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THE BONDS OF A COMMON FAITH: CATHOLICISM, MARRIAGE, AND THE MAKING OF BORDERS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PASO DEL NORTE

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THE BONDS OF A COMMON FAITH: CATHOLICISM, MARRIAGE, AND
THE MAKING OF BORDERS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
PASO DEL NORTE

by

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The Roman Catholic Church occupied a central place in life in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands as it governed interpersonal relationships, marriage, and family law from the Spanish colonial period until the 1860s and 1870s. This project examines the role of this church in Paso del Norte (present-day Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua and El Paso, Texas) as a social institution that regulated domestic life against the backdrop of dramatic political, economic, cultural, and ecological transformations. The central sources for this study are the marriage records of the Parish of Guadalupe. This church emerged as a Franciscan Mission for the indigenous Manso people in the seventeenth century and became a secular parish of the Diocese of Durango in the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the parish experienced many of the processes that defined the United States-Mexican borderlands on an intimate level; Mexican independence and attempts to forge a republic, military conflicts between Mexico and the United States, the emergence of long-distance trade networks, the growth of Euro-American settlement, and industrialization. One of the most significant changes the parish experienced was the imposition of a new boundary in 1848. However, the Guadalupe, as the seat of the Vicariate of Paso del Norte, retained its authority over adjacent parts of Texas and New Mexico. For nearly three decades after the U.S.-Mexico War, Catholics who lived north of the border continued to be baptized, married, and buried by an institution that remained under Mexican leadership. Ultimately, the arrival of a wave of settlers who sought to “Americanize” the borderlands brought an end to a Mexican church hierarchy that extended north of the border.
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Vita
Introduction

“The Church is One because all its members agree in one faith, are all in one communion, and are all under one Head.”

The Baltimore Catechism (1885)\(^1\)

The Roman Catholic Church professes to be a universal institution. However, in worldly matters, discord between fellow Catholics often prevailed in Paso del Norte (today’s El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico) during the nineteenth century.\(^2\) Despite a shared faith, Catholics of different backgrounds often quarreled over the administration of the church in Mexico’s northern expanses and along the United States-Mexican border. Disputes over the governance of Catholicism in the borderlands emerged during the Spanish colonial period, when secular clergy under the Diocese of Durango attempted to wrest control of frontier missions from the Franciscans.\(^3\) The inability of both the diocesan clergy and missionaries to serve the vast northern frontier in the late Spanish colonial period led to the emergence of popular religiosity; this folk Catholicism still coexists uneasily with the official church. The United States’ annexation of the northern half of Mexico created new divisions in borderlands Catholicism, as the

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\(^1\) The Baltimore Catechism (Baltimore: The Third Council of Baltimore, 1885). Response to question 139, “How is the Church One?”

\(^2\) La Villa del Paso del Norte was the southernmost town of New Mexico during the Spanish colonial period. When Mexico became independent, Paso del Norte became part of the new state of Chihuahua. The U.S.-Mexico War and resultant Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo divided Paso del Norte in 1848. The section in the United States became known as Franklin in the 1850s and 1860 before its incorporation as El Paso. In 1888, Paso del Norte, Chihuahua took the name Ciudad Juárez, in honor of President Benito Juárez of Mexico.

\(^3\) Secular clergy minister to the public at the parochial level. They are generally under the direct authority of a bishop. By contrast, regular clergy are those who take a vow to adhere to the rule of an order. In the context of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States-Mexico Borderlands, “secularization” refers to the process of transforming missions into secular parishes.
Vatican established new apostolic vicariates and dioceses in the region.\(^4\) Paso del Norte’s position on the boundaries of two nations – and on contested ground between Roman Catholic dioceses - made the community a battleground even after the conclusion of the United States-Mexico War (1846-1848). The arrival of Catholic settlers from a variety of Euro-American backgrounds contributed to even greater diversity – and also created new grounds for disagreement – amongst Catholics in Paso del Norte. This project seeks to reveal how residents of the nineteenth century borderlands contended with these processes in their intimate lives when they sought to marry in this divided church. Marriage was often a forum where the ideological currents and political processes of the nineteenth century directly intervened in the intimate lives of Paso del Norte’s people.

Because of its global hierarchy and the transnational makeup of its clergy, the Catholic Church often had the ability to subvert efforts by Spain, Mexico, and the United States to define and solidify national borders in their North American frontiers during the nineteenth century. On the surface, the permanence of the Catholic Church through frequent changes in national boundaries and political systems forged a sense of institutional continuity in a turbulent region. However, the churches of the region were decidedly not neutral grounds. North of the border, priests and parishioners often resisted efforts to realign the borderlands’ Catholic churches to dioceses in the United States. At times, the church’s leaders had an agenda that boldly transgressed national boundaries. During the three decades after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo redrew the U.S.-Mexican

border in 1848, the See of Durango retained its hold on parishes in southern New Mexico and western Texas in defiance of competing claims by Euro-American church authorities. Roman Catholics in this region maintained their allegiance to the Bishop of Durango and – in one very critical aspect of their daily lives – remained under Mexican governance. Furthermore, paseño clergy resisted attempts by the Euro-American dominated churches in Santa Fe and Tucson to administer parishes in southern New Mexico and El Paso and bring this transnational connection to an end.

Simultaneously, the Diocese of Durango contended with liberal reforms that aimed to curtail the power of the church in Mexico. In the course of the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church made the transition from an institution that enjoyed an untrammeled power to assess and collect fees, regulate personal behavior, and discipline parishioners to a member of a pluralistic and secular body politic. Anticlerical policies, after several fitful starts after Mexican independence, came to fruition under the second phase of Benito Juárez’s presidency (1867-1872). As the church lost its political and economic power, an influx of railroads, mines, and ranches brought further social change to the borderlands in the 1870s and 1880s. In the United States side of the borderlands, a deluge of Euro-American settlement marginalized Hispanic Catholics within their own church, and brought about a rapid end to Mexican governance over parishes north of the border. These changes coincided with the definitive realignment of diocesan boundaries with international borders. In 1871, the Vatican placed El Paso County under the new Vicariate of Arizona, and Euro-American hierarchs consolidated their authority over its churches during the following decade.
Sources and Methodology

The principal archival source for this project is the parish archive of the Guadalupe Mission. The voices of parishioners resonate through even the most mundane church documents. Marriage registries and marital investigations comprise an especially rich source that reveals the hopes, desires, and fears of men and women as few other documents of this time and place do. Other parish records, such as ledgers of baptisms and burials, also contain valuable data that might inform a comprehensive study of the demographics of this region. However, this study focuses on marriage records, as they not only recorded the names and other basic information of parishioners; they also contained far more about their personal lives and choices. Their records form, in their aggregate, narrative accounts of daily life in Paso del Norte during a period when newspapers were largely absent, and literacy among the general population was far from widespread.  

Church records were more than a tally of daily events or a compilation of vital statistics; they also contained formal documentation of the sacramental acts that faithful parishioners viewed as prerequisites for eternal salvation. This emphasis on careful record keeping emerged with the Council of Trent (1545-1563). A direct riposte to the Protestant Reformation, this assembly issued decrees in its twenty-fourth session that transformed Catholic marriage into a highly governed practice in which the church


carefully regulated sexuality and family formation. From that point on, only marriages between baptized and confirmed men and women who solemnized their union before a priest in the presence of two witnesses had sacramental validity. In addition to formalizing marriage rites, the Council of Trent mandated a more thorough process of record keeping and forbade marriages between couples that had prohibited degrees of consanguinity and affinity, including “legal and spiritual” relationships. Close blood relatives faced clear restrictions, and those related through marriage and godparentage also faced prohibitions. Furthermore, the directives of the Council of Trent regulated the marriages of “vagrants” or “foreigners” who had migrated away from their homelands and persons who had been baptized or confirmed in other parishes, restrictions that became all the more onerous with the urban growth, long-distance migration, and colonization of the modern era. In the nineteenth-century borderlands, restrictions on vagrants were frequent points of contention between non-Hispanic Roman Catholics of Irish, German, or other European origin and Hispanic clergy, and complicated interethnic marriages, even when both partners were Roman Catholics.

European marriage practices before the Council of Trent largely consisted of a mutual agreement between a man and a woman, a public promise by the spouses to marry and form a permanent marital union, followed by sexual consummation. After the Council of Trent, marriage became a far more regulated process, which the church more

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7 Ibid., 101.
8 Ibid.
10 Poska, 102.
explicitly tied to the fulfillment of other sacraments. As result, parishes were to subject marriages to careful review. Partners had to be baptized as Roman Catholics and fulfill the sacraments of confirmation and penance before a legitimately recognized marriage could be celebrated in a parish. In order to verify membership in the Catholic Church, dioceses regularly corresponded with the parish and vicariate on confirmations, with lists issued by the diocese.\(^\text{11}\)

The mandates of the Council of Trent that record-keeping and the investigation of marriages were somewhat realistic in densely populated Western Europe, Central Mexico, or Peru; however, they posed immense challenges to remote missions and towns such as those of colonial New Mexico. Despite canonical requirements for a bishop to conduct confirmations and review parish records, from 1760 until 1833, no bishops visited Paso del Norte or New Mexican communities to the north and appearances by ecclesiastical visitors (*visitadores*) were infrequent. These conditions added to the difficulties of compliance with the Council of Trent.

In addition to formal registries of baptisms, marriages, and burials, Paso del Norte’s oldest and principal parish, that of the old Guadalupe mission, also compiled priests’ correspondence with the Bishop of Durango. Clergy in the borderlands exerted influence over the community as counselors, advocates, and arbitrators. At times, they also inspired resistance against government authorities on both sides of the border. After the end of the war between the United States and Mexico, the Roman Catholic Church in the borderlands faced liberal reforms (*La Reforma*) in Mexico and the arrival of

Protestant and Mormon colonists and missionaries. At times, Catholic ministers in the borderlands vociferously denounced liberalism and “heresy” in the pulpit. However, these clergy also sought to limit the impact of these changes through more subtle methods. Clergy in Paso del Norte converted many of the early Protestant Euro-American arrivals in the region, often in order to enable intermarriage between these settlers and established Hispanic families. The clergy also challenged the Mexican government’s registry of births, marriages, and deaths by asserting the importance of Catholic marriage as a prerequisite for honor, legitimacy, and eternal salvation.

Parish priests in Paso del Norte also opposed efforts by hierarchs in the United States to impose an “American” Catholicism over Hispanic and indigenous parishes. At times these efforts involved calls to direct – or even armed – resistance. The San Elizario or El Paso Salt War of 1877 was an especially intense conflict between Hispanic paseños and Euro-Americans. While this armed struggle emerged after an attempt to privatize salt deposits, anger over the transfer of borderlands parishes from Mexican to American administration contributed to these tensions. Clergy also engaged in quiet resistance, often by disregarding the Bishop of Santa Fe and maintaining pastoral correspondence across the international border.

The use of church archives to inform the social history of the colonial and nineteenth-century borderlands has been evident for over a century. Pre-nuptial investigations or diligencias matrimoniales occupy an especially important place in scholarly understandings of northern New Mexico, if not Paso del Norte. In 1893, Adolph Bandelier was among the first researchers outside of the Roman Catholic clergy who recognized the potential for these documents in studies of the region’s history. Bandelier
described the diligencias of the colonial period as “an extremely instructive picture of the
customs of those times.” An especially noteworthy use of colonial New Mexican
marriage records is in Ramón Gutiérrez’s When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went
Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (1991). In this work,
Gutiérrez examines marriage records, particularly pre-nuptial investigations, to engage
the questions of how Spanish missionaries and clergy attempted to regulate sexuality,
especially among Pueblo Indians and genízaros, or indigenous captives and their
descendants. The scope of Gutiérrez’s work spans the entire Spanish and Mexican
period; however, little discussion of these processes after the period of Mexican
independence takes place. In part, this study aims to examine the social history of an Age
of Transition; the years between the Mexican War of Independence of 1810-1821 and the
“Triumph of Liberalism” that took place along both sides of the borderlands in the years
after 1867. This is not an absolute temporal definition; it may be extended even further
back to the Bourbon Reforms, the Louisiana Purchase, or the early incursion of Zebulon
Pike into New Mexico and Nueva Vizcaya (now Chihuahua and Durango, Mexico).
Likewise, it may be extended further through the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in
1910, and the increased regulation of immigration that took place in the United States
during the 1910s and 1920s.

12 Adolph F. A. Bandelier, The Gilded Man (El Dorado) and other Pictures of the Spanish
Occupancy of America (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), 293.

13 Ramón Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and
Power in New Mexico, 1500-1848 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 243-244.
Historiography

The Roman Catholic Church occupies a central place in the early history of the borderlands. Spain’s colonial expansion across North America often centered on the creation of missions. Herbert Eugene Bolton’s 1917 article “The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish-American Colonies” laid the foundation for a history that brought the Spanish frontier into a truly continental vision of early American history. Bolton’s central argument, that the missions were engines of Spanish colonial expansion, continues to influence the history of colonial borderlands. These narratives of the borderlands that center on Spanish missionaries have faced sharp criticism on a number of grounds. Bolton lauded the “civilizing” effect of the missions among “heathen” Indians, but said little about indigenous peoples’ ability to shape the mission frontier through accommodation or resistance. Bolton was dismissive of what he termed the “half-breed” settlers and soldiers who shaped Spanish frontier society. More insidiously, Boltonian history fueled contemporary efforts in places such as California and New Mexico to construct a “Spanish” past. Carey McWilliams’ 1949 book North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States memorably indicted historians and civic boosters who highlighted efforts of Spanish colonists and clergymen and disparaged or ignored the contributions of indigenous groups and casta (mixed-race) settlers from Mexico.


Despite this critique of the Boltonian school, scholarship concerning the role of missions on the Hispanic-American frontier remains vital. Since the 1980s, a “New Mission History” has emerged that has recast missions as places of exchange, and not simply sites where Europeans converted Native Americans. Erick Langer and Robert Jackson’s edited volume on *The New Latin American Mission History* (1995) brings together leading advocates of a revised approach to colonial enterprises. This book also offers a brief periodization of mission history that effectively summarizes much of the historiography of Catholicism in the Borderlands through the date of its publication. The initial effort by Bolton and other early twentieth-century scholars asserted the importance of the mission and argued for a role for Spain in United States history. A second wave of historians emerged in the 1940s; members of religious orders, published works that, in Jackson’s view “were narrative church self-history with certain biases.” This tradition has continued with “apologies for the activities of the different orders in an earlier date.”16

Finally, according to Jackson a “new mission history” emerged by the 1980s; its focus is on the indigenous people who interacted with the regular clergy in frontier areas.17

Recent histories of Spanish colonization, such as Juliana Barr’s *Peace Came on the Form of a Woman*, have underlined how critical indigenous acceptance and collaboration was to the success of a mission, and further described how Native American resistance thwarted Spanish expansion. This work draws heavily from Richard White’s scholarship on indigenous people and French and British colonization in the


17 Ibid.
Following White, scholars have recast missions as “middle grounds” between European colonizers and indigenous peoples. Since the late 1980s, New Mission Historians have also shifted the emphasis from studies of the regular clergy and institutional bases of the mission to a broader view of the Spanish mission as the nucleus of a multicultural community. New mission histories have also examined the role of gender in all its facets. This development coincides with the “gender revolution” in social sciences and humanities, exemplified by Joan Scott’s 1986 article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” which called upon scholars to consider how societies have constructed social roles for women and men. Furthermore, Scott’s expansive definition of gender theory asks historians to consider that all perceived differences and inequalities that are delimited along boundaries of class, race, or sexuality may be “gendered.”

The New Mission Historians have also redefined the timeline for missions as they have extended their scope well beyond the period of secularization between 1760 and 1830. David Block’s Mission Culture on the Upper Amazon: Native Tradition, Jesuit Enterprise, and Secular Policy in Moxos, 1660-1880 (1994) portrays the mission not as an institution, but as a community formed by indigenous peoples and missionaries. The mission culture in Moxos, a region of Upper Peru, endured through independence and secularization, but the advent of economic liberalization, decline of communal property

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holding, and the emergence of a one-crop rubber plantation economy led to the decline of
mission communities as economic centers. A similar narrative, describing the onslaught
of economic liberalism on a frontier mission town is found in works such as Thomas E.
Sheridan’s *Los Tuconeses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1851-1954* (1986) and
Lisbeth Haas’ study of Santa Ana and San Juan Capistrano, *Conquests and Historical
Identities in California, 1769-1936* (1996). Both of these studies examine locales that,
much like Paso del Norte, grew around Roman Catholic missions through the early
nineteenth century. In extending their work into the twentieth century, Sheridan and Haas
emphasize the impact of railroads, agribusiness, and industrialization on these mission
communities in the age of industrial capitalism. The arrival of railroads, in particular,
completed Euro-American conquest in both of these places. These authors also explore
the complex relationships between indigenous communities and Hispanic populations. At
times, oppositional binaries existed between the two groups in spite of the undeniable
cultural and ancestral bonds they shared.

Frontier missions form a familiar thread of Spanish Borderlands history. The secular
church that followed these Franciscan or Jesuit enterprises has not captured the
imagination of the public, and receives less attention from historians. In 1987, John
Frederick Schwaller stated in the introduction to *The Church and Clergy in Sixteenth-
Century Mexico* that the history of the regular clergy in Mexico had continued to occupy
a far greater space in colonial Mexican and Latin American historiography than the
secular church. In some respects, the “New Mission History” has preserved this

20 John Frederick Schwaller, *The Church and Clergy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Albuquerque:
University of New Mexico Press, 1987), xiii-xiv.
emphasis on religious orders, but its more expansive definition of the mission helped create a historiography that is more inclusive of diocesan and parish clergy.

Scholarship on the secular church in the Spanish Borderlands extends across much of the twentieth century, though a sweeping survey of this topic has yet to appear. Among the foundational works of early borderlands history was Carlos E. Castañeda’s seven-volume work, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, a history of Roman Catholicism in Texas from 1519 to 1936. Castañeda approached the Roman Catholic Church’s history from a largely celebratory perspective. However, given the dominance of a triumphalist, Anglo-American dominated history of the state at the time, Castañeda’s inclusion of Spaniards and Mexicans, and the church they brought to the borderlands, provided a much needed perspective at the time of its publication. Other regions of the borderlands have yet to receive such encyclopedic treatment in church history.

New Mexico’s lay brotherhoods; known as hermandades penitentes or Penitent Brotherhoods, form another facet of late colonial and nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism that has received a fairly extensive historical treatment. Hermandades formed in New Mexico after the Bourbon Reforms, a period of secularization and administrative restructuring in the second half of the eighteenth century. Secularization reduced the power of the Franciscan order, but failed to create a strong diocesan structure in northern New Mexico. Hispanic New Mexicans remedied the weaknesses of institutional Catholicism through the formation of brotherhoods that provided for their spiritual needs. Studies of penitentes form a substantial field within New Mexico history. Alice Corbin Henderson’s Brothers of Light: The Penitentes of the Southwest (1937) sought to challenge views of the hermandades as “backward” congregations of lay
Catholics who merely indulged in brutal self-punishment, such as public and private acts of flagellation and other forms of corporal penance.\textsuperscript{21} Henderson chose to highlight Hispanic New Mexicans’ preservation of a centuries old artistic heritage. While this work was romantic in many respects, it did serve – much as Carlos Castañeda’s contemporary scholarship on Texas – to create a space for discussions of the importance of Hispanic Catholicism in borderlands history.

Later works would provide a more expansive view of the relationship between the hermandades and the secular and regular church institutions of New Mexico. Marta Weigle’s \textit{Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest} (1976) was, in many respects, an update of Henderson’s work from the 1930s that incorporated newer methodology. Weigle’s study of the \textit{penitentes} provided an overall survey of the social history of New Mexico during the Bourbon Reforms, Mexican Independence, and United States occupation.\textsuperscript{22} Further work on the hermandades appears in Michael Carroll’s \textit{The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico} (2002). In addition to familiar themes such as the clash between popular and institutional Catholicism and the cultural divide between Hispanics and Euro-Americans, Carroll examines the role of gender in these brotherhoods. This mode of analysis allows for a new understanding of themes such as the widespread condemnation of physical penance by Catholic elites and non-Catholic outsiders. For Carroll, this gendered analysis enables a new understanding of discussions concerning \textit{penitente} “barbarity,” public

\textsuperscript{21} Alice Corbin Henderson, \textit{Brothers of Light: The Penitentes of the Southwest} (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1937), 16-42.

\textsuperscript{22} Martha Weigle, in \textit{Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 19-49. Weigle traces the origin of the Penitentes to the visit of Bishop José Antonio Zubiría in 1833.
discussions of the display of the male body, and the meanings of masculinity in a borderland where many Hispanic and indigenous men faced the loss of their political, legal, and property rights.  

Pablo Mitchell covers similar themes in Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880 to 1920 (2005). The importance of the hermandades penitentes is well established through its coverage in this literature on northern New Mexico. However, the impact of hermandades penitentes in Paso del Norte is less clear; these groups simply did not concern the Catholic hierarchy of Paso del Norte as they did that of the northern reaches of New Mexico.

Works on individual clergy comprise another grouping in the historiography of borderlands Catholicism. For the most part these works have been celebratory, often to the point of hagiography. Several biographies have appeared on Bishop Jean-Baptist Lamy of Santa Fe (served 1850-1885), who presided over attempts to “Americanize” the Roman Catholic Church. Paul Horgan’s Lamy of Santa Fe (1975) is the most comprehensive treatment on the bishop to date. While rich in detail, the book tends toward praise of Lamy; furthermore, its depictions of New Mexico’s Hispanic clergy are largely condemnatory. More dangerously, Horgan accepts many of Lamy’s critiques of borderlands Catholicism at face value. “There was a pathetic spark of faithful need for the Church among the Latin population,” Horgan states; “and many families did what they could to pass along to their children the outlines of Christian doctrine and history.” The result of this neglect, was a faith in which “truth was lost on local fancy, and where

23 Michael Carroll, The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 11-33 gives a detailed historiography of the penitentes, which includes references in travel accounts and popular literature.

form survived it was often corrupt and without substance.”

A counter-narrative to this work appears throughout Deena González’s Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880 (1999), which firmly contests Horgan’s portrayal of Lamy as a steadfast proponent of progress in territorial New Mexico who bravely faced a recalcitrant Hispanic clergy. González finds Bishop Lamy to be a leading actor in the religious, political, and economic conquest of New Mexico after 1848; she describes his arrival in Santa Fe as “a cold wind” which inaugurated a largely unsympathetic ecclesiastical regime in the borderlands.

Deena González’s timeframe, from 1820 to 1880, is significant as it makes a case for a periodization of borderlands history that does not merely hinge its most familiar turning point: 1848. Its allowance for a longer Age of Transition in United States-Mexican borderlands poses many complex questions for scholars who take an interest in state and community formation. In this periodization, the United States-Mexico War is not simply the consummation of the process of conquest, but the military phase of a much more prolonged wave of imperial expansion. A cultural war also took place after the onset of Euro-American efforts at social and cultural conquest, particularly during the later stage of this transition. The “cold winds” from north that traversed the borderlands, in time, swept over the linguistic, architectural, economic, and religious landscape of the


26 Horgan particularly contrasts Lamy with his sharpest critic in northern New Mexico, Antonio José Martínez, the Curate of Taos. Horgan describes Martinez as a “supreme egotist, a master in a little house who could never be a servant,” while Lamy was “self-disciplined in mildness,” and “a servant in a great domain who knew, when necessary, how to be a master.” Paul Horgan, Lamy of Santa Fe, 251.

entire region. The imposition of a new Roman Catholic hierarchy was an essential
element of this attempt at cultural dominance on the part of Euro-Americans. Several
works on an “Age of Transition” in the nineteenth century have discussed the role that
religion played in an age of rapid economic, political, and social change.

