden was as large as the fields, both sexes helped plant and harvest each.

As a reflection of the crucial nature of women's contribution, daughters usually inherited land equally with sons, although in some villages they received livestock, furniture, and household goods in lieu of land. This inheritance custom, their position as heads of households during men's absences, and the tradition that a woman retained her right to whatever property she had when she entered marriage, as well as her right to "community property" (property she shared with her husband), gave women a degree of independence, an ability to act on their own which would prove significant as more and more men left the village for longer periods.

Status differences did exist, but the differences were greatest between generations. . . . Geography, climate, and village structure helped minimize differences between families. With small private plots and diversified land, large-scale mono-cropping was impossible. With communal grazing lands, none could monopolize this vital resource for his or her own cattle or sheep. And with fully occupied families, a rainfall inconsistent at best, and a communal ethos, there was not much room for a single family to gain a lasting dominant position by using village resources.

Still, it was a communal system with ambiguities. . . . Men and women held their private land individually while they also shared in the larger communal property. Private land played a key role in the membership of individuals in the community and in their sustenance and autonomy. No written law governed its disposal. . . . Village mores militated against selling the land to an outsider, and such a sale was likely to result in the ostracism of seller and buyer. Privately held land gave room to individualism within the community, but at the same time the community limited that room in the interests of its own survival. . . .

. . . The village was not self-sufficient, and trade played a crucial role in its economy. There were few barriers to trade, and most families owned the necessary team and wagon. The villagers produced small amounts of hay, wheat, onions,

chilis, cabbage, sheep, and wool—products from the women's garden as often as from the men's fields—for sale in such regional centers as Española, Taos, and Santa Fe. Individual enterprise was more often channeled even farther outside the village. Villagers traded at first with the Utes to the northwest and with St. Louis and Mexico. After the Mexican-American War stifled the Mexican market for New Mexico sheep, New Mexicans shifted their trade targets to take advantage of new opportunities. They drove their sheep to the California and Colorado gold fields, to Denver, and occasionally to Kansas and Nevada. . . .

As families could not survive solely on the profits of such trade, when villages became crowded or grazing land depleted, small groups from the parent village would form a new settlement. . . . In the 1840s and 1850s, for example, families from Abiquiu in Rio Arriba County settled Guadalupe in southern Colorado, families from El Rito settled Rincones, and Taos families settled San Luis. . . .

Ironically, the United States conquest increased such expansion. Families set out to occupy new sites on their old grants, moved onto Indian grants or even to the California gold fields not only because of over-grazing and diminishing land at home, but also to seek better trade conditions and to escape the increasing Anglo influence. . . . Some of this expansion was, in fact, made possible only by the expanding Anglo frontier, by the protection that Anglo forts afforded to Hispanic settlers, and the trade opportunities Anglo settlements provided.

The Anglo conquest and control over land had still barely begun to impinge on Hispanic movement and livelihood in the 1870s. The railroad had not reached New Mexico and had only just reached southern Colorado. At this point, its Anglo towns provided new outlets for trade rather than threats to old ones. Anglos entered New Mexico and southern Colorado with improved livestock, but in small numbers. . . . The boom in sheep brought attractive if ephemeral profits and prosperity to the villagers. Land grants were finding their way into Anglo hands, but were seldom fenced or Anglo-colonized so the loss held little tangible threat. . . .

Ultimately, however, the same Anglo frontier that stimulated expansion became a major obstacle. While northern New Mexicans continued to homestead and settle on grants, and traders sometimes moved permanently to the Anglo enclaves where they traded, Anglo cattlemen, Mormon farmers, and Anglo railroadmen, land speculators, and merchants formed an increasingly complete circle around the expanding Hispanics.

In the 1880s the changing pattern became clear. For the first time, Hispanic migrants from New Mexico to Colorado were matched by Anglos migrating from Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. With each succeeding decade, while the number from New Mexico stood roughly the same, more and more states sent more and more people. In the 1880s, also, the railroad arrived in New Mexico, and brought increasing numbers of Anglos there as well. Before the 1880s, because of their relatively small numbers, Anglos in the region had found it to their advantage to adopt Hispanic customs, language, and wives. Now their increasingly complete community in the West rendered superfluous earlier Anglo assimilation of Hispanic ways, and their increasing numbers enabled them to impose their desire for and attitude toward land and business more effectively on the local scene.

For Hispanics, barriers to trade rose on all sides. Licenses were required to trade with the Indians, and agents were inclined to favor Anglos over Hispanics.

They believed "the average Mexican is too much like the Indian," and therefore trade between them would not perform its designated function of transforming Indian culture; would not, in the parlance of the day, Americanize the Indians. Other trade moved away from Old Hispanic villages to new Anglo railroad towns, and Hispanic freighters who had carried the majority of business could not compete on hauls covered by railroads. . . .

The new Anglo threat went even beyond the loss of trading income. The communal village land itself was at stake as Anglo attitudes toward land and economy, so different from Hispanic villagers', triumphed. Anglo capitalists who came to New Mexico in this period took for granted private property, commercial use, and a monetary economy. . . . To the Anglo, land not visibly occupied or, worse, not producing a profit, was wasted and vacant. In line with this philosophy, most Hispanic land grants, as confirmed by Congress, included only the home lots and the irrigated fields. Much of what had been the villagers' common land went to the public domain and in turn to railroads, Anglo homesteaders, and national forests. Without pasture, the land remaining in villagers' hands was often insufficient to sustain their pastoral economy.

Hardly quiescent, Hispanics filed suit after suit, but theirs was not the legal system. After forty years of turmoil, Congress established the Court of Private Land Claims in 1891 to depoliticize the land issue. But the court only increased the loss of land by Hispanics. Of 35,491,020 acres at stake, the court confirmed to Hispanic claimants in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado 2,051,526 acres. The judges interpreted the law rigidly, rejecting even grants which were over one hundred years old and without previous dispute. And the procedure was not free. Hispanics who won their case could lose land to their lawyers. . . . As the villagers usually had no cash—even the payment of new Anglo taxes required selling essential land—lawyers accepted payment either in land or, if the decision was for partition and sale as the . . . proceeds from the land. Some lawyers received as much as half the grant. . . .

Even for Hispanic villagers who did not lose title to their land, Anglo "progress" could spell disaster. Mine operators at Torres, Colorado, acquired right-of-way across Madrid Plaza in 1901 and used the land as a refuse site for mine tailings. The dumping caused erosion, leading to decreased agricultural productivity and the eventual abandonment of the plaza, town—incidentally, making labor available for the mine. In addition, the once free range was limited by the government's removal of over six million acres of New Mexico's land for national forests and by new homesteaders who, as early as 1900, claimed nearly one million acres in New Mexico.

By 1900 most Spanish American villagers both in Colorado and in New Mexico found available range limited by Anglo settlement and corporations, and the range to which they did have access—whether by leasing privately held land or buying grazing permits for national forests—now cost them hard cash, if they could afford it at all. This set of circumstances changed the structure of the sheep industry in this region in the same way the railroads changed the structure of trade, and thus changed the structure of the villages themselves.

. . . By opening new markets, the railroad had brought a boom in sheep. At first it might have seemed to Hispanics as though the increased income from the

expanding market for sheep would make up for the loss of trade outlets, but by the 1880s those commercial sheep operators which had been glimpsed in the 1870s had poured into the Southwest with capital and improved livestock. . . .

As the number of Anglo-owned livestock companies increased and the market became more competitive, pressure on the land also increased. Land rose in value, and land transfers accelerated. Public domain became an object of exclusive control as stock growers acquired title, if not to large acreage, to essential watering places. By controlling access to water, stock growers controlled the utility of the surrounding range. Railroads in New Mexico, as elsewhere in the trans-Mississippi West, had received vast land grants of their own. In their own freighting interests, when granting leases they tended to favor Anglo commercial users over Hispanic small-scale operators. The Hispanic village system of stock farming based on ownership of sheep rather than land was rapidly becoming obsolete.

Both Hispanics and Anglos enlarged their herds, but gradually the balance of ownership shifted and not solely because of shifts in control of land. . . .