Not all sectors of the United States-Mexico Borderlands experienced a cultural
transition at the same rate. In eastern to central Texas, Euro-American settlement came
early in republican Mexico, and the dispossession of Tejano’s lands, political rights, and
economic status often preceded Texas’ independence in 1836. Northern California
experienced an even more sudden transition in the late 1840s, with the Gold Rush of
1849-1850 transforming many Hispanic communities into barrios within predominantly
Euro-American communities in a matter of months. Indigenous Californians experienced
an even more drastic downfall in numbers. By contrast, areas such as the Rio Grande
Valley of Texas, Paso del Norte, and much of New Mexico retained a Hispanic-
indigenous majority through the remainder of the nineteenth century.

The work of Andrés Reséndez in Changing National Identities at the Frontier:
Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850 (2004) does not encompass the entire period of
transition; nevertheless, it epitomizes the current state of nineteenth-century borderlands
history. His work engages the economic dimensions of American conquest; the United
States’ acquisition of its present-day southwest involved merchants as well as soldiers.
Among his more provocative arguments is his analysis of the role of Tejanos and
nuevomexicanos as consumers of Euro-American traders’ products, and brokers for white
settlers who sought access to borderlands markets and lands. In this view, Mexicans in
the far north made choices that enabled later changes in boundaries. This is in no fashion
a denial of the expansionist and imperialist sentiments that drove Euro-Americans to the borderlands; however, Reséndez shatters the long-standing image of a stagnant Hispanic society that unwittingly found itself the objects of another people’s “Manifest Destiny.”

In a similar vein, Reséndez boldly revises previous historians’ assessments of Mexico’s rule in the far north. In his book, one sees Mexican national, state, and territorial officials facing the challenge of governing the far north with diligence and energy, and experiencing a degree of success in fostering a sense of national identity. The rituals of rule often took place in remote Santa Fe and San Antonio during the Mexican period. However, a lack of financial resources, strong indigenous resistance, the weaknesses of the central government, and the economic power of the United States thwarted Mexican attempts at bringing the area under its firm control. Reséndez also considers the role of the Roman Catholic Church in this transition, and revises earlier arguments that posited a dilapidated Mexican hierarchy that – like the state – lacked the ability to govern the northern frontier. In his article, “Failure of a Frontier Institution: The Secular Church under Independent Mexico, 1821-1846” (1981), David J. Weber summed up the condition of the Roman Catholic Church in the frontier during the Mexican period as being in “shambles” by the time of the American conquest.28 By contrast, Reséndez makes a case that, especially in New Mexico and Paso del Norte, the hierarchy undertook a significant “reassertion” under the tenure of the Bishop of Durango, José Antonio

Zubiría (1831-1863). Paso del Norte, in particular, experienced stronger bonds with its diocesan seat by the 1840s.

In recent years, scholars who cover areas far from national borders have also created new discursive spaces for historical analyses that transcend the nation state, the “Atlantic World” being an especially productive example. The field of borderlands history has benefited from this increased willingness to reach across borders – and disregard them when necessary. However, boundaries continue to frame many historical narratives. This is especially apparent in Paso del Norte. This place is often neglected in histories that focus on Texas, as the area was not under Texas’ administration in the Spanish and Mexican period. Its transfer from New Mexico to Chihuahua in 1821 and later inclusion in Texas has worked to exclude the region from New Mexico history as well. Paso del Norte can find a place in works on Chihuahua in the colonial and early independence era; however, the tendency to equate the borderlands with the United States Southwest creates a particular problem for Paso del Norte. This region defies easy placement in any particular state, territory, province, or nation in the nineteenth century; this has fostered neglect on the part of borderlands historians.

The tendency to define a “borderlands” that consists entirely of the U.S. Southwest is, at best, presentism. At worst, this ahistorical view implies that Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Alta California had always stood apart from “Mexico proper” and had a separate destiny from the lands to the south. In the past, a number of historiographically significant works contained this fallacy. David J. Weber’s 1982 overview *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1848: The United States Southwest under Mexico*...
is one example. This, and many other works on the nineteenth-century borderlands, largely ends at the Río Grande. Drawing lines where no boundaries exist creates an incomplete sketch of borderlands history. A study of Paso del Norte reveals the arbitrary and artificial nature of the borders that the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase delineated across the region. Before and after 1848, *paseños* lived a single community. The border between the north and south banks of the Rio Grande has progressively hardened over time, but has never obliterated the existence of a unified *paseño* identity.

This project is very directly influenced by scholarship that surveys border communities in order to examine larger processes of state formation. As such, it aims to extend this mode of analysis to the Catholic Church and its control of frontier parishes. Peter Sahlins’ *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (1991) stands out as a model of how historians may draw out larger implications about state formation by covering a rather small border community. Sahlins masterfully illustrates how the French and Spanish states sought to transform Catalan-speaking villagers in the Pyrenean district of Cerdanye into Frenchmen or Spaniards. Closer to Paso del Norte, Juan Mora-Torres’ *The Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo León, 1848-1910* is another recent book that influences this work, as it examines a specific community, the city of Monterrey, in order to pose larger questions about the role of Mexican business leaders, political bosses, and foreign investors in the formation of an export oriented industrial community. Mora-Torres also focuses on the transition that northern Mexican frontier communities experienced in the nineteenth century. Monterrey, much like Paso del Norte, suddenly emerged from isolation and
became a transnational industrial and commercial city. While Monterrey did not lie directly on the international boundary, the sheer scale of foreign investment and settlement made the city an international metropolis by the twentieth century. In both Sahlins’ and Mora-Torres’ work, a central theme is the repositioning of national histories from approaches that focus primarily on “core” sites such as capitals and major metropolises to the borders. A major theme of modern borderlands history is the theory that nationalisms are often most sharply defined at the frontier, and that global, national, and regional histories take on a new clarity when one observes a place from its margins.³⁰

Governments in Mexico and the United States have long viewed their peripheries as places where national identity and political authority face continuous tests. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, la Villa del Paso del Norte (Ciudad Juárez after 1888) became a barometer for the strength of successive Mexican regimes. Maximilian’s empire began to crumble after the juaristas made a last stand at Paso del Norte in 1865 and 1866. The death knell of the Porfiriato sounded the streets of Ciudad Juárez in 1910 and 1911, when the Mexican Revolution erupted. Panistas won some of the first major opposition victories against the hegemony of the standard bearer of this revolution, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, in the 1980s. In the twenty-first century, the horrors of femicide and cartel violence in Ciudad Juárez have made the weaknesses of the neoliberal state achingly clear. The United States has similarly viewed its border with concern, and despite its overwhelming military and economic power in relation to

Mexico, nationalists have long bemoaned a lack of control over a line that often seems all too permeable, despite ever-increasing surveillance. Ecclesiastical institutions behaved much as states in this regard during the nineteenth century, as the Diocese of Durango viewed its northern frontier as a place where its strength as an institution was at stake. Durango’s command over areas that became part of the United States faced a severe test after 1845; however, the church in Mexico maintained a degree of authority over the lands the state lost during the nineteenth century.

**Chapter Outline**

The first chapter, “‘A Delightful Country in the Summer’: The Catholic Frontier in Paso del Norte, 1659-1810,” begins with an overview of Paso del Norte’s indigenous people, the Manso and Suma, at the time of Spanish settlement. Beginning in 1598, The Pass of the North became the entry point for Juan de Oñate’s colonization of el Reino de Nuevo México. The Spanish invasion was more than an act of military domination; the Franciscans engaged in a spiritual conquest of the northern frontier. After their extensive conversion efforts among the Pueblos of the north in the first half of the seventeenth century, Franciscan missionaries extended their reach to the agricultural and nomadic peoples of central to southern New Mexico. In 1659, Fray García de San Francisco y Zúñiga established a mission, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos in what is now the historic downtown of Ciudad Juárez. This mission engaged in policies of reduction (reducción) that encouraged intensive, irrigated agriculture in Manso and Suma villages.
This initial phase ended abruptly with the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Pueblo anger over the missionaries’ suppression of their religion and abuses committed by colonists and Franciscans led to a coordinated uprising against Spanish rule. Hispanic settlers, Christianized Tigua of Isleta, and the Piro Pueblos of Socorro and San Antonio de Senecú took refuge in Paso del Norte. Paso del Norte and the new town of San Lorenzo became Spanish towns. Under the supervision of Franciscans, the Tigua and Piro formed new missions that bore the names of their former homes.

The expansion of the mission frontier to Paso del Norte represented the first phase of Christianization in the area; in the eighteenth century, a second wave of Catholic expansion took place, as the Diocese of Durango sought to extend its authority over New Mexico. The first step toward secularization came with the arrival of Bishop Benito Crespo in 1725. Subsequent visitations by Crespo in 1730 and by Bishop Martín de Elizacoechea in 1737 strengthened ties between the diocese and Paso del Norte. A more thorough inspection tour, which coincided with the onset of the Bourbon Reforms, came in 1759-1760, as Bishop Pedro Tamarón visited New Mexico.

Tamarón’s secularization, which took effect in the following decade, was initially a success. Paso del Norte and other towns in New Mexico such as Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Santa Cruz de la Cañada had clergy who reported to the Diocese of Durango. Over the course of the late eighteenth century, the Franciscan Order also declined in New Mexico in terms of its numbers of missionaries and its funding and economic influence. Unfortunately for the Bishops of Durango, the secular church did not successfully fill the void created by the waning missions, and by the early nineteenth century, much of New Mexico experienced an acute shortage of clergy and deteriorating facilities. Paso del
Norte, with its closer connection to the diocesan see, fared somewhat better during the late colonial period. Nevertheless, the Franciscans under diocesan authority remained in this area’s mission chapels, resulting in a period of “hybrid secularization.”

This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the growth and evolution of Paso del Norte in the late colonial period. Paseño society during the colonial period was characterized by a racial and cultural synthesis or mestizaje. This fusion of peoples went beyond that of Spaniard and Indian; Manso, Suma, Tigua, Piro, and Apache people often contributed to a broader indigenous paseño identity in town and mission alike. Afro-Mexicans were also a significant presence, as Paso del Norte witnessed the arrival of free and enslaved blacks in middle years of the eighteenth century. Many paseños continued to claim Spanish ancestry, and boasted of titles such as don or doña indicating this status; but Paso del Norte became a thoroughly mestizo society that drew from a diverse range of ethnicities.

Chapter Two,” ‘If Prayer Is Lacking, How Much More Is Lacking?’ The Crisis of Borderlands Catholicism, 1810-1833,” covers the tumultuous political and ecclesiastical transitions that took place in Paso del Norte during the first third of the nineteenth century. During these years, Villa del Paso became increasingly significant as a trading center in northern Chihuahua, a state in an independent Mexican republic. The area also underwent significant changes in its relationship to the Diocese of Durango. After decades of neglect, the see began to take a greater interest in its frontier parishes. In 1816-1817, the Ecclesiastical Visitor Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara inspected Paso del Norte and installed secular clergy, ending the period of hybrid secularization. Juan Rafael Rascón served in Paso del Norte from 1816 through 1824, when he became a visitador
for the diocese. After a period of vacancy in Durango, Bishop José Antonio Zubiría, who served from 1831 to 1863, undertook extensive pastoral tours of the north. In a landmark visit in 1833, he initiated a significant drive to renew the Roman Catholic Church in Paso del Norte and New Mexico.

In New Mexico, especially the Río Arriba district north of Santa Fe, Zubiría’s arrival marked the beginning of an intense conflict between Catholic institutions and folk practice, a divide that only grew sharper after the ascendancy of Euro-American hierarchs after 1850. The bishop took umbrage at the growth of the hermandades penitentes. Zubiría was also concerned with the poor material conditions of the New Mexican parishes and what he saw as the widespread misadministration of sacraments. By contrast, the bishop was content with conditions in Paso del Norte. Despite its inclusion within New Mexico for over two centuries of Spanish rule, Paso del Norte had developed a different relationship with the Diocese of Durango by the 1830s.

The third chapter, “‘From the Moment That I Made My Wedding Vows My Suffering Began’: Gender, Honor, and Church Governance in Paso del Norte, 1821-1846,” examines how ordinary paseños experienced church administration of family law during the 1830s and 1840s. Parish clergy in Paso del Norte had wide powers of jurisdiction over marriage and community life. Marriage records, in particular, divulge how parishioners and clergy negotiated interpersonal and intimate relationships. While the views of clergy and other community elites predominate through most matrimonial registries and nuptial investigations, the voices of ordinary men and women also emerge. A large part of this chapter centers on one woman in Paso del Norte, Bárbara Aguirre, whose two marriages and associated diligencias matrimoniales and divorce hearings
provide many glimpses of everyday life in the Mexican borderlands during the years between independence and the United States-Mexico War. In the course of the various investigations, legal demands, and interrogations that arose from Aguirre’s marriages, one encounters a variety of viewpoints concerning appropriate gender roles of men and women. Furthermore, paseños aired their opinions on matters of propriety, honor, and class in these documents.

The 1830s also marked the beginning of one of the most remarkable careers in the history of Catholicism in the borderlands. In 1838, Ramón Ortiz arrived at the Guadalupe mission chapel and began nearly sixty years of service in the borderlands. During his tenure, mostly at Paso del Norte, Ortiz stood at the center of many of the major events that paseños witnessed in the century: war, occupation, and territorial division, diocesan realignments, Euro-American settlement, the arrival of railroads and industry, La Reforma and secularism, and the challenges of Protestantism, Mormonism, and religious pluralism.

Chapter Four, “‘He Does Not Profess, until Today, Any Religion:’ War and Accommodation in the Borderlands, 1846-1860,” is concerned with the years surrounding the United States-Mexico War, and the imposition of new borders through the heart of Paso del Norte. War came to this community on Christmas Day, 1846, when the forces of Alexander Doniphan clashed with those of Chihuahua’s governor Ángel Trías at the Battle of El Brazito, in what is now the southern Mesilla Valley of Doña Ana County, New Mexico. Paso del Norte then experienced military occupation. The local

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31 “Divorce” in a Roman Catholic context does not refer to the complete dissolution of a marriage. It is a process that involves a recognized separation of spouses. “Divorced” persons may not remarry while their spouse lives.
church was not spared the effects of war; the United States Army placed Padre Ramón Ortiz under arrest for several months in 1847.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo placed the Territory of New Mexico and the north bank of Paso del Norte, including the missions of Ysleta and Socorro and the presidio of San Elizario, in the United States. Many New Mexicans who opposed this new order took refuge in Mesilla, which remained in Chihuahua after the Mexican Cession. Ramón Ortiz took a leading role in the formation of this community. However Mesilla and the neighboring village of Doña Ana stood close to an ill-defined border, and on land coveted by American railroad magnates. The Gadsden Purchase (La Venta de Mesilla) transferred this region to the United States, creating a new stream of refugees. This second loss of territory further underlined Mexico’s weakened position along its northern boundary.

The Diocese of Durango also suffered territorial losses during this time. The Vatican created the Vicariate Apostolic of Santa Fe in 1850. This area encompassed the New Mexico Territory, then part of the United States. Jean-Baptiste Lamy, a French-born prelate, brought a new regime that sought to reform New Mexico’s parishes, invariably over the strident objections of their clergy. While the new vicariate (the Diocese of Santa Fe after 1853) extended claims over western Texas, including the north bank of Paso del Norte, these parishes remained closely tied to Padre Ortiz and Bishop Zubiría in Mexico. The career of Antonio Severo Borrajo, a Spanish priest who arrived in Paso del Norte in 1850, epitomized Durango’s enduring influence across the new border. Borrajo arrived as a close personal collaborator with Bishop Lamy, and remained in Paso del Norte to minister to San Elizario and Socorro. Once in Paso del Norte, he came to identify with
the Mexican Catholicism of the area and the Diocese of Durango. In his later career, he became a fiery and outspoken champion of Hispanic interests in opposition to Euro-American dominance. The See of Durango managed to achieve some small victories against the backdrop of the United States-Mexico War and Gadsden Purchase. Bishop Zubiría, Vicar Ortiz, and Father Borrajo defended this bishopric’s interests in El Paso County, Texas and Doña Ana County, New Mexico. In practice, through 1871, these places remained under the ecclesiastical governance of a Mexican hierarchy.

In the years before 1870, settlers from the United States and Europe arrived in small numbers. Many of them were merchants who sought trade and commerce along the camino real after Mexican independence. After the war, they were joined by a small garrison of United States soldiers in army posts. Paso del Norte’s population remained mostly Hispanic and indigenous, Spanish-speaking, and Roman Catholic. These newcomers generally accommodated to the prevailing culture and religion of Paso del Norte. At times, the church faced the challenge of integrating Euro-Americans, whether of Catholic or Protestant backgrounds, into the community. Male settlers often sought marriage with paseñas, which required their acceptance of Roman Catholicism. The local clergy mediated these relationships.

Chapter Five, “‘She Will Only Leave My Home by Gunpoint:’ La Reforma Arrives in the ‘City of Juárez,’ 1860-1870,” covers the arrival of Mexican liberalism in Paso del Norte. These years began with the breakdown of the national order in Mexico and the United States. Mexico experienced an intensive wave of liberal changes in law (La Reforma) that abolished church prerogatives that had stood for centuries. Reformist leaders such as Ignacio Comonfort, Melchor Ocampo, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, and
Benito Juárez drafted laws that broke up ecclesiastical estates, created secular education, the civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths, and allowed members of non-Catholic sects and religions to practice their faith openly. These radical changes met with strong conservative opposition, and opponents of *La Reforma* turned to France’s Napoleon III for aid. By 1863, much of Mexico fell under French occupation, and these foreign troops backed the installation of a monarchy under Archduke Maximilian of Austria. Some conservative Mexicans also supported the imperial regime. Benito Juárez attempted to recruit liberal opponents of Maximilian, as well as nationalist Mexicans who loathed French occupation, helped to fuel resistance on the part of Benito Juárez.

After a series of withdrawals to northern Mexico, Benito Juárez took refuge in Paso del Norte in 1865. From this redoubt, *juarista* forces – with support from the United States – slowly regained Mexico from imperial hands. The arrival of President Juárez in Paso del Norte also directly introduced the forces of *La Reforma* and secularization to the borderlands. By 1870, civil matrimony and state intervention in marriage became evident in Mexican Paso del Norte. The historical memory of Benito Juárez’s stay in the region is most evident in the renaming of Villa del Paso del Norte in his honor in 1888; however, the emergence of a secular society in the northern Mexican borderlands represents another legacy of this president. Ramón Ortiz, facing a new state of affairs in his parish, responded with an extended foray in the Sierra Tarahumara from 1866 to 1872, where he worked as a missionary.

While the United States conquered and occupied the region and essentially dictated a new boundary with Mexico, much of New Mexico and the areas surrounding El Paso in the United States remained thoroughly Hispanic and indigenous in terms of
language, culture, and religious observance. The few Euro-Americans who settled in the region often – willingly or grudgingly – accommodated to this fact. Even in domains such as law, property rights, and local civic administration, Spanish and Mexican practice survived north of the border in many places with Hispanic majorities.

This period of accommodation came to a rapid end after 1870; the sweeping changes of these years are the focus of Chapter Six, “‘Testing the Bonds of a Common Faith’: El Paso County, 1860-1881.” On the northern side of the border, the number of settlers from the rest of the United States and Europe gathered pace after the American Civil War. Ranching and mining attracted a wave of colonists who often had little understanding of, or respect for, Hispanic concepts of property rights. The Salt War of 1877 epitomized this conflict, as newcomers sought to claim and exploit salt deposits that paseños had viewed as communal property from time immemorial. This conflict, while primarily over land use and control of local offices, also encompassed a bitter struggle over the leadership of Catholic parishes in the Lower Valley of El Paso County.

The death of Bishop Zubiría in 1863, and Ramón Ortiz’s virtual exile from Paso del Norte from 1866 to 1872, created a void in local church leadership. Their successors could not effectively oppose the realignment of southern New Mexico and far western Texas into the Vicariate Apostolic of Arizona. As of 1871, these regions came under the authority of Jean-Baptiste Salpointe in Tucson. Hispanic priests in this new vicariate, led by Antonio Severo Borrajo, countered this with a proposal for a diocese for the El Paso area. This effort went nowhere, and led Borrajo to make increasingly strident denunciations of Euro-American Catholics, Protestants, and Mormons.
Protestantism gathered strength in the region after 1870, when Father Joseph Tays established St. Clement’s Episcopal Church in El Paso. Later in the 1870s, Mormon missionaries, such as Daniel W. Jones, began to make inroads in communities on both sides of the border. The arrival of railroads in 1881 led to a revolutionary change in Paso del Norte’s religious landscape. In that year, no less than four Protestant denominations arrived in El Paso, as new railroads brought an unprecedented number of settlers to the emerging city. The Catholic Church in El Paso County also underwent dramatic transformations. Jesuit missionaries assumed control of the Tigua’s chapel in Ysleta, and created new parishes in El Paso, Texas.

In time, new Catholic parishes formed in El Paso, often defined along ethnic and class lines. Carlos Pinto, an Italian-born Jesuit missionary, epitomized these changes when he consecrated two new chapels in El Paso in 1892 and 1893. Pinto founded Sacred Heart Church to serve the Mexican-American neighborhoods that emerged in south El Paso’s Second Ward, or Segundo Barrio. He also helped build San José del Río to serve the Mexican immigrant workers of Smeltertown, west of El Paso. Father Pinto’s other church, Immaculate Conception, stands in the center of El Paso’s downtown business district; this parish served an English-speaking, Euro-American congregation when it opened. This segregated church persisted well into the twentieth century.

Terminology

All ethnic labels are imperfect, as they belie the high degree of diversity and fluidity that exists in the real world, particularly in the borderlands. Many ethnic identities also underwent changes over time. During the colonial period, español (Spaniard) took on a variety of racial and cultural connotations. The term was used by
those of Spanish birth (peninsulares), and American-born people of “unmixed” Spanish origin (criollos). Those of partial European ancestry (castas) often asserted their rights as gente de razón (people of reason) and members of the “Republic of Spaniards” (república de españoles) in colonial society. In response to these broad and overlapping definitions of Spanish status, peninsulares usually clarified that they were “españoles europeos” or “españoles de los reinos de Castilla” (European Spaniards or Spaniards of the Kingdoms of Castile).  

Colonial Mexico had a complex caste system that ranked all members of colonial society according to their proportion of European, African, and indigenous American ancestry. Theoretically, each specific mixture of these groups formed a distinct caste identity. In practice, this system was far from absolute. Specific, and often arcane, caste labels mattered far less in village marketplaces and parish churchyards than they did within the corridors of cathedrals and palaces. Caste took on different meanings in the northern frontier. Residents of the northern Mexican frontier fused a colonial caste hierarchy with ideas concerning social class, gender and honor, a concept termed calidad (quality). Those who migrated to the region from central and southern Mexico often left former caste labels behind, and claimed a more “Spanish” identity in their new home. One might also “pass” as a member of a caste with a higher status with economic advancement. Another essential component of calidad was its emphasis on the performance of caste roles. Men and women gained – or lost – social stature through their


ability to publically display “honorable” appearances and conduct. Furthermore, many residents of frontier communities imbued cal\textit{idad} with strong notions of what constituted gender-appropriate behavior.\textsuperscript{34}

One of the enduring labels in the borderlands was \textit{vecino}. Literally “neighbor,” this term took on a complex ethnic and political meaning in the colonial borderlands. Moreover, unlike caste labels, this description survived well after Mexican independence. In the context of late colonial New Mexico, Ross Frank summarizes \textit{vecino} as a term for those with “a sense of belonging” as a “citizen.”\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Vecinos} encompassed the “Spanish” residents of communities as well as \textit{castas}, such as \textit{mestizos} and \textit{mulatos}. In everyday language, \textit{vecinos} were all members of Hispanic society who did not belong to an indigenous community.\textsuperscript{36}

In this study “Hispanic” refers to people who belong to predominantly Spanish-speaking communities regardless of citizenship or race. “Mexican” will generally describe citizens of Mexico regardless of origin, especially after 1821, when Mexico became independent from Spain.\textsuperscript{37} “Mexican Americans” are people of Mexican heritage residing in the United States. “Indigenous” refers to people who identify with a Native American ancestral and cultural background, generally as members of specific

\textsuperscript{34} Martin ,181.


\textsuperscript{36} Anthony Mora, \textit{Border Dilemmas: Racial and National Uncertainties in New Mexico, 1848-1912} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 36-38. \textit{Vecino} identity also persisted in New Mexico well after the independence of Mexico.

\textsuperscript{37} During the colonial period, the definitions of Mexican and Mexican underwent several shifts in meaning. In general in the northern frontier before independence, \textit{mexicanos} were those from the present-day central and southern states of Mexico.
communities. The term “Euro-American” will be used to describe non-Hispanic whites. While “Anglo” is often a more common term, many of the white Catholics who settled in the borderlands during the nineteenth century were outside the mainstream of the mostly Protestant and British-American society that dominated the United States.\(^{38}\)

Political boundaries were in constant flux in the nineteenth century, and toponyms experienced many changes in name or spelling; identifying geographic entities often proves difficult. The town of Paso del Norte, which became Ciudad Juárez in 1888, had a variety of names in the colonial period. El *partido de Paso del Norte* included neighboring towns, missions, and presidios. In order to disambiguate between these meanings, I will refer to the town as “Villa del Paso;” “Paso del Norte” will encompass neighboring settlements such as Senecú, San Lorenzo, and Carrizal, now in Chihuahua, and Ysleta, Socorro, San Elizario, and El Paso, Texas. Residents of all of these interconnected places are *paseños*. Finally, “borderlands” – with no further qualification – refers to the United States-Mexico borderlands, a dynamic space that may be defined as the parts of each nation that have strong and direct cultural, economic, historical, and personal links with the country opposite the Rio Grande.

\(^{38}\) These labels are not exclusive to one another. Hispanics may be indigenous by ancestry. Spaniards may concurrently identify as Hispanic and Euro-American in the borderlands. Some Euro-American settlers in Paso del Norte have become, to varying degrees, part of Hispanic society.
Chapter One

“A Delightful Country in the Summer”: The Catholic Frontier in Paso del Norte, 1659-1810

Paso del Norte’s origins as a mission community shaped its society well into the nineteenth century. The missions of Guadalupe, Ysleta, and Socorro have preserved their spiritual and cultural significance through the present. The larger community that formed around these churches developed a way of life based on irrigated farming, viticulture, and ranching. The Catholic liturgical calendar and its performance of the rites of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial marked the rhythms of daily life for much of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Despite these continuities, Paso del Norte was far from static during the Spanish colonial period. The area’s original inhabitants, the Manso and Suma Indians, witnessed the influx of Spanish and Pueblo settlers, indigenous captives, and Afro-Mexicans. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church in Paso del Norte experienced secularization as the Diocese of Durango gradually extended its influence over its northern borderlands, largely by integrating regular clergy into the secular church hierarchy. Franciscan friars continued to minister to parishioners in the missions. This “hybrid secularization” took root in Paso del Norte by the end of the colonial period. The rest of Spanish New Mexico experienced the decline of the Franciscan order as well as the near absence of the secular church. Paso del Norte began to diverge from the rest of New Mexico in the respect that institutional Catholicism remained relatively strong into the early nineteenth century.
The Emergence of Paso del Norte as a Mission Frontier

Paso del Norte was a borderland well before its division between the United States and Mexico as it functioned as a meeting place of indigenous American cultures for centuries before the arrival of the first Spanish colonists. In a study of this zone at the time of European colonization, Bill Lockhart identified Paso del Norte as the contact zone between two groups, the Manso and the Suma. The mountain passes along the middle course of the Rio Grande served as a center for trade and intellectual exchange for two distinct societies, as the Manso primarily subsisted on sedentary agriculture and fishing along the river bottoms and marshlands, while the Suma largely lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers in the deserts and mountains.39

In 1598, Juan de Oñate led colonizers to El Paso del Norte and claimed the region from that point northward as New Mexico.40 Paso del Norte linked this northern frontier province of New Spain with the silver-rich lands of Nueva Vizcaya (now the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango) to the south.41 During the colonial period, Paso del Norte became a center for regional trade and its farms and ranches produced commodities


41 During the Spanish colonial period, Nuevo México encompassed more land than the present-day state of New Mexico. Spanish land claims extended across much of what is now the western United States. The zone of permanent Spanish settlement and mission activity was much smaller; it extended from Paso del Norte in the south to Taos in the north.
such as wine, brandy, dried fruits, and hides.\textsuperscript{42} The community received its name from the pass the Rio Grande cut between the Franklin Mountains to the north and the Sierra de Juárez to the south.\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{Camino Real de Tierra Adentro} (The Royal Highway of the Interior) connected Paso del Norte to the silver mining centers of Nueva Vizcaya and north to New Mexico. The northern frontier provided commodities such as furs and skins, timber, and the labor of \textit{genízaros} (indigenous captives). The Rio Grande was not useful as a navigable river, but it provided a valuable source of water. The Keystone Wetlands in western El Paso, Hueco Tanks east of El Paso, the underground Hueco Bolsón, and the Ojo de Samalayuca also enabled subsistence in an arid and often unforgiving landscape.

The relative plenty of the valleys along the \textit{Sierra de los Mansos} (Franklin and Juárez Mountains) and \textit{Sierra de los Órganos} (Organ Mountains) often made a profound impression on overland travelers, especially before modern transport enabled more rapid and comfortable journeys. Upon his arrival at Paso del Norte in 1598, Juan de Oñate asserted Spanish dominion over the banks of the Rio Grande in “a lengthy discourse that echoed the book of Genesis.”\textsuperscript{44} However, Paso del Norte was no primordial Eden. It had been continuously occupied by agricultural communities for two thousand years before Spanish colonization and its inhabitants witnessed periods of prosperity along with times of scarcity. Long after the Spanish conquest, \textit{paseños} continued to draw from pre-Hispanic spiritual life, foodways, and methods of adaptation to an arid environment.


\textsuperscript{43} Rio Grande is the standard name for the river in the United States; in Mexico, \textit{Río Bravo} prevails. In colonial times (and in regional usage) \textit{Río del Norte} appears as well.

\textsuperscript{44} Weber, \textit{The Spanish Frontier in North America}, 57-58.
At first, Spanish explorers only skirted the edges of the region. In 1536, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca traversed the area, most likely to the south of Paso del Norte. In 1540, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado marched north along the present-day boundary between Arizona and New Mexico before turning east to launch a full scale military invasion of the Pueblo civilization of New Mexico.\(^{45}\) In virtually every part of the Americas, the effects of European contact with indigenous Americans were catastrophic.\(^{46}\)

The linguistic and cultural identities of the people the Spanish encountered at Paso del Norte in the sixteenth century have long been a matter of dispute for anthropologists and historians, if less so for indigenous \textit{paseños}. The first Spaniards in the region used the term \textit{manso}, an archaic term meaning “peaceful” or “tame,” to describe the agricultural people of Paso del Norte.\(^{47}\) Despite this label, the Manso engaged in two centuries of active resistance against Spanish colonization. In terms of ethno-linguistic identity, scholars have variously identified the Manso as speakers of a language isolate, as members of a larger Jumano group, or as Athapaskan-speakers.\(^{48}\)

\(^{45}\) Weber, \textit{The Spanish Frontier in North America}, 46. Both explorers’ routes are subject to dispute.

\(^{46}\) Or as Cabeza de Vaca put it, “half of the natives died from a disease of the bowels and blamed us.” Weber, \textit{The Spanish Frontier in North America}, 30.

\(^{47}\) John Reed Swanton, \textit{The Indian Tribes of North America} (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), 334. Martín González de la Vara, \textit{Breve historia de Ciudad Juárez y su región} (Chihuahua: El Colegio de Chihuahua, 2002), 44. One cannot ignore the use of the highly gendered use of \textit{manso} in colonial New Mexico, as revealed in Ramón Gutiérrez, 209. In the context of Franciscan sexual abuse of Pueblo Indians, Gutiérrez notes that in the idiom of the colonial Spanish Borderlands “an emasculated man was referred to as \textit{manso}, meaning meek, gentle, humble, and lamblike. \textit{Manso} was also the word used to signify a castrated animal or person.”

\(^{48}\) An overview of debate concerning the origins and affiliations of the Manso appears in Lockhart’s “Protohistoric Confusion: A Cultural Comparison of the Manso, Suma, and Jumano Indians of the Paso del Norte Region.”
Spanish explorers noted another indigenous group in the area as the Suma; these people were predominantly hunter-gatherers in the deserts surrounding present-day El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. During Spanish colonization, Manso and Suma often took refuge among the Natagée and Mescalero Apache north and east of Paso del Norte. These affinities led Spanish observers to identify Mansos and Sumas as “Apaches,” even though the ancestral connections of these groups remain unclear. In 1959 Jack D. Forbes surmised that the Manso and Suma were most likely Athapaskan, as they frequently allied with the Apache nations to the north, and members of these groups were often “related by marriage” in Spanish records. 49

The presence of intermarriage between two groups does not mean that there was a common ethnic or linguistic origin, but this admixture reveals the emergence of communal bonds. In his refutation of Forbes’s assertion that intermarriage demonstrated a shared Athapaskan heritage, Thomas Naylor states that the process of intermarriage more convincingly establishes that Manso and Suma in the Paso del Norte area were a people who “became Apache” after the arrival of Spanish colonists. 50 The Manso intermarried with other groups over the century following Spanish conquest, to the point that John Swanton, in The Indian Tribes of North America (1952), simply stated that “very few of Manso blood remain.” Yet, a community of Piro-Manso-Tigua descendants


50 Quoted in Lockhart, 119.
continues to maintain a Manso identity at the Tortugas Pueblo, located near Las Cruces, New Mexico.\textsuperscript{51}

The Franciscans, who arrived in New Mexico with Juan de Oñate in 1598, assumed responsibility for the spread of Christianity amongst the indigenous peoples of New Mexico.\textsuperscript{52} The order’s custodian (\textit{custos}) in New Mexico, who governed the missionaries, exercised many of the powers that Catholic bishops wielded in the secular church.\textsuperscript{53} From these initial bases, Franciscans spread across New Mexico, then including Paso del Norte, in the seventeenth century. In 1659, Fray García de San Francisco y Zúñiga, a Franciscan missionary, established \textit{Nuestra Señora del Guadalupe de los Mansos}.\textsuperscript{54} Fray San Francisco began to convert the indigenous population to the forms of Christian living. The introduction of Roman Catholic marriage rites, in accordance with the Council of Trent, was among the radical changes that the Manso and Suma would face. Within three years, baptisms and marriages were underway at Paso del Norte, with the first recorded wedding at the Guadalupe Mission being that of Francisco Mutarama and Juana Mata on February 3, 1662. On March 28\textsuperscript{th} of the following year, María Fiscal, the young daughter of Tomás Fiscal, received the first Christian burial at the mission.\textsuperscript{55} In 1668, the Franciscans consecrated a more substantial building at the mission, and this


\textsuperscript{52} For a brief, but sweeping, synthesis of the Franciscan order’s organization and activities throughout colonial Mexico, see Alan Knight, \textit{Mexico: The Colonial Era} (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34-45.

\textsuperscript{53} Ramón Gutiérrez, 98.

\textsuperscript{54} Anne Eugenia Hughes, \textit{The Beginning of Spanish Settlement in the El Paso District} (Berkeley: University of California Publications, 1914), 304.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
site continues to stand – with later repairs and additions that have altered some of its features – in the historic center of Ciudad Juárez. 56 By that year, the new mission chapel possessed two bells and “a beautiful arch” above a nave that held statues of Jesus, Mary, and St. Francis. The main altar featured a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a focal point for Mexican Catholicism by the end of the colonial era.57

By 1680, the Guadalupe Mission had a diverse population of indigenous converts. By that year, the Franciscans had baptized 830 Mansos, sixty-two Piros, seventeen Sumas, ten Tanos, five Apaches, and four Jumanos. 58 A small number of Spanish colonists also entered the area between 1659 and 1680. Francisco de Archuleta and Doña Bernardina Baca, both “Spaniards,” married at the Guadalupe mission on November 29, 1678. The Spanish initially settled along the margins of the Manso neophyte community, and by 1680, thirty-one recorded baptisms of Spaniards had taken place at the mission.59 The Pueblo Revolt of that year and the Manso Revolt of 1684 would rapidly transform the community around the mission into a Spanish town.

In 1680, Po’pay, a Tewa from the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, unified many of the indigenous peoples of northern New Mexico in the Pueblo Revolt. The Pueblo killed hundreds of Spanish colonists and missionaries; about two thousand survivors fled

56 Timmons, 15.


58 Anne Eugenia Hughes, 314.

59 Ibid.
southward to Paso del Norte. Spanish refugees transformed the environs of the Guadalupe Mission into an incorporated town, with a *cabildo* or governing council organized under civil law. Paso del Norte would later serve as a base for the reconquest of New Mexico in 1692; however, about a fourth of the New Mexicans who arrived after the Pueblo Revolt would remain there. This number included Spaniards and people of many caste groups, as well as members of two New Mexican Pueblos.

In the process of evacuating their settlements in northern New Mexico, the Spanish brought Tiwa (Tigua) from the Isleta Pueblo and Piro of Socorro and Senecú to their refuge at Paso del Norte. The circumstances of the migration of Tiwa to Paso del Norte continue to be a controversial. One on hand, there is the evidence that Christianized Pueblo Indians willingly accompanied the Spanish south, or left in fear of reprisals against Christians. Accounts that Spanish New Mexicans forcibly removed Tiwa to Paso del Norte stand in opposition to histories that emphasize Tigua loyalty or collaboration with the Spanish. The case of the Piro is subject to less dispute; Senecú

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60 Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) provides a thorough account of the background and consequences of the Pueblo Revolt, as well as the sweeping events of 1680.


62 Timmons, 20.

63 Bertha Pauline Dutton, *American Indians of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 19. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History*, 18, flatly states the Tiguas “to this day insist that they fled because they sought the relative safety of the Pass rather than because of any special loyalty to the Spaniards.”

64 Deidre Sklar, *Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 8. The Tiwa of Paso del Norte generally use the Spanish orthography (Tigua) of their name.
and Socorro simply did not become aware of Po’pay’s coordinated strike against the Spaniards until after the stream of southbound refugees reached their Pueblos.

The “Spanish” that made up the population of New Mexico and Paso del Norte were a diverse people. They included Spaniards and Mexican born creoles and castas (people of mixed ancestry). Genízaros, or indigenous people who entered Hispanic society through forced captivity or assimilation, formed a notable element of the Spanish-speaking population of the northern frontier. The records of the Guadalupe Parish during the seventeenth century also described people of African heritage; priests listed a number of paseños as mulatos in baptism and marriage records. The settlers and refugees at Paso del Norte formed a cluster of separate but interrelated populations that replicated the dynamics of northern New Mexico. La Villa del Paso, with the Guadalupe mission forming its nucleus, became the primary town for Spanish colonists as well as a dwindling number of Manso Indians. San Lorenzo, to the immediate east, housed many of the castas and genízaros, as well as Suma Indians. The relocated New Mexican Indians settled in los pueblos de abajo (the lower towns): Piros in Senecú and Socorro, and Tiguas in Ysleta. The emergence of a large population center at Paso del Norte also led to the creation of a frontier fort; the Spanish raised a presidio with fifty soldiers between San Lorenzo and the Guadalupe mission in 1684.

For two centuries after the arrival of Fray García de San Francisco in 1659, all recorded marriages in Paso del Norte took place within the confines of the Roman

65 A discussion of the formation of genízaro identity appears in Gutiérrez, 149-156.

66 Cruz, 44.
This does not mean that indigenous forms of marriage did not continue. Catholic clergy in the borderlands frequently denounced indigenous and Hispanic parishioners for cohabiting and having children out of wedlock through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; however, this does not allow for the fact that other forms of marriage and family formation might have existed. Direct documentary evidence of indigenous marriage rites, concepts of marriage and ideas concerning legitimacy, adultery, and concerns with abandonment or abuse are difficult to extract from parish archives in Paso del Norte. Anthropologists have provided fragmentary glimpses of Manso, Tigua, or Piro beliefs concerning marriage rites and the regulation of marital relationships through tribal structures such as clan and kinship.

In 1883, the ethnographer Adolph Bandelier visited Paso del Norte and included notes on indigenous *paseños* in his field study of the Indians of the United States Southwest. Unfortunately, Bandelier subscribed to an essentialist definition of indigenous identity that focused on “blood purity” and strict adherence to a primordial “original” culture. Bandelier deemed the Manso to be thoroughly blended with the Tigua and Piro who had arrived in the area as refugees from the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, as well as the Spanish and Mexican settlers who arrived after 1659. While Bandelier contended that widespread “miscegenation” had made a distinctive Manso identity difficult to

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67 In 1870, two events marked an end to Roman Catholic hegemony over marriage in the area. One was the arrival of St. Clement’s Episcopal Church in El Paso, Texas. The other involved the first civil marriages recorded in Paso del Norte, Chihuahua.

68 Anthropology and ethnography in the area did not begin with the arrival of Anglo-American scholars. Manuel Orozco y Berra, *Geografía de las lenguas y carta etnográfica de México* (Mexico City, 1864), contains an earlier study of Manso, Tigua, and Piro *paseños*.

distinguish from the larger mestizo population, he did note that a small number of paseños continued to assert that they were “the direct descendants of those whom Fray García de San Francisco settled at the ‘Pass’ in 1659.” However, the Manso were indigenous to this site; a more accurate assessment would be that Fray García de San Francisco and other missionaries reduced the Manso from scattered hamlets into the more densely settled mission town of Paso del Norte.

Bandelier was generally disparaging toward the Manso, at least in terms of recognizing their claims of continuity and their efforts to preserve a tribal government. In his description of the Manso, Bandelier describes an episode involving a dispute over tribal leadership:

They [Mansos] have two so called Caciques, and, as well as in the other Indian villages, there has been strife between them on the score of “legitimacy,” the second Cacique claiming to be more legitimate than the first. This quarrel has lately ended by an elopement! Cacique No. 2 (over sixty years of age) has fled with the spouse of Cacique No. 1 (the lady is over fifty).  

Bandelier provided no further detail concerning exactly how this “elopement” took place. It is safe to say that such an arrangement would not have found favor with a Roman Catholic minister; this marriage might have taken place clandestinely, or outside the church as a civil marriage. Even so, the marriage laws of Mexico and the United States would not approve of a bigamous union. This passage only hinted at the possibility

70 Ibid., 247.
71 Bandelier, Final Report of Investigations Among the Indians of the Southwestern United States, Carried on Mainly in the Years From 1880 to 1885, 247. Cacique, a term that originated with Spanish contact with the indigenous people of the Caribbean, is a term for indigenous chief or governor.
72 Sadly, there are no parish records indicating that a marriage took place under this type of circumstance.
that another set of values concerning marriage coexisted with formal Catholic doctrine in Paso del Norte. In noting the age of the bride and groom in this “elopement,” Bandelier implied that this marriage took place to settle a “quarrel,” and had no other purpose. The ages of married persons who were well beyond the age of consent often do not appear in matrimonial registries, making it difficult to find any fifty-to-seventy-year-old spouses in archives.

In describing the two competing caciques, Adolph Bandelier noted that one was Tigua through his maternal lines, and therefore partisans of a “pure” Manso candidate opposed his leadership. Furthermore, Bandelier claimed that the caciques “were so closely similar among the Mansos and the New Mexican Pueblos that one of the latter could officiate for the former.” While Bandelier was rather dismissive of aspects of the Mansos’ heritage, his notes are among the most revealing sources we have on the maintenance of Manso community life and marriage practices. In his attempt to delineate and differentiate Manso, Tigua, Piro, and “Mexican” paseños, Bandelier documented the ethnogenesis of a Piro-Manso-Tigua people.

In 1901, Jesse Walter Fewkes (1850-1930), a Harvard-educated marine zoologist who turned toward ethnography and anthropology in the second half of his academic career, visited Paso del Norte. His notes on the Tigua of Ysleta del Sur and on the Piro of Senecú and Socorro had similarities to Bandelier’s description of the Manso of Paso del Norte in that they emphasized indigenous paseños’ acculturation and detribalization.

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73 Bandelier, Final Report of Investigations Among the Indians of the Southwestern United States, Carried on Mainly in the Years From 1880 to 1885, 247.

“These Indians have practically become ‘Mexicanized,’” Fewkes wrote in his field study, “and survivals of their old pueblo life which still remain, such as their dances before the church, have long lost the meaning which they once had or that which similar dances still have in the pueblos higher up the Rio Grande.”

Fewkes regarded the southern Tiwa and Piros as “good Roman Catholics,” and in his judgment their pre-Christian ceremonies and rituals merely survived as “secular customs.” This does not allow for the presence of syncretism, in which these ceremonies and customs held an inner spiritual meaning that the Tigua effectively masked from the eyes of outsiders.

Yet, despite his conclusion that Ysleta was a “Pueblo Indian settlement that has become a Mexican town,” Fewkes found that a Tigua political and social identity remained decidedly intact at the dawn of the twentieth century. While the Tigua disappointed Fewkes with their lack of language retention, they preserved significant elements of their pre-Hispanic culture. Fewkes described the layout of the Ysleta Pueblo, referred to in the indigenous language of its residents as Chiawipia, in a manner that belied his earlier implication that the Pueblo lost its indigenous character. After his description of Piarote, the cacique of the Tigua, Fewkes printed a translation of the constitution of the Tigua. This remarkable document melded indigenous Tigua law and the obligations of Spanish mission life with the republican values of the United States and Mexico.


76 Ibid.

77 Fewkes mentions the migration of a group of Tigua to Las Cruces “and other localities along the railroad where they find profitable employment.” Fewkes, 61.
Fewkes’ description of the Tigua community included a fleeting account of the “survivals of the clan system” of their ancestors, which he described as matrilineal. However, he went no further with this description. While Fewkes found the southern Tigua as lacking in their preservation of pre-Hispanic culture in comparison to the northern New Mexican Pueblos, Fewkes was even less impressed with the cultural integrity of the Tiguas’ indigenous neighbors. Of the “Mexicanized” Piros of Senécú and Socorro, Fewkes had far less to say, apart from his finding that their language had “practically disappeared,” apart from their memory of many words, and that their dances and religious rituals had lost all of their original “pagan” meaning. Fewkes, much as Bandelier, did not encounter many indigenous paseños that convincingly boasted of a “pure” lineage or a culture that was untouched by Spanish influences.

The Diocese of Durango’s Northern Borderlands

Anthropologists were not the only ones who argued that the Manso and other native paseños had largely assimilated into Hispanic society. The indigenous status of a community had importance for matters of property rights and access to resources such as water rights and farmland. Native Pueblos formed, in the Spanish colonial period, part of the “Republic of Indians” (república de indios). As such, their distinct relationship with the Spanish crown allowed for the maintenance of communal lands. The regular clergy of the missions ardently championed the maintenance of the Republic of Indians and its distinct legal status, and these indigenous rights also “often enjoyed the sympathy and

78 Ibid., 74.
support of the secular clergy.” 79 Opposition to the Republic of Indians brought together a coalition of Spanish landlords, miners, and merchants who opposed the clergy. By contrast, according to Alan Knight, the religious orders “sought to maintain caste and ethnicity in a purer form, permitting a degree of mobility for the Republic of Indians but strictly controlling and limiting both the seepage of Indians into the Spanish sector and the brusque invasion of Spaniards (and mestizos and blacks) into the Indian ‘republic.’” 80

This division might be apt for the center of Mexico. However, in Paso del Norte and New Mexico, the secular church was far less favorable to the preservation of the Republic of Indians. The Bishops of Durango sought to extend diocesan boundaries across a vast frontier where Franciscans held exclusive sway. Durango’s hierarchs furthered the secularization of the Pueblo missions, a process that undermined the Republic of Indians in Paso del Norte. Secularization on the frontier also came at a time when vecino efforts to detribalize lands belonging the Manso of Guadalupe at Paso del Norte, reached a peak in the eighteenth century.