The lack of a money economy in the region made credit extension an essential part of the business. . . .

This extension of credit brought the villagers directly into the national economy and made them vulnerable to its convulsions. In the depression years of the 1890s and in 1907 when debts were recalled, or at other times when the sheep men could not meet their accounts because of grazing fees or other expenses, many of the sheep farmers lost their flocks. They became "partidarios," or sheep sharecroppers. . . .

Unlike the traditional "partido" agreement, wherein owner and renter had shared both profit and loss, in the new arrangement the renter alone bore all the loss. What had started as a way for sons to establish their own herds became a self-perpetuating system to provide pastoral labor for consolidated and rationalized sheep farming. . . .

By 1900, one-quarter to one-half of all New Mexico's sheep were under partido contracts. Many villages shared the experience of Tierra Amarilla, which . . . had gone from a village of farmers with a few ranch hands in 1880 to a village of workers for wages. . . .

. . . Moreover, as the growing commercial livestock industry, railroads, and national forests consumed more and more land, Hispanics, like Indians, found themselves on a land base increasingly inadequate to their needs. . . . Faced with a truncated frontier and an increasingly intrusive conquering economy and culture, the Hispanics could not retreat. They had to find new modes of expansion, had to choose how to adapt or to resist. They had to formulate new strategies in order to maintain the viability of their villages. . . .

. . . Socially as well as economically marginalized by the new order, the economic and social foundations of their culture threatened by new Anglo institutions of industry, government, and education, many Hispanics organized along ethnic lines to resist the onslaught, control it, or even turn it back. . . .

The best remembered of these organized resistance movements is the "Gorras Blancas," or "White Caps" of San Miguel County. At their peak, the secret organization claimed 1500 members, including respected officials of the villages; a good number of the local, largely Hispanic, Knights of Labor, including a district organ-

izer; and a sprinkling of "quasi-bandits." They rode abroad, mainly at night, in groups of varying size, from 66 to 300 or more, and, for the most part, confined their activities to fence cutting and the defense of fence cutters. They cut the fences of Hispanics as well as of Anglos, and of the parish priest, and were not above using the general "disorder" to settle personal grudges. But they also attacked the railroads. They tore up tracks, burned bridges, ordered teamsters to strike, hacked nine thousand railroad ties in half, and tried to set standard prices for all wood cut and hauled. Their platform, which they nailed to the buildings of East Las Vegas one midnight in March 1890, claimed, "Our purpose is to protect the rights of the people in general and especially those of the helpless classes."

In their platform, the Gorras Blancas cried out against land grabbers and "knavish" lawyers, against monopolizers of water, against bossism, and even against agitation on racial issues. They covered, in short, the whole scope of the Anglo impact, and they enjoyed the support of almost the entire Hispanic, and for a time even some of the Anglo community. In December 1889, when alleged fence cutters were released from jail in Las Vegas, they paraded down the street led by women waving the American flag and singing, "John Brown's Body," and were followed by "a squad of little girls." "These people," a mystified local editor, Russell A. Kistler, wrote, "in some way regard themselves as martyrs." The Gorras Blancas and their supporters did not see a necessary connection between living under the American flag, enjoying the liberties it promised, and living under a particular economic system. . . .

The Gorras Blancas met with some success. . . . But in general, the tide could not be turned back, and for Hispanic villagers, organized violence required time, money for lawyers' fees, and great personal risk for questionable rewards. Most Hispanics turned to other means, both outside and within the Anglo system, to resist Anglo incursions and dominance. They turned to other strategies, both organized and individual.

In the more remote villages, even local Penitente societies shifted focus and became politically active, some evolving into political machines. Elsewhere, in villages suddenly surrounded by Anglo-controlled mining or railroad towns and among Hispanic trackworkers, "mutualistas" (mutual aid organizations) sprang up; seventeen formed in New Mexico between 1885 and 1912. . . . Sharing the newer aims of the Gorras Blancas, such organizations stood against bossism and political corruption, and for mutual protection and an active role in determining the new hierarchy. Like the more violent groups, they were part of a broadly based attempt to retain or achieve some control over the confrontation with Anglos, but unlike those organizations, they were adapted to a situation of daily coexistence.