In Let There Be Towns: Spanish Municipal Origins in the American Southwest, 1610-1810, Gilbert R. Cruz reveals a rather idyllic portrait of Manso life at Guadalupe on the eve of the Pueblo Revolt. Orchards and gardens on the mission grounds produced an abundance of “grapes, apples, quinces, plums, peaches, and figs.” 81 An acequia, or irrigation canal, traversed the lands along the mission community, expanding arable grounds southward from the banks of the Río Grande. Alongside the croplands, ranches

80 Ibid.
81 Cruz, 40-41.
with “nine thousand head of cattle” and “thirteen thousand sheep and goats” provided meat, hides, and tallow for the mission’s residents; numbering a thousand by the end of the 1660s.\textsuperscript{82} A chain of \textit{reducciones}, or permanent village settlements for Manso and Suma farmers and ranchers, emerged along the Rio Grande and \textit{acequia}, with names such as San Pedro de Alcántara, Santa Gertrudis, and San Francisco.\textsuperscript{83}

The arrival of two thousand Spanish and Pueblo refugees from northern New Mexico in 1680, and hundreds of soldiers and their families in the period leading up to the 1692 reconquest of northern New Mexico, ended this brief age of plenty.\textsuperscript{84} The Manso and Suma rebelled against the Spanish in 1683 to 1684. The sudden scarcity of resources and the displacement of Mansos by Spanish and Pueblo refugees apparently triggered the uprising. The Manso Revolt had several significant results. Spanish forces destroyed several of the smaller \textit{reducciones}, such as San Francisco and Santa Gertrudis. Mansos and Sumas who remained under Spanish control faced further reduction, as they concentrated in the emerging town around the Guadalupe mission.\textsuperscript{85} Many other Mansos took refuge with neighboring Apache groups, contributing to the Natagée and Mescalero communities north and east of Paso del Norte.\textsuperscript{86} In the long term, the Manso became a shrinking minority within the mission that bore their name. The dispossession of the Manso had reached the point that, by 1754, Spanish colonists had taken their former

\textsuperscript{82} Cruz, 41.

\textsuperscript{83} Timmons, 20.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. Other brief mentions of the Manso Revolt of 1683/1684 appear in Timmons, 20 and Hughes, 391. In these accounts this was, at most, an aftershock of the Pueblo Revolt.

\textsuperscript{86} Forbes, 99, 101. Jack Forbes cited this fusion of Manso and Apache as evidence of linguistic and cultural kinship between Manso and Athapaskan-speakers. FULL CITATION
communal lands. Population growth and the expansion of viticulture, ranching, and other agriculture placed communal Indian lands at a premium by the middle of the eighteenth century. Secularization compounded these detribalizing pressures. Ideally, Roman Catholic missions of the Spanish borderlands were temporary institutions in recently conquered areas; once they converted indigenous peoples, colonized regions would enter a mature phase as secular parishes. In practice, missions often became more permanent institutions, where regular clergy passionately defended their unique role as spiritual guardians of indigenous wards for decades and centuries after the initial conversion of an indigenous community. The Diocese of Durango challenged the mission’s exclusive hold on the church in New Mexico later in the colonial period.

Durango became the seat of a bishopric in 1620; previously, it had been part of the Diocese of Guadalajara. The Bishop of Durango oversaw the secular parishes of the province of Nueva Vizcaya, a vast expanse in the northern plateau of Mexico. While its extent varied through the colonial period, at its core, Nueva Vizcaya encompassed the present-day Mexican states of Durango and Chihuahua. This province included New Spain’s lucrative silver mining operations at Parral, Santa Bárbara, and Santa Eulalia.

87 Microfilm 513, Part II, Ciudad Juárez Municipal Archives (hereinafter referred to as CJMA), roll 1, seq. 550-562, May 7, 1754 contains a lengthy claim by Manso Indians for lands held by vecino settlers.


89 César Navarro Gallegos, Durango: Las primeras décadas de vida independiente (Mexico City, Instituto Mora, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2001), 27.

90 Ibid., 23. Nueva Galicia formed in 1562.

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Durango and Chihuahua emerged as important administrative centers for this wealthy mining region. During much of the eighteenth century, the city of Chihuahua (founded as San Felipe el Real in 1718) eclipsed Durango in political and economic importance and served as a de facto capital in the eighteenth century. Yet, as the seat of a diocese, Durango retained its importance in ecclesiastical affairs. The church exercised broad temporal powers through its right to collect fees, its extensive property holdings, and its control over family relationships. In the eighteenth century, the Diocese of Durango sought to extend its power over the northern frontier, and backed policies of secularization.

New Mexico was firmly in the grasp of the regular clergy at the time the Diocese of Durango emerged in the 1620s. By 1629, New Mexico had fifty churches and friaries that housed missionaries, mostly built by indigenous women. In that year, the Franciscan presence in New Mexico grew with the arrival of new missionaries, who brought additional soldiers, settlers, and funding. David J. Weber describes this period as “a moment of extraordinary optimism, when everything seemed possible” for the Franciscans. The cause of this joy for the friars was the rapid progress of conversion; in their reports to superiors, missionaries in New Mexico recorded 86,000 baptisms at the time. In When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away, Ramón Gutiérrez details the formation of a quasi-theocratic regime in New Mexico which exerted great power

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91 Nueva Vizcaya’s official capital during most of the colonial period was Durango. San Felipe el Real’s proximity to mining operations and frontier defenses, and its status as the headquarters of the corregidor (royal magistrate) of the vital Chihuahua region led to its emergence as the de facto seat of government. Martin, 1-2.

92 Navarro Gallegos, 37-38.

93 Ibid., 98.
through missions, as well as its control of the prelacy (the office of the custodian or *custos*), the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and the Office of the Holy Crusade. The Franciscans of New Mexico viewed the province’s civil government and military authorities as agents of the missionary effort.⁹⁴

The Pueblo Revolt delivered a stunning blow to Spanish rule in northern New Mexico, and exposed the fragility of the Franciscan regime. Even after Diego de Vargas restored colonial rule over northern New Mexico in 1692, a deep sense of insecurity remained in the mission frontier. As Jim Norris states in his discussion of the impact of *el año ochenta*, as Franciscans referred to the uprising of 1680, “the Puebloans had demonstrated their capacity to rebel, and consequently, when the friars returned to their missions, the priests were more dependent on the state’s military protection and less willing to insist on the native people’s strict adherence to the tenets of Catholicism.”⁹⁵

In the early eighteenth century, Paso del Norte, and northern New Mexican towns such as Albuquerque (founded in 1706), Santa Fe, and Santa Cruz, had growing populations of *vecinos*. Franciscan friars could no longer make a strong case for the presence of a specially trained missionary clergy in the province. Malcolm Elbright and Rick Hendricks identify Paso del Norte as the “focal point in the struggle between the Bishop of Durango and the Franciscan order in New Mexico for spiritual control of the province, as the diocese pushed the transition from missions to secular parishes, and the

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⁹⁴ Gutiérrez, 97-99.


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Franciscans insisted that the predominance of Indian populations created mitigating circumstances." These conditions no longer clearly existed in Paso del Norte.

The Pass of the North was the gateway to New Mexico for Juan de Oñate and the Franciscans in 1598. In the eighteenth century, that province’s path toward secularization also began there. Every pastoral visitation of New Mexico from Benito Crespo, the first to visit the area, to José Antonio Zubiría, the last Bishop of Durango to assert claims on all of New Mexico, had Paso del Norte as its first stop. Paso del Norte also emerged as an exceptional community in the eyes of Catholic authorities, who invariably noted its progress toward secularization in comparison to more distant towns and Pueblos to the north. From 1725 until 1765, the leaders of the See of Durango made a series of episcopal visits to New Mexico with the intent of expanding their authority over the province. Each bishop that ventured north carefully evaluated the character of Catholicism in the Pueblo communities in New Mexico. Bishops and other ecclesiastical visitors also took note of the growth of the Hispanicized population. Paso del Norte, despite its close cultural affinities to New Mexico, often stood apart from the Pueblos and towns to the north in ecclesiastical reports.

In 1725, Benito Crespo, who had become the bishop of Durango two years earlier, was the first hierarch to set foot in Paso del Norte. A youthful bishop, just under fifty years of age when he took office, Crespo had planned to tour all of the Spanish


97 Bishop Tamarón wrote in 1761 that there were other viable routes – particularly from Arizona-Sonora to the western Pueblos of New Mexico. Eleanor Adams, Bishop Tamarón’s Visitation of New Mexico, 1760 (Santa Fe: Historical Society of New Mexico, 1954), 15-16.
settlements and missions of New Mexico.\textsuperscript{98} However, due to being “misinformed about the distance” and having made “insufficient preparations for the journey,” his travels extended no further north than Paso del Norte.\textsuperscript{99} However, while in the region, Crespo created enduring institutional linkages between Paso del Norte and Durango. Crespo named Fray Salvador López the vicar and ecclesiastical judge of Paso del Norte, posts that would remain at the center of local religious authority through the late nineteenth century. This began a pattern of “hybrid secularization,” where Franciscan friars served in posts under the authority of Durango’s bishop. This state of affairs would continue through 1817, when Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara arrived in Paso del Norte and appointed Juan Rafael Rascón to serve as the Curate of the Guadalupe Parish. According to Eleanor Adams, who translated Bishop Tamarón’s writings in the 1950s, this initial effort to extend diocesan control at the Guadalupe Mission resulted in little opposition in the rest of New Mexico, as “the bishop did not insist on proceeding beyond El Paso.”\textsuperscript{100}

In 1730, Benito Crespo began a more extensive visitation of New Mexico, in which he strove to extend diocesan control over the missions of Northern New Mexico. During this visit, the bishop encountered more vocal opposition on the part of Franciscan missionaries. In Santa Fe, as in Paso del Norte, the bishop appointed a vicar and ecclesiastical judge; however, this new vicar was not one of the region’s Franciscan Friars but a secular priest, Santiago Roibal.\textsuperscript{101} A “hybrid” system of appointing a


\textsuperscript{99} Adams, 14.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 15.
Franciscan missionary to serve under the bishop created a conciliatory climate toward secularization at Paso del Norte. In Santa Fe, the Diocese of Durango attempted a more direct takeover, which engendered more opposition.102

After Bishop Crespo’s investiture as the Bishop of Tlaxcala in 1734, his successor Martín de Elizacochea performed another visitation to New Mexico in 1737.103 The Elizacochea visita essentially followed up on the remarks made by Crespo, but made less strident criticisms of the northern frontier. Paso del Norte’s missions were in good order and the “hybrid secularization” of assigning a Franciscan friar to attend to the needs of vecinos proceeded.104 Elizacochea’s successor in Durango, Pedro Anselmo Sánchez de Tagle, failed to visit the northern provinces. For twenty-two years, no further pastoral visitations took place; this began a pattern of short outbursts of activity by more energetic bishops punctuating far longer stretches of neglect on the part of the diocese. This cycle of intensified diocesan interest, followed by decades of virtual abandonment, would mark the borderlands’ relationship with the Diocese of Durango well into the nineteenth century.105

102 Ibid.
103 Kessell, Kiva, Cross, and Crown, 320. Norris, 81, describes this visitation as “subdued” in comparison to Crespo’s 1730 visitation.
104 Norris, 81. Adams 16-17.
105 Cheney, “Archdiocese of Durango,” http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/ddura.html Catholic-Hierarchy (accessed July 25, 2012). It may be worthy of note that, until the term of Pedro Tamarón, which began in 1758, most Bishops of Durango – apart from those who died after relatively brief terms – went on to serve as Bishops or Archbishops in other Dioceses. Pedro Tamarón’s two predecessors, for instance, moved on to the bishopric at Michoacán. After Tamarón, subsequent Bishops of Durango, with the exception of Esteban Lorenzo de Tristán y Esmenota, who was dispatched to Guadalajara in 1793, remained at Durango until their death or retirement.
Pastoral visitations were not only part of the contest for territorial dominance between the Diocese of Durango and the Franciscan Order; they were significant religious, cultural, and social events. To the Catholic faithful, the doctrine of Apostolic Succession creates direct ties between living bishops and their predecessors in office. Bishops also had significant pastoral duties, including administration of the sacrament of confirmation and the ordination of new clergy. Visitations were accompanied by a pomp and grandeur that had few parallels in the borderlands during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For instance, Bishop José Antonio Zubiría’s visit to Paso del Norte and New Mexico in 1833 involved the prelate’s arrival to far-flung towns “in an elegant carriage accompanied by a chaplain, who also served as singer and master of ceremonies, his personal secretary, and a discrete guard.”

According to Josiah Gregg, a Euro-American Protestant traveler, when the bishop reached Santa Fe, “from every window in the city there hung such a profusion of fancy curtains and rich cloths that the imagination was carried back to those glowing descriptions of enchanted worlds which one reads of in the fables of the necromancers.” The absence of such visits also left its mark. A chief complaint of Pedro Pino, New Mexico’s delegate to the Parliament of Cádiz in 1812, was the fact that no bishop had visited New Mexico during his lifetime.

In 1759, Pedro Tamarón y Romeral, consecrated as the Bishop of Durango the year before, began two years of travels in an effort to visit the northern parishes of the

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106 Reséndez, 74.
diocese. During his travels to New Mexican parishes, the bishop oversaw the confirmation of 11,271 Catholics. In the course of this visit, Tamarón also drew up a comprehensive report on conditions in New Mexico, contending with spiritual and worldly matters alike. His visitation and report began at the growing Villa del Paso del Norte. Tamarón described the mission town as a collection of “Spaniards, Europeanized mixtures (original, gente de razón or “people of reason”) and Indians.” At the time, the community exhibited a “hybrid” structure, as it had both secular clergy and Franciscan friars. In Tamarón’s report, “the cure of souls is in the charge of the Franciscan friars of the Province of the Holy Gospel of Mexico. The bishop noted that two Franciscan friars served Paso del Norte,” with one serving as the custodian and prelate of all New Mexican missionaries. The other friar served as “the parish priest of that large town.” Two secular clergy also resided at Paso del Norte, with one holding the office of vicar and ecclesiastical judge. Tamarón granted these offices to the custodian and prelate of the Franciscans, which increased the power of the custos in Paso del Norte, but also placed that prelate under direct diocesan authority.


110 At this stage, there were no permanent Roman Catholic settlements between Paso del Norte and Isleta, New Mexico. The Piro region of Socorro and Senécú had been abandoned by missionaries and Spanish colonists. Adams, Bishop Tamarón’s Visitation of New Mexico, 1760.


112 Adams, 34.

113 Ibid. Bishop Tamarón indicated that the secular priest who had this charge “had given no cause for his removal from office.”
In Paso del Norte, Bishop Tamarón counted 2,479 vecinos in 354 Spanish and casta families and seventy-two Indian families with 249 persons.\textsuperscript{114} By this point, Paso del Norte had become – at least in the view of the bishop – a predominantly “Spanish” community. As hundreds of indigenous people were baptized at the mission between 1662 and 1680, this paltry number revealed the toll of disease and violence that the Manso and Suma experienced.\textsuperscript{115} Detribalizing pressures, such as acculturation through household captivity and mestizaje also acted to diminish this population. Nevertheless, indigenous paseños remained a presence in and around the mission. In 1760, three indigenous couples, Juan Teodoro Ávalos and Beatris Lorencito, Marcos Madilla and Ubalda (no surname given), and Juan Antonio Rodríguez and Isabel Salado, all labeled as “indios de la misión” with no further ethnic identifiers or descriptions, married at Guadalupe.\textsuperscript{116}

While mestizaje often refers to the mixture of Spanish and indigenous peoples, at Paso del Norte this also involved the fusion of distinct Native American ethnicities into new indigenous communities. Paseños drew from many ancestral streams. On November 24, 1754, Joseph de Gracia, indio Comanchi, married Salvador Gutiérrez, Apachi de la misión. A few weeks later, on February 24th 1755, Cayetano, an Apache servant of Don Pedro Roybal, married María Francisca; she was listed as a Comanche servant in the

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 35. In total, Tamarón gives a population of 4,112 for the entire area. The total indigenous population was 1,423; 429 were Tiguas. 425 were Piros, and 80 were Sumas.

\textsuperscript{115} Anne E. Hughes, 314.

\textsuperscript{116} ACCJ, roll 2. “Libro de Matrimonios,” March 5, 1760 and September 23, 1760. A total of fifty-three marriages took place in 1760.
same household.¹¹⁷ On January 3, 1761, José Antonio Tagle, identified as an “indio genízaro” and “a servant of Doña Manuela García de Noriega” in parish records, married María Nicolasa de Tagle, the genízara daughter of Antonio Joaquín de Tagle and María Manuela de Godoy. ¹¹⁸

The criados and genízaros of Paso del Norte served as household workers in the homes of Spanish civil officials, military officers and soldiers, artisans, and land-owners. Some, along with indios de misión, worked the fields that surrounded the mission towns. Paso del Norte was, at its core, a farming and ranching community. Bishop Tamarón’s report documented the condition of agriculture in the area, with “wines as fine as those of Parras,” as well as brandies, and a variety of grains and fruits.¹¹⁹ Paseño wines would enjoy a stellar reputation in the borderlands for decades to come. This bounty that Tamarón described emanated from Paso del Norte’s warm climate and relatively abundant water supply from acequias and the Rio Grande. The days of scarcity that prevailed in the 1680s had long gone. In 1750, 3,130 vecinos and Indians lived in Paso del Norte, and by 1795, the number reached 5,471. The relative abundance of farmland, the trade in genízaro captives, and migration from other parts of northern New Spain helped create this growth along with natural increase. Bishop Tamarón concluded his

¹¹⁷ ACCJ, roll 2, February 24, 1755.

¹¹⁸ Despite sharing the same surname, there was no apparent concern with consanguinity of affinity. They may have acquired the name by association with a Spanish Tagle family in Paso del Norte. Bearers of the Tagle surname appear as military officers and landowners in the eighteenth century. Genízaros and African slaves might have acquired surnames from these masters. Manuela García de Noriega was among the largest slaveholders in eighteenth-century Paso del Norte. Dedra S. McDonald, “To be Black and Female in the Spanish Southwest: Toward a History of African Women on New Spain’s Far Northern Frontier,” in African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000, eds. Shirley Ann Wilson Moore and Quintard Taylor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 38.

¹¹⁹ Robles, 328.
assessments of Paso del Norte’s vineyards, gardens, and orchards with his opinion that it was “a delightful country in summer.”\(^{120}\)

However, high rates of mortality, particularly for infants, ravaged the community, and the tragic consequences of disease and poverty were most apparent in the summer months. From May through September, *paseños* often witnessed spikes of infant and child mortality in the eighteenth century. At times, dozens of children would die in a summer outbreak; the cooler months experienced a more even distribution of deaths by age. The summer of 1757, three years before Tamarón’s visit, was far from delightful. In June of that year alone, at least eighteen small children were buried at Guadalupe, representing all but one of that month’s interments in Villa del Paso.\(^{121}\) In the year of the bishop’s visit, one in three entries in the burial registry was a young child (*párvulo*).\(^{122}\)

Pedro Tamarón made few direct remarks on religious observance in Paso del Norte, aside from brief comments on each of the churches. His most detailed observations were on the newly formed parish of Carrizal, where the priest demanded proper vestments.\(^{123}\) This town, established in 1758, served as a way station and military outpost on the route to Chihuahua and stood as the southern approach to Paso del Norte

\(^{120}\) Adams, 64.

\(^{121}\) ACCJ, roll 5, “Libro de Difuntos,” June, 1757.

\(^{122}\) Clergy did not always note specific ages in these entries; however, they usually termed infants and young children *párvulos*. Older children are sometimes listed as *mancebos* (youths or adolescents).

\(^{123}\) Ibid.
well into the nineteenth century. At Albuquerque, Tamarón noted that “the edict concerning public sins was read” and “the parish books were examined.” At Santa Fe, Tamarón expressed admiration for the upkeep of the parish, noting the Church of the Archangel St. Michael was “fairly decent” but under repair, and a “very fine church dedicated to the Holy Mother of Light” was under construction in the town. The adobe chapels that would draw the wrath of later ecclesiastical inspectors were in good order, at least in the view of the Bishop of Durango in 1760.

However, the bishop was far less accommodating in his assessment of most of the New Mexican Pueblos, especially those along the outer frontier of the province. Pecos, near Santa Fe, drew particular concern. Tamarón noted that a language barrier existed, with none of the Indians speaking Spanish and none of the missionaries understanding indigenous languages. As a consequence, the bishop reported that little in the way of effective pastoral care took place beyond the Franciscans’ attempts at taking confession through interpreters. These confessions usually took place only in those cases where the Pecos Indians were in imminent danger of death.

This lack of linguistic ability among Franciscans, given their renown for philological training, had long been a source of embarrassment for missionaries in New Mexico. Tamarón stated, “This point saddened and upset me more in that kingdom

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126 Norris, 97-98. Among the reasons stated in the eighteenth century for the Franciscan’s poor performance in this “fundamental missionary skill” were the amazing diversity of Pueblo languages, in the
than any other.”

Taking note of the brisk business between Spanish settlers, Puebloans, and Comanche and other indios gentiles (non-Christian Indians) at the annual Taos fair, Tamarón sardonically noted that “in trade and temporal business where profit is involved, the Indians and Spaniards of New Mexico understand one another completely.” This “avarice,” the bishop noted, overcame cultural boundaries when profits were at stake. Tamarón lamented that Franciscan missionaries did not extend the same sense of urgency to ensuring the salvation of the Pueblos and securing the spiritual well-being of the province.

Apparently, El Paso did not have these language barriers by the end of the eighteenth century. While illiteracy was widespread, no references to interpreters appear in parish records by the end of the eighteenth century. Many indigenous paseños in the missions had been Christians for several generations by 1760, and lived in a Hispanicized environment. There were a few possible exceptions; Tamarón noted 28 “infidel Sumas” at Senecú. These people appear to have been recently “reduced” to mission living. The bishop noted that the Franciscan friar resident at the mission taught catechism to these Sumas. No further note was made on whether the Suma truly understood the content of these lessons.

Santa Fe district alone there are three unrelated language families, Keresan, Tanoan, and Zuñian, each with a variety of distinct languages. Friars also complained of frequent transfers that made it difficult for missionaries to accumulate a sufficient knowledge of any one indigenous language.

127 Adams, 48.
128 Ibid., 49, 78.
129 Adams, 66.
According to Michael Carroll, a major task of any pastoral visit was an examination of local parishes’ compliance with the regulations set forth by the Council of Trent. Bishops and their assistants inspected parish registries and took note of the recorded baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials. However, according to Carroll, neither Bishop Crespo nor Bishop Tamarón took a very deep interest in assessing Hispanic New Mexican compliance with canon law. Instead, they were primarily interested in evaluating the performance of Franciscan missionaries and painting their efforts in a negative light. Crespo denounced the lack of annual confession and communion among the Pueblo Indians, but made no similar admonition of vecino Catholics. Bishop Tamarón’s report, likewise, was free of the general denunciations of New Mexican religious practice that became common in the nineteenth century. Bishop Tamarón said nothing concerning hermandades penitentes, a major concern of Bishop Zubiría seventy years later. Likewise, Tamarón issued none of the blanket denunciations of illegitimacy and cohabitation that appeared in Zubiría’s account of New Mexico.

Bishop Tamarón was not universally condemnatory of indigenous piety. At the Pueblo of Galisteo, for instance, he observed that most of the Indians confessed annually and knew catechism. However, the bishop was not impressed with the religious adherence of many of the other northern Pueblos. At Pecos, Tamarón demanded that the resident missionary account for the lack of recent entries in the matrimonial registry. The Franciscan simply replied that no marriages had taken place in the previous year.

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130 Michael Carroll, 40.
131 Ibid.
132 Kessell, 336.
general, the more remote a mission stood, the harsher his critique became. Pecos, on the far east of the Christian frontier of New Mexico, drew particularly strong comments from Tamarón. After his visit ended, a cacique of the Pueblo dressed himself in imitation of the bishop, held mock confirmations and masses, and handed out tortillas in communion ceremonies. A few days after this event, a bear fatally mauled the cacique, an act that Tamarón interpreted as an act of divine retribution. Tamarón argued that this episode should be publicized amongst New Mexico’s Pueblos in order to “serve as a warning to those remote tribes” that would entreat them to show “due respect” for the Catholic Church.

Bishop Tamarón requested that the Spanish Crown grant to his diocese four secular parishes, Villa del Paso, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Santa Cruz de la Cañada. These four towns had the largest vecino populations in New Mexico. In Paso del Norte’s case, the bishop had already exerted diocesan power in appointing Franciscans to ecclesiastical offices and establishing a new parish in neighboring Carrizal. In making this demand, the bishop stated that the secularization of New Mexico was “a necessary first step in providing a remedy for that kingdom and so that the friars may not be such sole owners of it.”

Secularization was at the core of Bishop Tamarón’s vision for the northern frontier, and his remarks on New Mexican religious practice and marriage reflected this overriding objective.

Tamarón’s report concluded with a series of edicts upon the churches of New Mexico. The bishop called for regular Sunday sermons “of moderate length,” to be read

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133 Adams, 79.

134 Ibid., 81.
in a serious, clear, and simple style.” The bishop also proposed increased religious instruction for children, with the ringing of bells and gathering of children on “Sunday afternoons at four o’clock.” Furthermore, Tamarón ordered parishes to conduct an annual examination, in which parishioners were questioned on their knowledge of catechism before receiving penances. And overall, he called for more care in record keeping, the maintenance of holy oils and other goods, and greater attention to sick and dying parishioners. While the prospect of death without proper confession and unction was Tamarón’s most pressing concern regarding the administration of the sacraments, the bishop also issued directives concerning marriage and baptism. He reminded New Mexican clergy that betrothed persons were to be examined in their knowledge of Christian doctrine. Candidates for marriage also had to offer confession before being deemed “worthy of approaching the holy sacrament.” These directives were repeated and elaborated upon in subsequent pastoral visits, such as that of Bishop José Antonio Zubiría in 1833.

**Paseños in the Late Colonial Period**

Paso del Norte’s population grew larger and became increasingly diverse through the late eighteenth century. According to an account of Paso del Norte in 1773, the Guadalupe mission contained “Spaniards, Indians of the Manso, Piro, and Pima Nations, now thoroughly mixed into one society; San Lorenzo el Real with its Suma Indians; Isleta

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135 Ibid., 82.

136 Ibid. Of all the sacraments, the malpractice of extreme unction most sorely troubled Bishop Tamarón.

137 Ibid.
with its Christianized Indians, some white people, and many soldiers…and Socorro, a community of Apaches ransomed from the warlike Comanche.”

To this array of ethnic groups in eighteenth century Paso del Norte, one must add people of African heritage. Afro-Mexicans appeared with some frequency in the Guadalupe Parish archives during the middle to late 1700s. On August 11, 1778, Friar Rafael Benavides identified Vicente Franco as the “legitimate son of Lucas Franco and Bernarda Chávez, *mulatos* of the town of Chihuahua.” On that day, Franco married Josefa Banegas, the daughter of Pablo Banegas and Josefa Naranjo of Paso del Norte. Three years later, Fray Benavidez presided over the wedding of José Gervasio López, son of “*mulatos libres*” Estebán López and Manuela Castañeda of Chihuahua. López married María Gertrudis, an indigenous servant of Raymundo Ávalos, on March 26, 1781. A few Afro-Mexicans may have travelled much further; in one instance, José Antonio, “a black slave from the Congo nation” (*un esclavo atezado de nación Congo*), appeared in Guadalupe. He, a slave of Captain Don Manuel Antonio San Juan, married Manuela, who was only identified as “an Apache woman” in 1760.

A number of Free Blacks also settled around the mission, such as the Jiménez family. On November 3, 1754, Bernabé Jiménez, identified as black (*negro*) and the “legitimate son of Diego Jiménez and Juana Padilla,” married María Micaela, noted as a *coyota* (child of a mestizo/a parent and an indigenous parent) and orphan.

138 Oakah Jones, 121.

139 Archives of the Cathedral of Ciudad Juárez (hereinafter referred to as ACCJ), Microfilm 489, “Libro de Matrimonios,” July 7, 1760; August 11, 1778; March 26, 1781. Many indigenous people, particularly *criados* and *genízaros*, have no surnames in these records.

María Micaela’s daughter, a párvula (an infant) was listed in the 1768 registry of burials, where the parents are identified as “negros de la misión.”\(^{141}\) In the next few years, Bernabé Jiménez’s two brothers also married at the parish. In 1755, Francisco Jiménez, listed with the same parents as Bernabé, but described as a mulato, married María Esperanza, mulata, and legitimate daughter of Isidro Esperanza and Rita Gómez.\(^{142}\) Two years later, their brother Domingo Jiménez married; like Bernabé, but unlike Francisco, the friar labeled him as a negro. Domingo Jiménez married Maríja Josefa Frésquez, a mulata libre, noted as the “legitimate daughter of Lázaro Frésquez and Lugarda Palomares.”\(^{143}\)

African-descended paseños were hardly rare in parish records in the 1740s and 1750s; however, references to negros and mulatos declined later in the century, becoming rare by 1810. Among the last appearances of an identifiably Afro-Hispanic person in the parish archive was the May 9, 1810 marriage of Juan Agustín Jiménez, mulato libre and legitimate son of Tomás Jiménez and Juana María Dominguez Lucero to María Martina García, mestiza and widow of Francisco Gómez.

Within months of their wedding at Paso del Norte, Don Pedro Bautista Pino would pass by the Guadalupe Mission during his journey to Cádiz, Spain. In his Exposición sucinta y sencilla de la provincia del Nuevo México (A Succinct and Simple Exposition on the Province of New Mexico), written in 1812, Pino declared that “in New Mexico there has never been known any caste of people of African origin,” adding that

\(^{141}\) ACCJ, roll 14, “Libro de Difuntos,” July 9, 1768.

\(^{142}\) AACJ, roll 2, “Libro de Matrimonios,” November 24, 1755.

\(^{143}\) Ibid., May 2, 1757. Many of the black and mulato paseños of the eighteenth century are surnamed Jiménez and appear to have connections to one another.
his homeland “is probably the only one in Spanish America to enjoy such distinction.”
Pino was wrong; negros and mulatos lived in New Mexico and they had formed an
integral part of borderlands society since the arrival of Estevanico with Cabeza de Vaca
in 1536. Ramón Gutiérrez, in When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away, states
that Pino “advanced the claim to validate a myth he wished to perpetuate, namely that
New Mexico’s nobility has preserved their honor and racial purity over the centuries.”
Gutiérrez counters Pino’s claims by stating that Africans were indeed present in the
province; however, “the number of blacks in colonial New Mexico probably never
totaled more than a dozen.” Gutiérrez added that “by 1800 they [Africans] had so
interbred with the Indian and European-origin population that their former distinctiveness
was no longer even remembered, or at least not by Don Pedro Pino and his clan.”
Gutiérrez’s assessment does not encompass Paso del Norte, part of New Mexico in 1810.
At that time, Afro-Mexican paseños numbered well over a dozen. To be certain, Paso
del Norte was never a major center of African slave holding; indigenous genízaros and
criados made up most of its unfree workforce. Nonetheless, a small elite in the
borderlands held Africans in bondage; an extreme example in Paso del Norte during the
eighteenth century was that of José de Colarte and his wife Manuela García de Noriega;
together they owned six slaves in addition to their genízaro workforce.

144 Gutiérrez, 197-198.
145 Ibid., 198.
146 This is a very conservative estimate. Of course, if limited to negros, or those of fully or mostly
African heritage, the number may be as low as ten to twenty. At least ten different people are identified as
black or mixed African slaves in the Guadalupe mission records between 1730 and 1770. If expanded to
include mulatos and their children, the number could easily reach a hundred in Villa del Paso in the 1760s.
147 Dedra S. McDonald, 38.
Pedro Pino was hardly alone in denying the presence of Africans in the borderlands in the early nineteenth century. Explicit references to negros and mulatos vanished from Guadalupe parish archives at this time as well. Mexican Independence would further obliterate caste and race distinctions in Mexico. After Mexican independence, indio was the only explicit racial designation that appeared in the archives of the Guadalupe Parish. Non-indigenous people appeared as vecinos. This term means “neighbor,” but had added political, social, and racial meanings in the Spanish and Mexican frontier. 148 The Roman Catholic Church would often stand at odds against independent Mexico’s government, but the priesthood shared one common thread with their liberal opponents in the government during nineteenth century. Both acted to obliterate caste labels in the borderlands. Parish records in Paso del Norte would no longer refer to parishioners as españoles, mestizos, coyotes, negros, mulatos, or genízaros after Mexican independence in 1821. Yet, indications of race and class divides would remain within the Hispanic population. The use of don or doña for those who affirmed a higher social status endured for several decades after independence.

Other changes were in the air in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Euro-American travelers and merchants who sought trade with the wealthy mining frontier of New Spain found their way to Paso del Norte. These visits came in spite of Spanish

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restrictions on foreign trade and growing concerns with filibustering schemes.\textsuperscript{149} Paso del Norte’s first significant contact with the United States took place on March 21, 1807, when Captain Zebulon Pike and his party of fifteen soldiers, who had been detained along the northern frontier of New Mexico by Spanish troops, arrived in Paso del Norte.\textsuperscript{150} Pike’s description of the area illustrated, much as Bishop Tamarón’s report, the abundance provided by its irrigated agriculture, particularly its wines, and its large herds of cattle and sheep.\textsuperscript{151}

Captain Pike spent much of his time at San Elizario, a presidio formed at the eastern end of the Paso del Norte settlements in 1789.\textsuperscript{152} Soldiers garrisoned at this post engaged in frequent and often brutal warfare with the Apache. Pike vividly described the church and clergy in notes that he clandestinely gathered during his travels. His encounters with Catholic ministers along the \textit{Camino Real} led the officer to write,

\begin{quote}
…the inferior clergy, who do all the slavery of the office, are liberal and well informed men. I scarcely saw one who was not in favor of a change in government. They being generally Creoles by birth, and always kept in subordinate grades, without the least shadow of a probability of rising to the superior dignities of the Church, their minds have been soured to such
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{149} While no one in Paso del Norte would receive this news until well after Pike left Paso del Norte, the Spanish Empire had already began to face its greatest crisis since the unification of Castile and Aragón, as the French under Napoleon I had invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 1807.

\textsuperscript{150} Timmons, 59. Before Zebulon Pike arrived, a “Dimas Procell” and a “Francis Lorenzo Duroret” arrived in 1806. A few months after Elias Bean, a member of the filibustering expedition of Phillip Nolan in East Texas, spent time in San Elizario as a prisoner of the Spanish.

\textsuperscript{151} Zebulon Pike, \textit{Exploratory Travels through the Western Territories of North America} (London: Paternoster Row, 1811), 262-263.

\textsuperscript{152} Timmons, 50, 56. San Elizario had its origin in a presidio near present-day Jiménez, Chihuahua from 1753 to 1774. The inspection tour of the Marques de Rubí recommended the relocation of the fort to a site closer to Paso del Norte; this was part of a larger Bourbon effort to realign frontier defenses, and from 1774 to 1789, the presidio stood 37 miles east of the current location of San Elizario. From 1789 to 1792, the military garrison relocated to the current site of San Elizario, Texas.
a degree that I am confident in asserting they will lead the van whenever the standard of independence is raised in the country.\textsuperscript{153}

Pike’s travel account was published in 1811; at this time, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a creole priest, had already led Mexican insurgents in a tumultuous campaign that began in Dolores, Guanajuato, in central Mexico.\textsuperscript{154} While Hidalgo did not explicitly call for a break with the Spanish Crown, his call to arms against abusive colonial officials marked the beginning of Mexico’s War of Independence. Paso del Norte and New Mexico had little to do with the war between Mexican insurgents and Spanish royalists.

The deteriorating condition of Roman Catholic institutions was the most acute symptom of the stress that the Spanish empire experienced in New Mexico during the early nineteenth century. Despite collecting a variety of fees and commanding significant estates and mission and parish buildings, the borderlands church was chronically understaffed. In the wake of Tamarón’s visit in 1760, the Spanish Crown increased its pressure to secularize. This drive to secularize had two aims, to diminish the presence of the Franciscan Order, and to augment the presence of diocesan clergy. Unfortunately for the Roman Catholic faithful of New Mexico, the former took place without the latter. In 1759-1761, New Mexico generally counted on a Franciscan friar, albeit one who might not be very competent in Bishop Tamarón’s eyes, in each Christianized Pueblo. By 1826, the number of active Franciscan missionaries in New Mexico, which no longer included Paso del Norte at the time, fell to nine, and by 1832, five.\textsuperscript{155} This decline in

\textsuperscript{153} Pike, 348.

\textsuperscript{154} The first rule of prophecy is to predict something that has already happened, and reports of Miguel Hidalgo’s uprising might have preceded the publication of this account.

Franciscan numbers was not accompanied by a surge in secular clergy; numbers generally remained flat at around four to five, with one in each of the major “Spanish” towns.¹⁵⁶

The lack of pastoral care on the part of the Diocese of Durango was also due to the short tenures and fragile health of its bishops in the late eighteenth century. After Bishop Tamarón’s death, José Vicente Díaz Bravo briefly served in the see, from 1769 until his death in 1772. The next two bishops in Nueva Vizcaya had longer tenures; Antonio Macarulla Minguilla de Aguilain served in Durango from 1772 to his death in 1781. Afterward, Estebán Lorenzo de Tristán y Esmenota led the diocese from 1783 to 1793, when he became the Bishop of Guadalajara. He died in the following year.

Durango might have appeared to be the end of the earth to these men; Bishop Díaz Bravo, a native of Tudela, Navarre, died at sea in 1772 on a journey to Spain. Bishop Macarulla Minguilla, Aragonese by birth, journeyed to Durango from his previous post at Camayagua, Honduras. His successor Bishop de Tristán, a native of Toledo, was also promoted to Durango from Central America; he previously led the See of León, Nicaragua. José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez had a shorter distance to travel when he was appointed to Nueva Vizcaya in 1794; he had been the bishop of the neighboring diocese of Sonora. Unfortunately, Granados y Gálvez died only seven months after his consecration. His successor, Francisco Gabriel de Olivares y Benito of Toledo, who previously served as the Bishop of Chiapas, enjoyed the longest tenure of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
any bishop in Durango to date; he died there in 1812, shortly before his eighty-fifth birthday.  

At the time of Bishop Olivares’ death, the Spanish Empire faced crisis on three continents; rebellion had spread across much of Hispanic America and its metropole was a battleground between Bonapartists, supporters of the Bourbon dynasty, and liberals. Apart from ongoing Apache resistance, Spanish settlements in New Mexico and Paso del Norte did not experience war during the 1810s; however, signs of discontent with the colonial order were apparent. The secularization of the area, a chief objective of Bishop Pedro Tamarón y Romeral in the 1760s, had proceeded in fits and starts. Despite the Diocese of Durango’s efforts to establish parishes in all of the principal towns in New Mexico, as of 1810, only two truly secularized parishes had emerged. These were in Santa Fe, the provincial capital, and in Paso del Norte, the largest population center. Albuquerque and Santa Cruz de la Cañada, despite their growing populations and the fact that Bishop Tamarón secularized these towns in the 1760s, depended on a declining number of Franciscan friars. Aside from the four towns with civil government, settlements such as Taos, Tomé, and Bernalillo had growing populations of vecinos.

Between 1750 and 1800, the Hispanic population of New Mexico, excluding Paso del Norte, surged from 4,000 to 19,000, and by 1780, vecinos outnumbered Pueblo and mission Indians.  


158 Carroll, 105.
Population growth redefined the Río Arriba or the “Upper River” district north of Santa Fe. Hispanos who sought land for subsistence farming moved outward along the Rio Grande and its tributaries and established towns, villages, and farmsteads. The Río Arriba would become the heartland of the hermandades penitentes in the nineteenth century, as its inhabitants, in Marta Weigle’s words, “were largely left to their own devices in religious matters.” 159 Paso del Norte would not undergo this process in the nineteenth century, as local agriculture remained productive and the Apaches retained their hold over much of the territory that surrounded Hispanic settlement. Paso del Norte’s spatial structure as a cluster of settlements in close proximity to one another enabled stronger links between parishioners and clergy. By contrast, remote settlements in northern New Mexico had much less direct contact with formal Catholicism.

Residents of the Mexican frontier expressed displeasure with the state of the Roman Catholic Church during and after the Mexican War of Independence. Pedro Pino, speaking as New Mexico’s representative in the Parliament of Cádiz in 1812, denounced the lack of episcopal oversight on the part of the Diocese of Durango and requested the elevation of a new diocese. Despite some half measures, such as the arrival of a visitor general in New Mexico from 1817 to 1820, the lack of pastoral care continued to trouble the region. The consecration of Bishop José Antonio Zubiría as the Bishop of Durango in 1831 led to a period of renewal in the secular church; the bishop’s journey to Paso del Norte and New Mexico two years after his investiture marked a dramatic turning point in the history of the borderlands.

159 Weigle, 21.
Chapter Two


In 1821, New Spain achieved independence as the Mexican Empire, under the reign of Agustín I. Within months, this monarchy crumbled, and the borderlands became part of a republic. Mexico’s new regime and the Diocese of Durango shared a fundamental challenge in the years after independence: the question of how to govern a vast and thinly populated north. At the eve of independence, Visitor General Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara made one of the diocese’s more notable efforts at regaining ground in the north since Pedro Tamarón’s visit. However, a period of vacancy in the See of Durango and a growing rift between church and state marked the first decade of republican government in Mexico. By 1833, the diocese was at its nadir. In that year, when Bishop José Antonio Zubiría travelled to the north, seventy-three years had passed since the last visitation of this level had taken place in New Mexico and Paso del Norte.

The Zubiría visitation had far-reaching results; in the short term, the Diocese of Durango experienced a marked revival in the far north. However, the hierarchy’s efforts to exert more authority over New Mexicans met with resistance. In contrast, the entrance of the bishop strengthened the bonds between the diocese and Paso del Norte. Bishop Zubiría’s strong confidence in paseño clergy stood in dramatic relief against the condemnatory words he had for many of New Mexico’s priests and parishes.
The Borderlands Church during Mexican Independence

In October of 1811, Pedro Bautista Pino undertook an arduous journey that brought him across North America and the Atlantic Ocean to Cádiz, Spain by the summer of 1812. The government of the province of New Mexico selected Pino as its representative to the Spanish Parliament. Along his journey, Pino witnessed a world torn asunder by war. The city of Chihuahua, along the Camino Real from Santa Fe, was the site of the execution of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla some three months before Pino’s arrival. Central Mexico still smoldered from insurgency, as José María Morelos rallied Hidalgo’s supporters to continue their rebellion. He would soon transform this struggle into a movement for independence, republicanism, and the equality of castes. At the time that Pino disembarked from Veracruz to Spain, the navies of the United Kingdom and France battled for supremacy in the Atlantic Ocean; by the end of 1812, the British were at war with the United States as well. Cádiz, where the Spanish parliament convened, was among Spain’s few remaining strongholds during the Peninsular War. Elsewhere in the Iberian Peninsula, Napoleon’s armies fought a protracted war against guerrilla fighters.

Pedro Pino did not reach the parliament of Cádiz in time for the promulgation of the liberal constitution on March 16, 1812. As he no longer had a role in the deliberations for the Spanish Empire’s new government, Pino sought to inform his fellow representatives on the conditions that his countrymen faced in the borderlands of the empire. His report, Exposición sucinta y sencilla de la provincia del Nuevo México,

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161 Ibid.
narrated the hardships of frontier life and the poor state of defenses of his home province against Apache, Navajo, and Comanche resistance to Spanish colonization. Pino also described the growing presence of the United States; four years before Pedro Pino left Santa Fe, Zebulon Pike’s journey to New Mexico signaled the arrival of a powerful new rival in the North American west.

Among Pedro Pino’s chief concerns was the deplorable state of the Roman Catholic Church in New Mexico. In a province that counted approximately 40,000 residents in twenty-six indigenous Pueblos and 102 Spanish communities, Pino reported that there were only twenty-two Franciscan missionaries and only two secular parishes with resident curates. In Pino’s eyes, the Diocese of Durango utterly failed to provide the spiritual needs of New Mexicans, and this lack of care compounded the state of sin that prevailed in the region. In his exposition, Pino wrote that “in fifty years, New Mexico has not seen the very face of its bishop,” and added that he “never knew how a bishop dressed until I came to Cádiz.” Pedro Pino details the misfortunes that resulted from the weaknesses of the church. Pino squarely laid the blame for this on his province’s attachment to the far off seat of Durango,

The evils that the inhabitants of New Mexico suffer from the absence of their bishop are great. All those born in the last fifty years have not been confirmed, and the poor that wish to obtain dispensation to marry relatives cannot obtain verification for the high costs of the lengthy voyage, of

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162 Pino, 51. This number would not include thousands of Diné or Navajo and Apache, and Comanche, who lived outside of Spanish jurisdiction and controlled most of the areas outside of the Río Grande valleys where Spanish colonization took place. This large number of “Spanish” communities included many genizaro hamlets.

163 Pino, 50-51.
more than 400 leagues, to Durango; as a result many, bound by love, cohabit and have children out of wedlock.164

Many of the themes of Pino’s report in 1812 echoed throughout subsequent writings on New Mexico from clergy and travelers. In the course of the nineteenth century, many other observers denounced low rates of marriage, widespread cohabitation, out-of-wedlock births, and a general sense of domestic disorder among poor Hispanic New Mexican families.165 Pino faulted the weakness of his diocese for these conditions. According to Pino, the lack of a bishop’s presence in his home province, and the distance to the diocesan see made it difficult to obtain confirmation, a major canonical prerequisite for marriage. The interwoven genealogies of New Mexico’s families often posed difficulties for potential spouses who sought to marry, and often required diocesan intervention. Canon law places restrictions on the marriage of blood relatives with prohibited degrees of consanguinity. The Catholic Church also bars matrimony between those who shared relationships by affinity, including relationships by marriage or godparentage between members of the prospective spouses’ families. These impediments often emerged in rural isolated communities, and required further investigation. 

*Diligencias matrimoniales,* or nuptial investigations, required a substantial investment of time and money on the part of New Mexican families, especially in the north. Bishops could grant a dispensation in most cases, and lift impediments to marriage, but the expense of an investigation and the distance between New Mexico and Durango made

164 Pino, 50-51.
165 Mitchell, 132-145. Pablo Mitchell elaborates on these themes in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Mexico.
this process very difficult. The majority of diligencias in cases of consanguinity in New Mexico did not result in a dispensation.\textsuperscript{166}

These hardships were especially galling since Pino believed New Mexico was capable of sustaining a diocese. He contended that his province delivered “9,000 to 10,000 duros of tithes” each year to its diocese. Pino concluded his exposition with a petition to establish a bishopric in Santa Fe to better serve New Mexico’s Roman Catholics. While the Spanish crown eventually responded to this request, with a formal plan to establish a diocese for the province in 1818, Mexico’s independence in 1821 brought a halt to this slow process.\textsuperscript{167} New Mexico would not become the seat of a bishop until 1850, after its incorporation into the United States.