Hispanics as a group did retain some leverage in electoral politics. The numerical superiority of Hispanics in New Mexico . . . and in parts of Colorado ensured that politicians of either ethnic group would ignore the accusation that courting the Hispanic vote was "fanning the race issue." The People's Party victories had proved the efficacy of the ethnic vote, and in New Mexico, Spanish Americans long had a majority in the House of Representatives.

Predictably, however, working through Anglo institutions brought only limited success. . . . Networks of patronage erected in territorial days, extending from Anglo politicians in the capital to Hispanic villagers, continued to foster division on

party lines among Hispanics. . . . Hispanics never succeeded in attaining sufficient political unity . . . to dominate New Mexico's government. . . .

. . . Villagers had to seek other modes of subsistence and expansion, other strategies. Among the options offered, seasonal wage labor proved the most attractive. . . . Seasonal wage labor permitted them to perpetuate a multi-source income . . . , a flexible sexual division of labor, a communal village, and seasonal migration into a cash economy as an outlet for individual enterprise. In it they beheld a new mode of expansion, one that allowed increased density on the land, and one that kept them from poverty without requiring either a permanent departure from their own culture or a permanent entry into Anglo culture. . . .

The railroads provided some of the earliest and most convenient opportunities for Hispanic wage laborers. In 1880 tracks reached Albuquerque and Santa Fe. In the next two years, the Denver and Rio Grande built two narrow-gauge lines through the heart of Hispanic southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, and the growth of railroad mileage in New Mexico did not slow until 1912. Although Chicanos in the United States were confined to track maintenance or section work—usually under American or European foremen—and other full- or part-time unskilled labor, even the sectionman's wage of one dollar for a twelve-hour day or about \$25 per month compared favorably to shepherd's wages. It attracted mountain villagers who lived twenty and more miles from the nearest tracks. . . .

Hand in hand with the railroad in the creation of both a new Anglo economic framework and new opportunities for Hispanic wage labor came the exploitation of the coal deposits in southern Colorado. The railroad needed coal to run and provided the means to market it or ship it to steel plants. As the railroad arrived in southern Colorado in the 1870s, the first mines opened at Engleville and Starkville and, like the railroads, they expanded rapidly in the first years of the new century. The coal mines, too, were conveniently close at hand for Hispanic villagers needing seasonal wage labor. . . . The number and proportion of Hispanic mine workers varied from camp to camp, but in 1905, 11.5 percent of all Colorado Fuel and Iron's mine workers were Hispanic. By 1914 the figure had risen to 17.37 percent, and 92.59 percent of its 540 lumber workers were also Hispanic. Piece rates were standard, but Hispanics did tend to receive poorer "rooms" in the mines, and so as in railroad work where there was wage as well as occupational discrimination. Hispanics made less money than Anglos. Even so, Hispanic miners could earn up to twice the monthly income of Hispanic track laborers.

Whether they lived near the mines or not, Hispanic miners integrated their forays into this Anglo enterprise with their own cultural economy, as they did with their railroad work. . . .

The turn of the century brought yet another seasonal wage occupation into being: sugar-beet labor. In the 1890s would-be sugar-beet growers had, with local capital, put companies together all over Colorado. By the end of 1901 at least four processing factories had been built, covering each of the areas that was to become a major producer: the Arkansas River in southern Colorado, the South Platte River in the north, and the Western Slope. . . . The Spanish Americans, who often juggled their new wage-earning jobs, began to abandon railroad work during rushed times in the beetfields, or to spend one season on the tracks, the next in the mines, and the next in beets. . . .

Beet labor, in particular beet labor where colonies had been built, though onerous and a departure in some ways from older patterns, afforded yet another mode of physical expansion and cultural survival for the Hispanic villagers. As in the folk expansion of the previous century, families often came north in clusters and never severed their ties with their parent village. These pioneering Chicanos often sent money back to relatives in their villages who, in turn, sometimes sent produce north. In the northern cities, on the isolated northern farms, these extended kinship links retained for the otherwise bereft migrants a sense of community.