While Pino described New Mexico as sorely deficient in terms of ecclesiastical and civil government, it was a relative stronghold for Spain in comparison to other frontier provinces in North America. In 1810, New Mexico had approximately 40,000 subjects, over ten times the number in Texas or Alta California and Baja California combined at the time.\textsuperscript{168} The vicinity of Paso del Norte, at the time the southernmost part of New Mexico, had approximately 7,000 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{169} Unlike these other parts of Spain’s North American borderlands, where Spain’s presence had often been sporadic before the eighteenth century, Spanish colonization in New Mexico had taken place for

\textsuperscript{166} Gutiérrez, 243-247. Gutiérrez identifies 6,558 diligencias that took place in New Mexico from 1694 to 1846. Of these, 251 resulted in the granting of a dispensation to remove impediments to marriage in a case of consanguinity.

\textsuperscript{167} Pino, 52.

\textsuperscript{168} The 1790 Spanish census of New Mexico counted 30,953 Spanish subject residents, including 5,244 in the Paso de Norte. A census of 1800 enumerated 36,764 in New Mexico, including 6,136 in the area. By contrast, Texas counted 3,980 Spanish subjects in 1804 and 4,155 in 1809. Alta and Baja California combined had approximately 1,500 Spanish subjects in 1800, and by 1821, 3,270 lived in Alta California and 800 in Baja California. Oakah L. Jones, Jr., 49, 122, 124, 126-127, 240-241.
more than two centuries. Even the outbreak of the Mexican War of Independence in that year did not immediately shake the foundations of imperial rule in New Mexico.

While no bishops visited New Mexico in the period between 1760 and 1833, the Diocese of Durango sent officials to conduct inspections. The most significant of these visitations at a sub-episcopal level took place from 1817 to 1820, when Visitor General Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara conducted inspections of the parish churches of New Mexico, from Paso del Norte in the south to Taos in the north.\(^{170}\) The *visitador* assumed many of the powers of bishop, particularly in extensive dioceses such as the Bishopric of Durango.\(^{171}\) Ladrón de Guevara made this visit on behalf of Bishop Juan Francisco Castañiza (1815-1825), Durango’s first Mexican-born bishop, and the last to serve under Spanish rule.\(^{172}\)

During his stay in New Mexico, extensive inventories were made of parishes and missions, detailing the condition of the buildings, the state of altars, and artwork such as *bultos*, paintings, and cloth pieces.\(^{173}\) Clergymen tallied the amounts of wine, candles, incense, and other goods that their sanctuaries contained. Ladrón de Guevara found New Mexican churches sorely lacking in these material resources. The visitor also deplored the overall state of education, literacy, and familiarity with catechism, which he found below acceptable standards. His 1820 letter to Bishop Juan Francisco Márquez de

\(^{170}\) John Gilmary Shea, *The History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, Vol. 4 (New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1892), 300-301 argued that the Ladrón de Guevara visitation was the Bishop of Durango’s direct response to Pedro Pino’s call for the creation of a bishopric in Santa Fe.

\(^{171}\) Schwaller, 10.


Castañiza of Durango quickly dispensed with its flowery salutations, and called for immediate action to correct the “deplorable condition of the churches of this part of the diocese.” The visitor general portrayed the area in stark terms,

Since the discovery and reconquest, (New Mexico) has never known happiness, sadness afflicts its natives of all classes…it endures hard conditions from warfare and constant hostility on the part of barbarian nations and gentiles, and a shadow of general ignorance is cast upon the province. Out of 35,500 inhabitants, only a thousand Spaniards and castas know the Christian doctrine. Perhaps thirty of those can read and write with some degree of proper orthography…and none of the Indians of the missions, with the exception of Senecú, know any more of God than the gentiles. 174

Like Pedro Pino, Ladrón de Guevara attributed these poor conditions to the fact that no bishop had visited in fifty-seven years. The visitor general found much to bemoan in New Mexico, such as “indecent churches, lacking proper ornaments.”175 To some extent, these condemnatory remarks reflected an elite disdain for folk religion and popular arts. For instance, the cleric found the iconographic paintings executed on elk skins at the Santa Bárbara chapel in Santa Fe so repulsive he ordered them burned.176

Ladrón de Guevara’s wrath also extended to individual Catholics; he denounced the cantor of the San Francisco parish in Santa Fe as so “perverse” that he immediately had

174 Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara, Letter to Bishop Juan Francisco Márquez de Castañiza. October 23, 1820. Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe (hereinafter referred to as AASF), Microfilm 525, roll 45, 0285-0302. “October 23, 1820, Gentiles,” or indios gentiles, are non-Christian indigenous people outside of missions. There are two places in the borderlands with the name Senecú. The older of the two sites is San Antonio de Senecú, located near Socorro, New Mexico. This is the site of the Piro Pueblo which the Spaniards evacuated after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. San Antonio de Senecú was later resettled by Hispanic New Mexicans during the 1820s and 1830s. The other Senecú is in what is now Ciudad Juárez. This mission town became the home of the members of the Piro of San Antonio de Senecú who went south after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.174

175 Elizabeth Boyd, Popular Arts of Spanish New Mexico (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1974), 176. ACCJ, roll 14, October 23, 1820.

the governor banish him from the capital. Paso del Norte, despite its better conditions, did not escape negative comments. The old Guadalupe Mission of Paso del Norte was “worse than a Mexico City pulquería” (a place for the purchase and consumption of the alcoholic drink pulque) in his judgment. 177 Unlike many other travelers, he had no praise for paseño wines. The visitor general’s slur against the Guadalupe Parish carried clear racial implications in late colonial Mexico. In colonial New Spain, wine was the drink of those who aspired to Spanish status; it also had sacramental value to the church. By contrast, foreign visitors and elites in Mexico associated pulque with the indigenous and poor castas of Mexico; pulquerías were places of disorder. 178

Ladrón de Guevara ended his letter to the Bishop of Durango with a call for improved education, and the formation of schools in the province. He argued that New Mexico’s material deficiencies and “indecent” religious practices stemmed from the widespread illiteracy and the lack of formal religious education in the province. There were few direct results of this proposal on the part of the diocese, apart from the induction of a few New Mexicans into the seminary at Durango in the 1820s and 1830s. 179 However, in the next decade New Mexico did experience modest growth in educational opportunities in state-backed schools after independence. Andrés Reséndez describes an “educational crusade” that took root in New Mexico and Texas from 1827 to

177 Quoted in Martina Will de Chaparro, Death and Dying in New Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 75, 203. The church of Paso del Norte had, in comparison to other parish churches, more extensive inventories, with fifteen pages of items, as opposed to approximately four in most mission chapels. No record exists of Guevara destroying any artworks or ordering dismissals at Paso del Norte. ACCJ, roll 14, October 23, 1820.


1834. The territorial government opened primary schools in the towns of Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Santa Cruz de la Cañada and the Pueblos of Zia, Jemez, and Zuni. While these schools were products of a republican drive to “bolster national loyalties” in a newly independent nation, the territorial government mandated New Mexican teachers to “observe the Catholic doctrine” and to “teach the principal mysteries of our holy Catholic faith.”

Ladrón de Guevara’s visit was the first of a series of efforts by senior church officials to enforce stricter doctrinal standards among the Roman Catholics of New Mexico. Martha Weigle, in *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest*, and Ray John de Aragón in *The Penitentes of New Mexico: Hermanos de la Luz: Brothers of the Light* aver that Ladrón de Guevara prolonged his stay in northern New Mexico to suppress the emergence of lay brotherhoods such as the Third Order of St. Francis, and to impose the primacy of the Diocese of Durango over the remaining Franciscans in the province. Weigle views this as the beginnings of an “underground” movement of *hermandades penitentes* that grew in importance in the course of the nineteenth century. The visitor general’s condemnation of improper conduct by clergy, poorly constructed church buildings and their lack of materials, and widespread “ignorance” of religious doctrine would echo in later ecclesiastical inspections of New Mexico. Later visitations brought about more overt instances of popular resistance to


182 Weigle, 33 and Ray John de Aragón, 28-29.
hierarchical authority, as ecclesiastical officials imposed changes in practice and increased the collection of fees.

Ladrón de Guevara’s pronouncements on the state of the church took place immediately before the sweeping changes in local government brought forth by Mexican independence in 1821 and the arrival of republican rule in 1824.  

Marc Simmons and Andrés Reséndez have convincingly argued that New Mexicans and Tejanos, while remote from many of the events that marked Mexican independence and the republic, responded with “enthusiasm” to nationalist ideals, and embraced republicanism.  

Likewise, the economy in New Mexico and Paso del Norte experienced various upheavals, including the breakdown of the colonial mining economy in Chihuahua to the south and the emergence of trade routes with the United States to the east such as the “Santa Fe Trail,” which linked northern New Mexico to Missouri.

Mexico’s new republican government redefined the political geography of the borderlands. In July, 1824, much of the former province of New Mexico became a territory. The region of Paso del Norte, including the communities of Senecú, Ysleta, and Chihuahua, was reorganized into a new territory.

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184 Marc Simmons, *New Mexico, an Interpretive History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 198), 109. According to Simmons, “the New Mexicans, shut off by distance and poor roads from events in the south, had no hand in the winning of independence from Spain. Yet once it was an accomplished fact, they made a show of enthusiasm by “ringing church bells, firing artillery salvos, and uttering patriotic speeches” in the plaza of Santa Fe.

185 Ibid.
Socorro, San Lorenzo, and San Elizario, formed a *partido* or subdivision in the state of Chihuahua.\(^{186}\) States, and territories to a lesser extent, had a high degree of self-government in the Constitution of 1824, as federalists held sway in Mexico City. Mexican independence and republican rule also brought changes in church administration. Bishop Juan Francisco Castañiza’s death in 1825 created a six-year vacancy in the Diocese of Durango.\(^{187}\) The Vatican withheld recognition of Mexican independence until 1829, and did not fill vacancies in the hierarchy. The expulsion of most remaining Spaniards from Mexico from 1826 to 1829 also struck heavily at the clergy.\(^{188}\)

Several geographic changes took place in Paso del Norte in the decade after independence that would prove significant after the United States-Mexican War ended in 1848. In 1824, Juan María Ponce de León received a land grant in what is now downtown El Paso, Texas, and by 1830, a small number of homesteads lined the north bank of the Rio Grande.\(^{189}\) Floods hampered these early efforts to settle these land grants and devastated other *paseño* communities. In 1827, the river raged across Ponce de León’s first ranch site. In 1829 and 1831, floods created a second channel of the Rio Grande that placed Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario north of the primary course of the river.


\(^{187}\) David J. Weber, 70. Weber points out that the vacancy in the Diocese of Durango was shorter than that in other Mexican dioceses.

\(^{188}\) Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 203. Anna states that the “lower-Spaniards among the regular clergy were specifically targeted,” and between 1826 and 1829, their numbers dropped by 17 percent.

Flooding also wiped out the mission chapels of Ysleta and Socorro, and many surrounding homes. Franciscan friars, who remained in these Pueblos, rebuilt the chapels over the following decades, and reconsecrated *Nuestra Señora de la Purísima* at Socorro in 1843. *Corpus Christi de la Ysleta* reopened in 1851 as a secular parish.¹⁹⁰

**The Nadir of the Diocese of Durango in the 1820s**

In many respects, daily religious life in borderlands parishes changed very little with Mexican Independence. Many clergy in New Mexico and Paso del Norte were born in the Americas, and were generally members of Santa Fe’s *rico* or elite families.¹⁹¹ Thus, the departure of European priests had far less impact in the northern frontier than in central Mexico, where many Spanish ecclesiastics lived. At Paso del Norte, the Parish of Guadalupe baptized infants, conducted *diligencias matrimoniales*, consecrated marriages, and buried the dead much as they had in the late years of Spanish rule. If any decline in the church was present, whether in terms of the quality of its materials and record keeping, or in the numbers of clergy in relation to the number of worshippers, this declension had set in during the late eighteenth century.

Despite sweeping republican reforms such as the abolition of legal distinctions between creoles and castes and universal male suffrage, the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico still placed some importance on caste and retained decidedly undemocratic hierarchies and institutions. In a republic where caste distinctions no longer carried legal weight, Ramón Ortiz of Santa Fe certified his *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) to his

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 74, 79.

superiors at the Seminary of Durango in order to demonstrate his fitness for the priesthood in 1833.\textsuperscript{192} Parishioners no longer carried caste labels; these had already declined in use by 1810. However, the clergy still divided their flock between vecinos and indios, and took note of the social status of men and women, labeling those of higher status don or doña. Tithing remained obligatory through 1833, and the church retained extensive properties.\textsuperscript{193} The fuero eclesiástico granted autonomy to Catholic institutions and exempted its clergy from civil courts.\textsuperscript{194} And while the Office of the Inquisition had lost much its fearsome authority in the course of the Bourbon reforms, it still condemned heretical ideas with vigor.\textsuperscript{195} If inquisitors and censors no longer wielded the threat of death in an auto-da-fe, they certainly exercised considerable rhetorical powers in their attacks on freemasonry, the “pernicious doctrine of freedom of religion,” and other tenets of early nineteenth century liberalism.\textsuperscript{196} Excommunication remained a powerful threat, as José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, the author of The Mangy Parrot (El Periquillo Sarniento), discovered after his public defense of freemasonry.\textsuperscript{197}


\textsuperscript{193} David J. Weber writes that tithing had largely “fallen into disuse” in Alta California and Texas during the Independence period. However, mandatory tithing remained more firmly in place in New Mexico until its abolition in 1833. Weber, \textit{The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846}, 76, 147.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 38.

\textsuperscript{195} For example, \textit{El Imperio de la Ley}, a newspaper in Durango, printed extensive writings in its May 3, 1831, June 5, 1831 and other editions of essays from the Office of the Ecclesiastical Censor in Mexico City that condemned the influence of freemasonry and calls for the disestablishment of Roman Catholicism as the state religion.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{197} David J. Frye, in the foreword to José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, \textit{The Mangy Parrot, the Life and Times of Periquillo Sarniento} (Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis: 2004), xx. Church condemnations aside, Masonic lodges of the Scottish and York Rites (escoceses and yorkinos) enjoyed wide influence in early independent Mexico.
However, Mexicans also assessed the shortcomings of the church with a new
degree of candor. Antonio Barreiro, dispatched by the federal government to New
Mexico to serve as legal advisor for the New Mexico territory, wrote An Overview of
New Mexico (Ojeada sobre Nuevo México) in 1832. His purpose, much as that of Pedro
Pino twenty years earlier, was to describe the difficult conditions that prevailed in the
northern frontier. Barreiro was critical of the state of Roman Catholicism in New
Mexico, and emphasized the hardships posed by high sacramental fees in particular.

The spiritual administration finds itself in a truly dismal condition. Nothing is more common than to see numberless sick folk die without
confession and extreme unction, nothing is rarer than to see the Eucharist administered to them. Corpses remain unburied for many days, and infants are baptized at the cost of a thousand sacrifices; a considerable number are unhappy, for they pass most Sundays of the year without hearing mass; the churches are almost destroyed, and most of these are certainly unworthy of being called Temples of God.

Roman Catholics in the nineteenth century Borderlands, as well as non-Catholic observers, often harshly criticized the church’s fees, and blamed them for a host of social ills in Hispanic and Pueblo communities. Obligatory payments to the clergy took several forms in late colonial and early independent Mexico. In addition to diezmos or tithes which placed a tenth of parishioners’ income in the coffers of the church, aranceles, or sacramental fees, were assessed for the acts of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial. The Archbishop of Mexico issued an arancel of 1767, creating four classes of fees based on caste status. Spaniards paid the highest fees, followed by castas, then Indians working on estates (indios de quadrillas y haciendas), and finally Indians attached to a

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199 Antonio Barreiro, Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México (Puebla: Imprenta por José María Campos, 1832), 39. Barreiro suggested that the church and the government remedy this by paying stipends to clergy who agree to serve for ten years in frontier districts such as New Mexico. Barreiro, 40
landholding community (*indios de pueblos*).\(^{200}\) The archives of the parish of Guadalupe in Paso del Norte contained a four-tiered list of fees for *bulas de vivos*, or indulgences, dating from 1820, but with no direct reference to ancestry. In its place, occupational categories are listed, with senior government officials in the first rank, followed by lower ranking officials, then merchants and property owners, and finally workers.\(^{201}\) By the time of the 1843 *arancel* of the Diocese of Durango, no allowance for race or class appeared, though clergy such as the Vicar Forane of Paso del Norte, Ramón Ortiz, opted to waive fees for indigenous parishioners.\(^{202}\)

Another major source of church income, especially in communities in rural frontier regions that depended heavily on small-scale subsistence or pastoral agriculture were *primicias* or “first fruits.” Farmers and herders donated offerings of their crops and livestock to local missions and parishes. In comparison to cash fees, *primicias* appeared to have a higher level of acceptance among New Mexicans. Their delivery to the altar often symbolized an act of devotion and sacrifice on the part of parishioners.\(^{203}\) In addition to annual *diezmos* and *primicias*, and scheduled *aranceles* for sacramental acts, many worshippers also donated *limosnas* or alms. *Limosnas* existed as unsolicited acts of charity, but were also recorded as the direct consequences of specific offenses that placed practicing Catholics in jeopardy of sin. The parish ledgers in Paso del Norte, particularly


\(^{201}\) ACCJ, roll 2. May, 3, 1820, “Bula de Vivos,”

\(^{202}\) The 1843 *Arancel*, as issued by Bishop José Antonio Zubiría, assessed specific fees for each sacramental act. A marriage was set at eleven pesos and two reales.

the matrimonial registries, abounded with marginal notes indicating a limosna on the part of spouses who had “lived in sin,” and wished to repent.

Opposition and protest against these fees was widespread. In 1831, Padre Antonio José Martínez of Taos privately denounced the collection of fees from Roman Catholics who already paid tithes.\textsuperscript{204} However, his protests did not end the practice, and six years later, during the Río Arriba or Chimayó rebellion, New Mexicans expressed their disapproval of these fees with armed force.\textsuperscript{205} While such outbursts of violent opposition to sacramental fees were not frequent, passive resistance was evident from the lists of delinquent diezmo and arancel accounts in parish records. In the parish records of Guadalupe at Paso del Norte in 1820, for instance, seventy-two people are listed as owing a total of 1,145 pesos to the church.\textsuperscript{206}

Foreign travelers in the northern Mexican borderlands often took interest in the obstacles that fees and canonical restrictions posed to matrimony. At times, these visitors exaggerated their impact. Josiah Gregg, an American merchant and frequent traveler of the Santa Fe Trail and Camino Real in the 1820s and 1830s, made observations similar to those of Pedro Pino and Antonio Barreiro in his 1841 account Commerce of the Prairies. In his observations on marriage in the Mexican territory of New Mexico, Gregg described the mandatory fees for the sacrament as “a system of extortion,” tantamount to “absolute prohibition” on marriage for the poor.\textsuperscript{207} He described marriage fees as ranging from “twenty dollars” for a simple wedding solemnized at mass to more elaborate ceremonies

\textsuperscript{204} Weber, The Mexican Frontier, 76
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} ACCJ, roll14. April 12, 1820.
\textsuperscript{207} Gregg, 50.
performed at private homes, which might reach, in Gregg’s account, “five hundred dollars.”\textsuperscript{208} Another dire assessment appears in James J. Webb’s travel account of New Mexico, where he claimed that “an inflexible rule with the priests was no money, no marrying; no money, [no] baptizing; no money, no burying.”\textsuperscript{209}

Gregg’s narrative, overall, blends many of the prejudices of Anglo-American, Protestant society toward Mexican and Native American culture with an unusual effort, for the time, to include Mexican points of view. In order to provide evidence of the hardship that borderlands Catholics faced, Gregg included a translated letter to an unnamed Chihuahua newspaper which reflected a “plebeian” view; its author identified himself as \textit{un ranchero}. The letter described a father’s struggle with the parishes of the towns of Allende and Jiménez to reduce the fees for his son’s wedding.

The following simple and concise answer is all that I have been able to elicit… ‘\textit{The marriage fees are a hundred and nineteen dollars.’} I must confess that I was completely suffocated when I heard this outrageous demand upon my poor purse; and I did not pride myself on being a true Apostolic Roman Catholic, and were it not that the charming graces of my intended daughter-in-law have so captivated my son that nothing but marriage will satisfy him, I would assuredly advise him to contrive some other arrangement with his beloved, which would not be so ruinous to our poor purse; for reflect that $119 are the life and all of a poor ranchero.\textsuperscript{210}

Critiques of the personal conduct of priests were also widespread in both European American and elite Hispanic accounts of the church and its clergy. James J. Webb, \textit{Adventures in the Santa Fé Trade, 1844-1867} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1931), 102. The original refrain, according to Webb, was \textit{no haya dinero, no hay casamiento; no haya dinero, no hay bautismo; no haya dinero, no hay entierro.}

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., Will de Chaparro, in \textit{Death and Dying in New Mexico}, 90 reports that the 1806 funeral of José Antonio Ortiz, a prominent Santa Fe patriarch, cost his estate 586 pesos. A peso was a silver coin of substantial value at the time.

\textsuperscript{209} James J. Webb, \textit{Adventures in the Santa Fé Trade, 1844-1867} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1931), 102. The original refrain, according to Webb, was \textit{no haya dinero, no hay casamiento; no haya dinero, no hay bautismo; no haya dinero, no hay entierro.}

\textsuperscript{210} Gregg, 50-51. Earlier in his account, Gregg somewhat contradicts the “ranchero’s” statement when he claims that marriages in the region are often arranged with little or no regard for the wishes of marriage partners; “In short, instances have actually occurred when the betrothed couple have never seen each other till brought to the altar to be joined in wedlock.” Gregg, 50.
Webb, a Santa Fe trader in 1844, found them “heartless, demoralized, and utterly impious, yet very religious.” 211 Webb concluded that New Mexicans saw “no merit in virtue and honesty.” While these views were clearly in line with popular anti-Catholic prejudices in the eastern United States at the time, some Mexican observers shared similar assessments. José Agustín de Escudero noted in his overview of New Mexico, “Among the measures that governments adopt for civilizing men, sweetening their character, preventing disorder, and forming, maintaining, and perfecting good habits, none are more effective and powerful as religion.” 212 Yet, in Escudero’s view, these benefits did not take root in New Mexico, as it had a clergy whom he described as a “plague for the people, an obstacle to good habits, and a scandal for religion; (who) discredit it with their gross ignorance and do little honor to the state through their unseemly conduct.” 213 Escudero believed that the lack of episcopal oversight allowed priests to engage in scandalous behavior with no effective supervision from higher authorities. In his comments in New Mexico, written in 1833, he expressed hope that the recent investiture of a new bishop in Durango would lead to improvements in pastoral care in the frontier. After his accession in 1831, Pope Gregory XVI began to fill Mexico’s vacant sees and named José Antonio Zubirúa, a native of Arizpe, Sonora, as the

211 Webb, Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade, 102.
212 José Agustín Escudero, Noticias estadísticas del estado de Chihuahua, (Mexico: Juan Ojeda, 1844), 38.
213 Ibid.
Bishop of Durango that year. In the course of his thirty-two years as the Bishop of Durango, Zubiría demonstrated a new level of commitment to the northern frontier.

Bishop José Antonio Zubiría’s 1833 Visitation to the Northern Frontier

By all accounts, the naming of José Antonio Zubiría led to popular celebration in the diocese, from its seat in Durango to its farthest frontier parishes. El Imperio de la Ley, a conservative newspaper in Durango, termed Zubiría “the idol” of the city’s inhabitants. Its editors marked the bishop’s appointment as the end of the diocese’s “widowhood” and “orphanhood,” and over the course of the following months they published effusive décimas (poems of ten line stanzas) that honored the bishop. El Imperio de la Ley also made note of Zubiría’s humility, citing his efforts to keep his arrival in Durango secret in order to avoid a disturbance of the peace. Yet, rumors of his presence reportedly provoked “all to run in mobs in the roads, to wherever they suspected their beloved pastor had arrived.” To be certain, not all duranguenses shared in this adoration of Bishop Zubiría. As historian César Navarro Gallegos notes, “perhaps, he was worthy of his designation as the ‘holy bishop’ as some named him, but it is evident that for the liberals of Durango he represented a hardened adversary who was

214 George Archibald Frasier, New Mexico in 1850, A Military View (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 159. Zubiría was born in the military frontier center of Arizpe on July 4, 1791, the son of Spanish-born peninsulares.

215 At this time, the Diocese of Durango included the historic province of Nueva Viscaya, what are now the Mexican states of Durango and Chihuahua, as well as the territory of New Mexico.

216 El Imperio de la Ley (Durango, Mexico), Nettie Lee Benson Collection, University of Texas Library, Film 25001, roll 7. May 26, 1831, July 9, 1831, September 29, 1831.

217 Ibid., June 16, 1831.
The appointment of Zubiría coincided with the opening salvos of Mexico’s age of reform, and the bishop witnessed many political and religious upheavals during his tenure in Durango.

After decades of neglect, Zubiría sought to renew his diocese’s presence in its northernmost reaches, and in 1833, he undertook an arduous 1600-kilometer journey to New Mexico to perform the first episcopal visitation in seventy-three years. The Bishop of Durango responded to the spiritual crisis in the territory with what Andrés Reséndez termed an “ecclesiastical reassertion” in New Mexico. In terms of personal engagement with clergy and ordinary *paseños* and New Mexicans, and the performance of episcopal duties, Zubiría demonstrated a level of engagement with the northern frontier that the Roman Catholic Church had not displayed for nearly a century. Zubiría visited New Mexico and Paso del Norte three times, in 1833, in 1845, and after the United States-Mexico War in 1850.

During these visitations, and in his correspondence with New Mexican and *paseño* clergy, Zubiría labored to enforce higher standards of discipline amongst his clergy, rebuild parish facilities, bolster diocesan finances, and also, suppress the *Hermandades Penitentes* in rural New Mexico. These efforts continued even after the conquest of this region by the United States. In 1850, most of New Mexico came under the authority of the French-American prelate John Baptist Lamy, who served as the Vicar

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218 César Navarro Gallegos, *Durango: Las primeras décadas de vida independiente* (Mexico City, Instituto Mora, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2001), 130.

219 Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850*, 75.

220 Weigle, 25.
Apostolic, Bishop, and Archbishop of Santa Fe until his resignation in 1885. However, Bishop Zubiría continued to dispense advice to clergy and mediate disputes across the new international and diocesan boundaries. While Zubiría duly acknowledged the transfer of northern and central New Mexico to the new Diocese of Santa Fe in the 1850s, Durango’s see asserted its domain over the parishes of Doña Ana and Paso del Norte through 1871.

The bishop’s objectives, which he stated upon his arrival in Santa Fe on the first of June, 1833, were “correcting, and making amends for the sins, especially public sins” in the territory. Zúbiría called on residents of New Mexico to “declare any public sins that they know of or have become aware of: and their denunciations or warnings will not result in any punishment towards them, nor will they be obliged to appear in any hearing, nor have to be cross-examined, or even make their names known.” Furthermore, the bishop informed the clergy that he would observe whether they “precisely and religiously comply with the obligations of their respective ministries: and if they observe the way of life and personal conduct prescribed by Holy Canon Law.”

In a discussion of Bishop Zubiría’s role in Durango politics, César Navarro Gallegos attributes political, as well as ecclesiastical, motives to his 1833 visitation of New Mexico. That year, Vice President Valentín Gómez Farías enacted a series of liberal reforms that challenged the prerogatives of the church. Chief among these was the

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221 AASF, roll 49, Book of Patents LXIX, “Libro de Visita Pastoral al Obispo de Durango por Don José Antonio Zúbiría y Escalante,” 1833. In the original text, “punishing” (castigando) is crossed out here, but remains clearly legible in the draft.

222 Ibid.

abolition of *diezmos*, or mandatory tithes.\textsuperscript{224} Zubiría opposed these measures; nevertheless, the bishop wished to avoid the appearance of direct involvement in this controversy. For instance, on July 28\textsuperscript{th} 1833, during his pastoral visit, Zubiría issued an order to clergy that they were to avoid discussions of “political opinions or systems of government” in the pulpit.\textsuperscript{225} Yet, according to Navarro Gallegos, Zubiría covertly led Catholic resistance to liberal reforms during his journey to New Mexico.\textsuperscript{226}

While political events may have driven Zubiría’s departure to the far north, his stay in New Mexico primarily dealt with spiritual matters, and apparently inspired an outpouring of celebration and religious feeling in New Mexico. According to merchant and traveler Josiah Gregg, New Mexicans “worshiped” Bishop Zubiría, and received him with a level of pageantry that had no parallel in the history of the borderlands. On the occasion of the Bishop of Durango’s visit to Santa Fé in 1833, an event which had not taken place for a great many years, the infatuated population hailed his arrival with as much devotional enthusiasm as if it had been the second arrival of the Messiah.\textsuperscript{227}

If this account correctly encapsulated the reception that Zubiría received in the territory, the Bishop certainly did not reciprocate this adulation with praise for the religiosity of New Mexicans. Upon his return to Paso del Norte, Chihuahua, on October 19, 1833, Bishop Zubiría issued a pastoral letter to be read in each of New Mexico’s parishes. In this message, he offered a bleak assessment of Catholicism in New Mexico. The bishop was especially distressed by the faulty administration of the sacraments, and

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid. 288-289.
\textsuperscript{225} AASF, Roll 49, “Book of Patents LXIX,” July 28, 1833,
\textsuperscript{226} Navarro Gallegos, 130.
\textsuperscript{227} Gregg, 255.
he issued a series of orders concerning baptism, penitence, communion, marriage, the anointing of the sick, and burial.

In some respects, Bishop Zubiría was far less harsh in his assessment of popular cultural expressions in New Mexico than Ladrón de Guevara was in 1820. There were no reports of the destruction of “indecent” artwork, though the bishop did admonish Father Antonio José Martínez, the cura of Taos, to refrain from blessing “deformed” statues.\(^{228}\)

While the bishop did assert the need for churches to have sufficient structures and materials for the essentials of Catholic worship, he expressed sympathy for the challenges posed by a lack of financial resources. Zubiría also recognized the barriers to transportation and a lack of clergy in the territory. He also established that allowances could be made for some of the sacraments, in light of the adversities that prevailed in New Mexico. For instance, in his remarks on baptism, he authorized that the service be performed by qualified laymen if no priest was available, provided that infants baptized in this manner were to be anointed in a parish as soon as their health permitted them to travel.\(^{229}\)

However, Bishop Zubiría stressed that similar allowances were not to be made with the other sacraments, and he condemned ministers who took confession in private homes. The bishop also observed “women in confessionals without doors,” a situation which he denounced as “a great evil.”\(^{230}\) To remedy this, he required priests to maintain confessionals with thick walls, solid doors, and lattices with openings no greater than a

\(^{228}\) Reséndez, Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850, 80.

\(^{229}\) AASF, Book of Patents LXIX.

\(^{230}\) Ibid.
medio dedo (8.7 millimeters).\textsuperscript{231} Zubiría was also critical of the conduct of communion, noting that “at the least, all the parish churches of the territory should maintain the *sagrado depósito* (materials such as holy oils and incense), that disgracefully, is not kept in any parish, even in the very capital.” \textsuperscript{232}

Bishop Zubiría argued that poor administration of communion and penance placed consequential sacraments such as marriage in danger. Zubiría reaffirmed the necessity of *diligencias matrimoniales*, and in his pastoral letter Bishop Zubiría reminded parishes to “carefully investigate any prohibited degrees of kinship” and conduct investigations in cases of affinity and consanguinity. The bishop also called upon parishes to take special care with the marriages of migrants and foreigners, military men, and other parishioners that originated from other dioceses to verify their baptism and confirmation as Catholics. Bishop Zubiría faced a somewhat different cultural landscape from previous visitors such as Bishop Pedro Tamarón and Visitor General Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara. After 1822, with the opening of new trade routes such as the Santa Fe Trail, parish records in towns such as Santa Fe and Paso del Norte began to record more “foreigners.” Over time, Bishop Zubiría increasingly contended with the growing presence of Protestants and non-Hispanic Catholic settlers, although the numbers of Euro-Americans remained very small in New Mexico and Paso del Norte during the Mexican period, especially in comparison to eastern Texas.

Zubiría closed his letter to New Mexican parishes with a harsh admonition. He told New Mexico’s priests that he “vehemently suspected that not all parishes comply

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{231} Joseph Wheless, *Compendium of the Laws of Mexico* (St. Louis: The F. H. Thomas Law Book Co., 1910), 788.

\textsuperscript{232} AASF, “Book of Patents LXIX,” roll 49, October 19, 1833.
\end{footnotesize}
with the grave obligation of daily prayers,” leading him to ask “if prayer is lacking, how much more is lacking?” Overall, his pastoral visitation confirmed what lay observers had noted for over two decades, that the ecclesiastical regime in New Mexico did not adequately serve its parishioners and did not uphold the standards that prevailed in urban centers in the interior of Mexico. Unlike Pino and Ladrón de Guevara, Bishop Zubiría offered few concrete proposals to improve the condition of the Catholic Church. Zubiría’s visitation simply marked a renewal of everyday diocesan interest in New Mexico. The bishop of Durango, who appeared as a remote figure for earlier clergy in the region, became a real presence in the lives of New Mexico Catholics in the middle of the nineteenth century. During his 1833 visitation, Bishop Zubiría was as much an “idol” in Santa Fe as he was in the city of Durango. As Josiah Gregg stated in his account,

During the bishop’s sojourn in Santa Fé, which to the great joy of the inhabitants lasted for several weeks, he never appeared in the streets but that ‘all true Catholics’ who were so fortunate as to obtain a glimpse of his Señoría Ilustrísima immediately dropped upon their knees, and never moved from that position till the mitred priest had either vouchsafed his benédiction or had disappeared. Even the principal personages of the city would not venture to address him till they had first knelt at his feet and kissed his ‘pastoral ring.’

In his accounts, Josiah Gregg depicted New Mexicans as excessively fawning and obsequious toward clergy, not only toward senior hierarchs such as Zubiría, but also to the parish clergy. Many other Protestant Euro-American accounts of the borderlands faulted the adoration that Mexican Catholics had for priests that – in their eyes – rarely seemed worthy of such high praise. In reality, New Mexicans had a more diverse range of

233 Ibid.
234 Gregg, 248.
views toward the clergy, as the 1837 Río Arriba rebellion would reveal. While his presence in New Mexico in 1833 undoubtedly stirred the emotions of many religious New Mexicans, Zubiría’s “reassertion” also created new tensions. While the bishop condemned the incompetence of the clergy, and the lack of material resources in churches, he also chastised Catholics who formed lay organizations that addressed these shortcomings through the performance of penance and other services.

One of the most significant episodes in Bishop Zubiría’s first visitation to New Mexico took place in the town of Santa Cruz de la Cañada, north of Santa Fe. Zubiría learned that a hermandad de penitentes had formed without the approval of the diocese. In his Paso del Norte pastoral letter, the bishop ordered the suppression of these hermandades, and called upon New Mexicans to engage in “moderate” acts of penitence, as opposed to mortification of the flesh which “halfway kills the body,” yet “may leave the soul in sin for years.” However, Zubiría’s concurrent remarks on the sacraments and the state of sin that New Mexicans lived in did nothing to ease the sense of spiritual malaise that led the faithful to join these brotherhoods.

After 1833, Zubiría sought to strengthen the Catholic Church in New Mexico by increasing its revenues through higher fees for sacraments such as weddings and funerals. In part, this was a reaction to the government’s attempt to end mandatory diezmos. Popular anger over sacramental fees and the concurrent suppression of penitente brotherhoods prompted violent protests such as the 1837 Río Arriba rebellion of northern

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235 For an account of this rebellion, see Janet Lecompte, Rebellion in Río Arriba 1837 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).

236 Weigle, 24-25.

237 AASF, Book of Patents LXIX, Roll 49, October 19, 1833.
New Mexico. In one episode of the uprising, the residents of Taos forced Padre Antonio José Martínez to perform seven burials, twelve baptisms, and four marriages at gunpoint. These rebels continued to offer “first fruits” or primicias, as they engaged in armed resistance to cash payments. If indeed ordinary New Mexicans were generally deferential to Catholic clergy, they were also capable of challenging the authority of the church and taking stands against ecclesiastical policies that they viewed as unjust or abusive.

When Juan Bautista Ladrón de Guevara conducted his assessment of New Mexico, he began and ended the visit with an examination of Paso del Norte. Paso del Norte was part of the province of New Mexico at that time, and in Guevara’s view, its churches were only marginally better off than those in northern New Mexico. When Bishop Zubiría assessed the area thirteen years later, Paso del Norte was in the state of Chihuahua, and not included in the bishop’s overall report on New Mexico. Bishop Zubiría did conduct inspections in Paso del Norte parishes, and in particular, he examined baptismal, marriage, and burial records with painstaking detail. He noted, for instance, that several marriages in the course of the previous thirteen years did not clearly identify two witnesses, or the names of the spouses’ parents. However, he made no blanket pronouncements on the conduct of clergy or parishioners in Paso del Norte. The clearest

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238 For an account of this rebellion, see Janet Lecompte, Rebellion in Río Arriba 1837 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).
239 Lecompte, 125-126. Lecompte provides a translation of José Antonio Martínez’s letter to Bishop Zubiría, of September 25, 1837, detailing this incident.
240 Ibid.
241 AASF, Book of Patents LXIX, roll 49, October 19, 1833.
consequence of the bishop’s visit in Paso del Norte was the more meticulous management of record keeping in parish registries.

Despite his pronouncements on the dangers of living in sin, and the need to more carefully administer the sacraments, Zubiría’s visit did not lead to a rush to legitimate cohabiting couples in Paso del Norte. In 1833, the parish of Guadalupe at Paso del Norte solemnized twenty-two marriages. The number declined in the following two years, to nineteen in 1834 and twenty in 1835. From 1836 through the 1840s these numbers steadily increased, and reached seventy-four in the year of 1847, despite the disruption of parish activities during the United States invasion and occupation in that year.242

According to José Agustín de Escudero, the population of the Partido del Paso del Norte in 1834 comprised 8,495 residents.243 Out of 5,959 adults, 3,154 or about fifty-one percent were married. Slightly over nine percent were widowed. This indicated that, at least in Paso del Norte, marriage was more common than officials’ reports and travelers’ accounts suggest for the region. The parishes of Guadalupe, Socorro, Ysleta, and El Carrizal recorded approximately 650 marriages during the preceding decade. These numbers of marriages in the region, not accounting for the migration of married couples into the area, make Escudero’s figures credible. Statements such as William W. H. Davis’ declaration that it was “almost a universal practice for men and women to live together as husband and wife, and to rear a family of children without having been married,” did not

243 Escudero, 77. Single men numbered 1,253 and single women numbered 996, for a total of 2,349. Married men 1,595 and married women 1,559, for a total of 3,154. There were 258 widowed men and 298 widows, the total widowed population was 556. Paso del Norte had 2,496 children, 1,241 girls and 1,255 boys.
accurately reflect conditions in Paso del Norte, where marriage was far from rare in the middle of the nineteenth century.244

In comparison to secular observers, Ladrón de Guevara and Zubiría were far less explicit in their denunciations of cohabitation. The Catholic hierarchy focused on different concerns from political elites or foreign travelers in the Mexican Borderlands. Guevara and Zubiría were often more concerned with the competence of priests or acceptability of ecclesiastical buildings, artwork, or materials than they were with cohabitation. These hierarchs did not express any special concern in their reports with illegitimacy. When they did, it was in the context of deeper criticisms of the inadequacy of the clergy to minister to their flock. Church leaders such as Zubiría enacted policies such as the increased collection of fees in order to bolster the institutional strength of the diocese, despite the risk that these aranceles might create barriers to marriage for prospective spouses.

Ladrón de Guevara and Zubiría’s extensive inspections of marriage records gave them a different perspective of borderlands family life from civil officials and foreign observers. Neither of these men expressed the notion that marriage was rare or unattainable on the frontier. A large number of adults did cohabit, and many marriages in the church took place late in the lifetimes of contracting spouses. Baptismal registries were inconsistent in recording births as “illegitimate.” At times they identified children as hijos naturales of two unmarried parents who are listed in the records, and in other cases, they identified mothers as single women (solteras) with no father listed. In the Guadalupe

244 William Watts H. Davis, El Gringo: Or New Mexico and Her People (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), 221.
Parish, priests recorded some children as legitimate children (*hijos legítimos*) and said nothing about other births. The lack of consistency in classifying births in baptismal registries makes an analysis of the percentage of children born out of wedlock difficult in the Guadalupe Parish records. Apparently, its clergy did not observe a strict binary that made sharp distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children, but recognized a more diverse array of family relationships. These ranged from church-sanctioned marriages, cohabitation between unmarried lifelong couples, and matrifocal households with single women and children.  

The visits of Ladrón de Guevara and Zubiría did not resolve most of the troubles that afflicted New Mexico’s parishes and missions. Indeed these inspections of the territory led to new tensions between Catholics and church institutions. One signal of the weakness of Bishop Zubiría’s intervention was the fact that the report from the 1845 pastoral visitation mainly restated the critiques he made 1833. *Hermandades penitentes* also gathered strength despite official disapproval. The Euro-American clergy that assumed control of New Mexico after 1850 only broadened this divide between popular and formal Catholicism that already existed. In Paso del Norte, the results of the Ladrón de Guevara and Zubiría inspections were more apparent. The arrival of secular priest Juan Rafael Rascón with Ladrón de Guevara, and his direct ties to the diocese concluded the secularization of Paso del Norte. Rascón’s consolidation of the offices of Curate of the Guadalupe Parish, Vicar Forane of Paso del Norte, and Ecclesiastic Judge of Paso del

245 Castilian law, from the *Siete Partidas* through the Spanish colonial period, recognized several degrees of illegitimacy, ranging from *hijos naturales* – the offspring of *barraganía* or concubinage – to children born by adulterous or short-term relationships. A discussion of *barraganía* appears in Christine Hünefelt, *Liberalism in the Bedroom: Quarreling Spouses in Nineteenth Century Lima* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 106.
Norte in 1817 created a local church leadership that governed its parishes with relatively little intervention from the diocese. Padre Rascón continued to serve as cura in Paso del Norte through 1824. After Rascón’s promotion to visitor general in 1824, a succession of priests served the parish of Guadalupe. Luis Díaz de Luján became the Curate, Ecclesiastic Judge, and Vicar Forane of Paso del Norte through 1833, when Máximo Jesús Irigoyen arrived. Irigoyen worked as the interim curate (cura interino) for two years, a title which Francisco Pérez held from 1835 until 1838. After Father Pérez left, Ramón Ortiz held these offices on an interim basis.246

Ramón Ortiz, then a recent graduate of the seminary of Durango, was a protégé of Visitador Rascón.247 Ortiz remained at Paso del Norte through much of the remainder of the nineteenth century, and he would weather many storms during his long career in the Guadalupe Parish. At times he led paseños in active resistance, and the United States Army held him prisoner in 1847 during its invasion of Mexico. In the decade that followed the war, Ortiz led efforts to repatriate New Mexicans who wished to remain under the Mexican flag; in this endeavor, he sought to defend the civil rights of Mexicans in the face of unsympathetic officials from both the United States and his own government. Cura Ortiz also engaged in a lengthy struggle to retain Durango’s authority north of the new international border.

At the same time, Ramón Ortiz also befriended Euro-American settlers and travelers, at times hosting people many Mexicans viewed as enemies. By the 1870s, Ortiz enjoyed the confidence of Hispanic and Euro-American residents of the borderlands and

246 These dates of service are based on the appearances of these priests’ rubrics in ACCJ, rolls 2 and 3.

247 Mary Taylor, “Cura de la Frontera, Ramón Ortiz,” 67-85.
acted as an arbitrator in heated disputes such as the Salt War of 1877. Despite the later realignment of parishes on the north bank of the Rio Grande under an “American” hierarchy, in the 1880s and 1890s, Ortiz forged close personal bonds with Carlos Pinto, an Italian-born Jesuit who worked in El Paso, Texas. Later in the nineteenth century, the state and other religious groups would challenge Roman Catholic hegemony in this community, and would perform civil registrations of births, marriages, and deaths. However, in the 1830s, Ramón Ortiz and the other parish priests of Paso del Norte governed the formation of familial bonds through their regulation of marriage and family life. The next chapter examines the ecclesiastical regime in Paso del Norte’s regulation of marriage during the 1830s, when the Catholic Church regulated family law.
Chapter Three

“From the Moment that I Made My Wedding Vows My Suffering Began”: Gender, Honor, and Church Governance in Paso del Norte, 1821-1846

From the advent of the Franciscan missions in the seventeenth century, the Roman Catholic Church had nearly exclusive power over marriage and family life in Paso del Norte. During its performance of marriages, the Parish of Guadalupe interrogated prospective brides, grooms, witnesses, and family members on the validity of proposed unions. The diocese and its parishes performed these nuptial investigations to investigate potential impediments to marriage such as a lack of parental consent and blood relationships or kinship by marriage or godparentage between spouses. The church also investigated claims of abuse and adultery by married parishioners.

The occupation of Paso del Norte during the United States-Mexico War and its subsequent division brought many challenges to the Catholic Church in the borderlands; but parish priests retained much of their authority to govern marriage and other interpersonal relationships. The advent of liberalism gradually challenged the supremacy of Catholicism; civil authorities would exert increased power over the governance of family life in Paso del Norte by 1870. North of the border, the arrival of railroads and larger numbers of Euro-American settlers would further undermine the centrality of the Catholic Church in these matters. By the end of the nineteenth century, paseño clergy operated in a pluralistic and secular environment; they could only exercise power through moral persuasion and personal influence.
Ramón Ortiz and Marriage in Paso del Norte

In 1833, as Bishop José Antonio Zubiría trekked north to visit far ends of his vast Diocese of Durango, a nineteen-year-old youth from New Mexico arrived in Durango to study for the priesthood. Ramón Ortiz, born in Santa Fe in 1814, had been enrolled into the seminary by Juan Rafael Rascón. In 1829, Rascón arrived in Santa Fe as the Visitor General of the Diocese of Durango, with the objective of recruiting secular clergy for New Mexico. Under Rascón’s supervision, Ortiz began preliminary studies in Santa Fe, and in 1833, he accompanied Rascón on his return trip to Durango to enter the seminary in that city.²⁴⁸

For the rest of his days, Padre Ortiz lived with the consequences of the events of 1833. Zubiría’s visit to Paso del Norte and New Mexico ended seven decades of absence on the part of the Bishop of Durango. Ortiz would struggle to maintain these connections between Durango and the northern frontier over the next decades. In the same year, the brief administration of Vice President Valentín Gómez Farías also began the first round of anticlerical measures in Mexico, as the government ended the practice of mandatory tithing. Over the course of Ortiz’s lifetime, Mexicans mounted increasingly direct challenges to the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church. However, at the time Ramón Ortiz completed his seminary studies, on Easter Sunday 1837, this religious body still maintained its monopoly on the administration of marriage in Mexico.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Mary Taylor, “Cura de la Frontera, Ramón Ortiz,” 68-69.
²⁴⁹ Ibid., 72.
Ortiz arrived to minister to Paso del Norte in early 1838. Many accounts by his contemporaries portrayed him as a pillar of the community who was conscientious in his pastoral care of the poor, sensitive to the plight of indigenous *paseños*, and an honest broker to Mexican and American citizens alike. Padre Ortiz waived many of the clerical fees for many of the poorer residents of the vicariate, especially indigenous parishioners of the mission towns southeast of Paso del Norte. This was not simply an act of charity; it also helped reduce some of the sources of tension that existed in other borderlands communities. Anger over sacramental fees had prompted resistance against the church during the 1837 Río Arriba Rebellion of northern New Mexico.