The interplay of Anglo and Hispanic strategies had, by 1914, resulted in this regional community, this extension of community links, village by village, like runners from a plant, to encompass an entire region. No longer could the village exist or be understood apart from its laboring migrants, and the migrants, too, had inseparable and essential links to the village. The railroads, the mines, the beetfields were all in place, and the people were moving. . . . As Victor Clark explained in 1908, "The New Mexican no longer is village shy, averse to leaving the neighborhood where he was born and where he can always find shelter and food among his friends. He makes seasonal migrations to distant parts of the west in search of work, often leaving his family behind him to attend to the crop in his absence." Migration had become an essential and integral part of life for the Hispanic villagers. . . .

Migration and the form of community it created had become the dominant Hispanic strategy on the intercultural frontier. This strategy of strictly limited entry into the Anglo world carried vital implications for intercultural dynamics. For the new strategy had arisen not merely as a result of economic necessity and opportunities offered. Anglo attitudes toward land, business, and work had placed under siege not only Hispanic sources of livelihoods, but Hispanics' ability to define their own culture and values. The resulting Hispanic strategy was not merely an economic but a cultural choice. Hispanic and Anglo frontiers interlocked, and so did their strategies. . . .

By 1914, Hispanics in Colorado and New Mexico had largely lost control over developments affecting the region as a whole, but, through their strategy of work and migration patterns, they retained their control over their own enclaves, retained for themselves a homeland—both a refuge and a base for expansion without loss of cultural identity. . . .

. . . When the traditional pastorally based expansion of settlement was made impossible through federal land appropriations and Anglo incursions, migration for wage work was substituted as a new solution to the problem of increasing population density. Permanent migration did at times accompany wage work in a continuation of the expanding frontier, but Hispanics rarely migrated as farmowners, and they always maintained close connections with the home village. That this strategy of migration also served Anglo needs did not, as yet, render it less effective as a Hispanic strategy of cultural autonomy in the face of a hostile and powerful rival. Hispanics did not abandon other strategies. They continued to seek Anglo education, to form organizations, and to enter politics. For the largest number, however, migratory labor was the strategy best adapted to their aims and interests.

The regional community had arisen between 1880 and 1914 as a strategy of autonomy and expansion interwoven with Anglo strategies and development. It

had arisen, in short, from the changing dynamics of the intercultural frontier. The tradition of a multi-source income, family economy, communal village, and seasonal absence of men was proving a highly adaptable system. The villages, with their "living links," were not isolated and static, however unchanged their structure may have seemed. That very seeming continuity paid tribute to the early success of their efforts to control and limit the impact of the Anglo confrontation while still expanding their community to embrace both Colorado and New Mexico.

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CHAPTER

7

Struggle and Strife: Social Conditions of Mexican Americans, 1910–1917

Massive changes in demography, lifestyle, and migratory patterns among nineteenth-century Mexican Americans were produced by the economic development of the Southwest spurred by the rise of silver, copper, and coal mining; cotton and vegetable agriculture; railway construction; and the boom-like expansion of the region's cities. For instance, the growth of large-scale agriculture in the lower Río Grande Valley of Texas in the early twentieth century altered social relations between Anglos and Mexican Americans. Racism began to exclude Mexican Americans from participation in the social and political life of their communities, and once again conflict between Anglos and Mexican Americans ensued. This conflict often led to widespread violence against Mexican Americans at the hands of the notoriously brutal Texas Rangers. The large number of lynchings and killings of Mexican Americans by Anglos comprised the collective experience of inequality shared by Mexican Americans. In what ways did this become the basis for struggle and resistance by Texans?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the upheavals caused by labor unrest, the influence of anarchists and socialists, and disputes over law and land would result in a flurry of political activism by Mexican Americans. How was the local Mexican Americans' struggle for equality affected by immigrants coming from Mexico in search of work? The increase in Mexican immigration after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was the result of the declining economic situation in Mexico coinciding with the improving fortunes of the American Southwest. Soon many American firms became dependent on cheap Mexican labor. The U.S. government worked closely with these groups to help shape the pattern of Mexican immigration. What role did Mexican immigrant women play in this larger process of immigration to the United States?