As vicar forane, Ortiz oversaw the parishes of the region, including Paso del Norte and San Lorenzo, the mission towns of Ysleta, Senecú, and Socorro, the military settlements of San Elizario and Carrizal and Mesilla and Doña Ana to the north. The division of Paso del Norte along the Rio Grande after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, which separated Mesilla and Doña Ana from Mexico in the following year, did not mark an end to Ortiz’s duties north of the new boundary. He continued to act, formally and informally, as a spiritual leader in neighboring parishes in the United States until his death.

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250 Ibid. According to Taylor, Ortiz’s studies in Durango were interrupted by a brief “retreat” from Durango to Chihuahua with Juan Rafael Rascón, which closely coincided with the “self-exile” of Bishop Zubiría of Durango in 1833.

251 Taylor, “Cura de la Frontera, Ramón Ortiz,” 72. In the financial records of the parish at Paso del Norte, Taylor points out that Ortiz “marked the aranceles of the Indians, their fees, with a ‘0,’ not charging them if they had nothing to offer.”

252 Janet Lecompte, *Rebellion in Río Arriba, 1837*, 21, 41-42.
Father Ortiz’s duties at the old Guadalupe Mission of Paso del Norte included the drafting and maintenance of church registers for over two thousand marriages during his lifetime, including approximately 450 weddings in the years between his investiture and the United States’ invasion of Chihuahua, late in 1846.\textsuperscript{253} The work of documenting and preserving these records was essential to the performance of his sacerdotal duties, as the Council of Trent (1545-1563) had mandated the preservation of marriage registries and formalized the performance of matrimonial ceremonies. Ortiz’s long tenure at Paso del Norte created a high degree of continuity in these registries from 1838 through the remainder of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{254} The entries, while rigidly arranged and generally providing little more than the basic requirements of canon law, collectively formed Ortiz’s narrative of social processes in Paso del Norte over a critical period of transition.

In the parish records, Padre Ortiz and other parish priests often made marginal notes – comments outside of the main entries – that elaborated on the special circumstances that might have prompted a marriage. This was especially true of the marriages that took place at Paso del Norte with extenuating conditions such as the illness or impending death of a bride or groom, and those that involved nuptial investigations or \textit{diligencias matrimoniales}. Age, parental opposition, suspicions of parental coercion, and “vagrant” or “foreign” status could occasion a \textit{diligencia}.\textsuperscript{255} In an investigation, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{253} As church records are far from complete, especially in the periods surrounding the United States-Mexico War and the War of the Reform, and parish boundaries changed often, I will not attempt any statistical analysis.
\item \textsuperscript{254} In Ortiz’s final months as \textit{Cura}, Carlos Pinto, at the time a Jesuit missionary in El Paso, Texas, as well as in Juárez, served “with permission of the parish,” and worked as an interim curate after Ortiz’s death. Padre Pinto will emerge in the final segment of this dissertation.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Chapter Two, Bishop Zubiría explicitly calls for this process to be applied in all such cases in his 1833 letter to New Mexican parishes.
\end{itemize}
prospective bride and groom, as well as any relevant witnesses, gave testimony under oath to the ecclesiastic judge. Common examples of impediments included consanguinity (a prohibited degree of blood relationship) and affinity (relationship by marriage or by godparentage).

Despite the scarcity of resources such as ink and paper, and the fragility of these materials in the face of warfare, fires, and floods, the vicariate of Paso del Norte managed to preserve many essential records through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of the entries in the baptismal, marriage, and burial books of the Guadalupe Parish were formulaic and gathered identical sets of information in all cases. For instance, in compliance with the directives of the Council of Trent, matrimonial ledgers from 1838 to 1846 uniformly stated the following:

1. Location of parish (Guadalupe, Villa del Paso del Norte);
2. Date of marriage;
3. Name of groom, parents of groom, and origin of groom;
4. Name of bride, parents of bride, and origin of bride;
5. The date in which banns were first read;
6. Compliance with the “three canonic laws,” and the absence of impediments;
7. Names of two or three witnesses;

In the period from 1838 through 1846, very few marriages involved partners from communities other than those of the partido and vicariate of Paso del Norte. This is in

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256 January 1, 1838 and late December 1846 mark the time between Ortiz’s arrival as parish priest and the occupation of Paso del Norte, which resulted in a disruption in parish activities for a number of weeks, as well as Ortiz’s arrest by Colonel Alexander Doniphan.

257 These records invariably list the groom’s name and information first.

258 Information on parents is incomplete or lacking in a small number of entries, especially entries involving widowed spouses.

259 ACCJ; roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios.”

260 The presence of three witnesses often indicates a diligencia or investigation took place.
contrast to conditions a century earlier, when migrants from Chihuahua and other points to the south often appeared in records. The 1838 marriage of Tomás Anaya, of “La Villa de Alburquerque de Nuevo Méjico” and Juana González was the sole marriage involving a person who was not a vecino or indigenous resident of the parish in that year.

Only two of the forty-three marriages of Paso del Norte in 1838 referred to the partners as indígenas, that of Juan José Marrufo and Petra Leyba, and the marriage of Pedro Clemente and María Ortega. In these cases, no specific nation or tribal affiliation appeared.261 Aside from these marriages of indigenous people, there were no explicit references to race or ancestry in parish archives by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, differences in class were apparent in the use of the title don or doña to refer to spouses. These labels demonstrated some degree of social division among the non-indigenous vecinos of Paso del Norte. Eight of the marriages at Guadalupe Parish in 1838 involved partners identified as don and doña, and there were no “mixed” marriages in these circumstances.262 In the Spanish colonial period, this title generally indicated Spanish (español) status in addition to an elevated social standing; there were no entries where castas, Afro-Mexicans, or indigenous people appeared as don or doña in colonial Paso del Norte. During the late colonial period in the borderlands, this title referred to anyone of relatively high status in relation to other members of the community.263 Such a usage continued through the nineteenth century. If it no longer had an explicit racial


262 Marriages explicitly referring to don and doña became rare after 1838. Only three “don y doña” marriages take place in 1839, and three more in 1840. Similar numbers are found through the rest of the 1840s.

263 In the context of eighteenth-century Chihuahua, “‘Don’ and ‘dona’ were titles of respect and generally connoted a class standing somewhat higher than that of people who lacked these titles.” Martin, 210.
meaning by the 1830s, the title of don indicated some degree of social importance. Its bearers were often owners of more substantial holdings, merchants or owners of commercial enterprises, government officials, or people with professional duties. Ordinary wage laborers (jornaleros), small-scale farmers (labradores), and domestic or shop laborers (servientes) did not carry such titles.²⁶⁴

The 1838 municipal archives of Paso del Norte refer to men such as the chief judicial officer of Paso del Norte, judge (juez) Sebastián Bermúdez, and the school master of Ysleta, Felipe Durán, as don. In contrast to the usage of don and doña that prevails in Mexico today, as a term of respect or endearment for one’s elders, in the 1830s, young people with higher status carried the title. On December 15, 1838, a youth named Juan Apodaca was jailed and tried for the crime of assaulting “Don Ignacio Azcárate,” the minor son of a prominent landholding family in Paso del Norte. In the incident, the two boys engaged in a quarrel resulting in a thrown rock and “bloody shirt.” For this misdeed, Juan Apodaca served at least two months in confinement in the Paso del Norte jail.²⁶⁵ While formal distinctions of race and caste ended with the Mexican Constitution of 1824, class divides remained firm, and class and caste divisions continued to find expression in the concept of calidad. In Governance and Society in Colonial Mexico: Chihuahua in the Eighteenth Century, Cheryl Martin describes the concept of calidad (literally quality) as “an amalgam of class, ethnicity, and personal honor, the


²⁶⁵ CJMA, Roll 11, Seq. 2, 0255-0260
latter based largely on one’s reputed adherence to gender-specific norms of behavior.”

Even before Mexican Independence, especially in the borderlands, the caste system of late colonial northern New Spain had become less rigid than it had been in Mexico’s core. In comparison to the caste system, calidad represented a more expansive view of the synthesis of race and class.

Legitimacy impacted one’s ability to assert honorable status; priests noted if marriage partners had been born in wedlock. An indication that a person was a legitimate child appeared in many of the marriage entries, but Ramón Ortiz and other parish priests of the region seldom made direct references to illegitimacy in marriage records. In the forty-three marriages listed in the Guadalupe Parish in 1838, the first full year of Ortiz’s work in Paso del Norte, thirty-six designated both partners as the “legitimate son” and the “legitimate daughter” of their parents. The priest did not identify everyone as legitimate, but most of these entries merely identified the parents of a couple, with no further comment. Only one outright reference to illegitimacy took place in 1838, in the marriage of Pablo Apodaca and Teresa del Villar. Apodaca was a “natural son,” or hijo natural, indicating his parents were unmarried, but lived together in a long-term arrangement. The priest listed del Villar as legitimate. The only other marriage from 1838 with a possible discrepancy in the legitimacy of spouses was the union of Tomás Anaya, a native of Albuquerque and Juana González. Padre Ortiz wrote no names for parents of the groom, while the bride is listed as legitimate.267 By contrast, baptismal records contained references to legitimacy in much more explicit terms. Of the twenty-four births that took

266 Martin, 181.

267 ACCJ, roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios.”

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place in January 1838, Ortiz documented eleven as legitimate, and one infant was listed as a “natural” son of two unmarried parents. Seven children were born to an “unknown father” or “unknown parents.” Two of these children are espósitos, or foundlings, and the records list the person who lived at the residence where the child was found.268

Another major variant of marriage entries involved the identification of widows and widowers. When a spouse was widowed, the priest included the name of the deceased husband or wife in the marriage record. In 1838, two marriages at the Guadalupe Parish involved widowed men, that of Tiburcio Melendudo to María Francisca Apodaca, the other was the union of José Enríquez and Josefa Fuentes. Another marriage that year, joining María Lucero and Manuel Durán, involved two widowed spouses.269

Widowed persons who sought to remarry faced difficulties in small or close-knit communities, as their likely marriage partners might have familial ties to the deceased spouse. Catholic marriage laws barred marriages between relatives by marriage, such as brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law. Priests often initiated diligencias matrimoniales in instances where potential affinities existed, as well as in marriages that paired widowed candidates.

At Paso del Norte, most diligencias began as basic interrogations at the parochial level. The ecclesiastic judge (juez eclesiástico), managed the opening phase of the investigation. In the prenuptial investigation, the ecclesiastic judge questioned the bride or groom as well as family members or witnesses from the community. The

269 ACCJ, roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios.”
questionnaires were formulaic; most nuptial investigations that took place at Paso del Norte in the nineteenth century asked the bride and groom the following questions.

“What is your name and surname?”
“What is your home country (patria) and place of residence (vecindad)?”
“What is your age?”
“Do you have any relationship with your prospective spouse, one of consanguinity, affinity, or of a spiritual or legal nature that may impede your marriage?”

All answers to these questions were sworn statements; respondents took an oath and signed their statements. *No firmó, por no saber hacerlo, estampó con su cruz* (“He or she did not sign, for not knowing how to do so, and marked with his or her cross”) was a common phrase in diligencias and other legal documents of the time. Names in parish and civil records were often accompanied by crosses, indicating the illiteracy of signatories. Literate individuals often signed their documents with elaborate flourishes. Civil officials and priests appeared to use stamped rubrics. The ecclesiastic judge asked similar questions to witnesses concerning their identity and residence and also inquired whether any impediment based on relationship by blood or marriage existed. In addition, witnesses responded to an interrogatory under oath.

“What is your name and surname?”
“What is your home country and place of residence?”
“What is your age?”
“Do you know both prospective spouses?”
“Do you know if they have pledged to marry one another?”
“Do you know if they are forced or induced to marry?”

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270 The people in these entries often had two given names in the record, one or more paternal surnames, and one or more maternal surnames. As a result, individuals had wide discretion in name choice.

271 Most responses to this question simply stated the parish or town. Few candidates for marriage explicitly stated a nationality unless they were not native of Mexico. *Diligencias* involving the growing number of migrants and foreigners, including Europeans and Euro-Americans from the United States, are a topic in Chapter Four.
In cases that involved the question of age or parental consent, parish priests such as Francisco Pérez and Ramón Ortiz appeared to be content to delay the marriage until the bride or groom was older, or the parents relented. Marriages that involved a minors raised concerns with parental consent. Under the legal code in place in colonial and early independent Mexico, the age of majority for men was twenty-five. In the instances where Padre Ortiz entered age in the period from 1838 until 1843, the record generally documented a substantial difference in age or it identified rather youthful partners. The November 19, 1838, marriage of thirty-five-year-old Gabriel Ábalos and Jacinta Blanca, who was aged fifteen, was one such example. Questions concerning age were not always easy to answer for many who lived in the nineteenth-century borderlands. Before the advent of modern bureaucracy, knowledge of one’s specific age might have relatively little importance. For instance, Telésforo Valencia, a widower of Paso del Norte, is recorded as being twenty-six in an 1838 record prepared by Ramón Ortiz, but Valencia gave his age as twenty-three in a diligencia in that same year. Most marriages involving age discrepancies involved older men and younger women, but exceptions existed.

The third marriage performed by Ramón Ortiz was that of José María Bernal to Bárbara Aguirre, a widow. This entry listed Aguirre as a twenty-six-year-old; her partner

272 The age of majority during the Spanish colonial period was twenty-five. During the early years of independence, several Mexican states lowered the age; however Chihuahua maintained the Spanish (and Roman) age of majority. Ages of marital consent would become lower during La Reforma. Silvia Arrom, The Women of Mexico City: 1790-1857 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 92.

273 ACCJ, roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios,” November 19, 1838

was four years younger in this record. The Bernal-Aguirre wedding was the first marriage in Ortiz’s career as a parish priest that joined spouses with a higher social rank; the two were titled *don* and *doña*. Unlike the majority of marriages in the registry, this wedding involved three witnesses, which indicated that their wedding took place after a *diligencia*. The process of the Bernal and Aguirre marriage began during the term of the interim parish priest Francisco Pérez in 1837. Aguirre’s status as a widow and old allegations of infidelity during her first marriage were at issue during the premarital investigation. Affinity was also a possible concern, as Bárbara Aguirre’s baptismal record recorded her godfather as José Buenaventura Bernal. However, bearers of the Bernal surname figured prominently in the Paso del Norte as landowners and were common in censuses, military lists, and baptismal, marriage, and burial records during the colonial and early independence periods.

A concern with affinity to the Bernal family was only one of the matters that informed the context of Bárbara Aguirre’s *diligencia* in 1838. She had experienced a prenuptial investigation when she married Francisco Belarde as an adolescent in 1823. Her marriage to Belarde had been contentious to say the least, and included a lengthy separation and divorce process in the early 1830s. The records of Bárbara Aguirre, and in particular, her two marriages, illustrated a variety of concepts concerning honor,

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275 It would take further work to establish a genealogical connection between José María Bernal (born in 1808) and José Buenaventura Bernal (born in 1755). In short, the 1838 *diligencia* did not find a prohibitive degree of affinity.

276 This surname appears as Belarde and Velarde in parish records. In the majority of records, Francisco and his immediate family members are identified as Belarde, and in general, I will use name variants that contemporary scribes, notaries, and officials used most frequently. Due to the phonetic merger of B and V in Spanish, variants are common, at times within a single document. Bernal may appear as Vernal. “Soft C,” S, Z mergers are also common in American Spanish dialects, as are “soft G,” J, X. Non-Hispanic surnames also have variant forms, the prominent Magoffin family of Paso del Norte has members identified as Maguffin, M’Goffin, MacGuffin.
propriety, and spousal obligations in the nineteenth-century borderlands. Her life story, while incomplete, emerged throughout the sacramental records and proceedings of the Guadalupe Parish in the first half of the nineteenth century.

**The Marriage and Divorce of Bárbara Aguirre and Francisco Belarde**

Biographical details of Bárbara Aguirre’s early life are scant and rudimentary. Only a few essential dates concerning her early life history entered parish registries, and church documents were often the sole documents that recorded the lives of women in Paso del Norte during the early nineteenth century.277 María Bárbara Josefa Aguirre Ortega was born on December 4, 1807 to Don José Francisco Aguirre Porras and Doña María Seferina Ortega García de Noriega.278 Two days later, the Franciscan friar Antonio de Galfosco baptized infant Bárbara in the Guadalupe mission. In the record for this sacrament, the friar identified the father and mother as vecinos and Spaniards (españoles). Her parents had married September 14, 1804, and Fray Galfosco listed the two as Spaniards of legitimate birth at that time.279 Bárbara’s mother was the daughter of a local farmer and rancher, Don Sebastián Ortega.280 The two witnesses were also property owners, who claimed Spanish vecino status, Don Buenaventura Bernal and Doña Josefa

277 Women certainly did appear in records, for instance if they were subject to criminal or civil suits or, occasionally as landowners. However, women – aside from those from the most prominent families – are difficult to track outside of parish records.


280 Bárbara Aguirre’s maternal grandfather, Sebastián Ortega, was a landowner who registered land title in 1774. CJMA, Roll 10, Sequence 2, Frame 0491.
Noriega. Francisco Aguirre died when his daughter was two years of age, and on August 19, 1812, Bárbara Aguirre’s mother remarried to Don Francisco Lucero Telles.281

Aside from these basic entries, there were no other records of Bárbara Aguirre’s childhood and early life in parish or municipal archives. Individual records for boys appeared in the early nineteenth century in lists of pupils, and schoolmasters preserved their written grammars or copybooks in the Paso del Norte municipal archives. While this schooling for paseño boys was generally rudimentary and sporadic, most girls in the community received no formal education beyond catechism in the parish church. Later in life, Bárbara Aguirre’s documents were countersigned with marks indicating she was illiterate.

On October 11, 1823, before her sixteenth birthday, Father Juan Rafael Rascón joined Doña Bárbara Aguirre and Don Francisco Belarde in marriage. The groom was the twenty-four-year-old son of Don José María Belarde and Doña Encarnación Butiérrez.282 Their marriage took place after a diligencia matrimonial; in this hearing Bárbara stated “that she is the daughter of Don Francisco Aguirre, deceased, and Seferina Ortega and a resident of the parish and nation.” This was a rather novel means of identifying one’s status at Paso del Norte, as only two years had passed since Mexican independence. Bárbara Aguirre also swore that she “had not been forced, induced, or counseled to marry” Francisco Belarde. She added that she had no legal or spiritual impediments to marriage with him and no ties of consanguinity or affinity. Despite her birth in December

281 ACCJ, roll 10, “Libro de Matrimonios,” August 19, 1812. Several of these surnames—Lucero, Telles, Noriega and Noriega de García, and Bernal—were extremely common among paseños of that period.

282 This may be a variant spelling of Gutiérrez; it also exists as a surname in its own right. These records are clearly written, and “B” and “G” are distinguished elsewhere in records.
of 1807, indicating that she was still fifteen, Aguirre gave her age as seventeen, and according to Cura Rascón, she “made a cross before me, the priest,” to indicate that her statement was the truth.  

The first witness in the 1823 Belarde-Aguirre diligencia was José Pablo Carvajal. He testified that he knew the couple, did not know whether anyone had compelled them to marry, and stated that no impediments existed. The second witness, Ramón Olivera, agreed with these responses. Thirdly, José Ramos gave testimony. The parish priest noted his age and marital status; he had not done so with the other witnesses. Ramos was thirty years old and married, and, his answers corroborated those of the other two witnesses. All three men marked a cross by their names in the presence of Cura Rascón. The investigation uncovered no impediments, and the priest ruled that in three subsequent church services, banns were to be read.

During their marriage, Francisco Belarde and Bárbara Aguirre had at least one child. María Francisca Belarde Aguirre was baptized on February 27, 1825. María Francisca did not appear in subsequent records or testimonies. After their marriage and the birth of their daughter, Belarde and Aguirre disappeared from the records of the Guadalupe Parish for over five years. However, by the end of 1831 their marriage had

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283 ACCJ, roll 2, Libro de Matrimonios, Frame 235. No baptismal record matching this information for Francisco Belarde appeared in 1798-1799. In addition, his father was identified as Luis Belarde in later records.

284 ACCJ, roll 10, “Libro de Bautismos,” February 27, 1825. In the year of María Francisca’s birth, nearly half of recorded burials involved infants or children. Bárbara’s daughter received no mention in the divorce testimony, at which time she would have been seven. There are no apparent marriage records for her in Paso del Norte. María Francisca Belarde might have died in early childhood, or simply not been at issue in the dispute between her parents. If she died as a child, the Books of Burials pose challenges, as children were often identified only by their first names, and state little else about most párvulos. Adults are more likely to have ages listed, and the inclusion of their spouse’s name aids in further identification.

285 For this matter, children did not appear in other diligencias involving widowed spouses.
deteriorated to the point that Aguirre left her husband. Over the next year, legal and ecclesiastical authorities became involved in her request to separate from her husband.286

Bárbara Aguirre sought a divorce (divorcio) in the Guadalupe Parish. Divorce, in the context of Roman Catholic law, does not refer to the complete dissolution of a marriage, nor is it an annulment. Silvia Arrom, who discusses ecclesiastical divorce cases in *The Women of Mexico City, 1750-1857*, defines the process as “a separation of bed and board” in cases involving adultery, abuse, or abandonment.287 On December 28, 1831, Bárbara Aguirre initiated the process with her statement to the vicar forane, curate, and ecclesiastic judge of Guadalupe, Luis Díaz de Luján.288

María Bárbara Aguirre, wife of the citizen Francisco Belarde, before you, with all due respect and under the useful and necessary pretenses, states the following. For more or less six months, she has lived apart from her husband for he has afflicted me with serious injuries, beaten me, and has confined me in the mill of his father, Don José María Velarde, twenty-four hours a day. For these undeserved treatments, already made insufferable for their frequency, I left my home and lodged at the home of an uncle of mine.289

Aguirre added that this request for an ecclesiastical divorce would be accompanied by corroborating testimony of the “the bad life that I had suffered from my husband,” testimony that would establish “proof of past and present mistreatment, and the abuse that would await me in the future.” Aguirre concluded her plea by stating that she

286 The divorce case of Bárbara Aguirre dominates ACCJ, roll 2, in a section identified in the finding aid as frames 521-540. In truth, these records are scattered across nearly 100 frames. Documents date from December, 1831 to January, 1833.

287 Arrom, 66.

288 ACCJ, roll 2, December 28, 1831. In the course of 1832, *cura* Máximo Jesús Irigoyen became the primary ecclesiastic judge in the case.

289 At this point, the language of the statement shifted to the first person.
was “in urgent need of a separation by means of a divorce, for it is the only way I can be
guaranteed of an appreciable degree of protection from my husband’s unwarranted anger
towards me.” Bárbara Aguirre marked the letter with a notarized cross; Julián Bernal
acted as an *apoderado* (proxy). In practical terms, *apoderados* in Paso del Norte during
this period acted as country lawyers; they wrote letters for the illiterate, but also drafted
requests or statements to officials, wrote legal claims or defenses for clients, formulated
questionnaires, and interrogated witnesses.

Francisco Belarde responded to these charges of abuse with an effort to impugn
the reputation of Bárbara Aguirre in the eyes of the local clergy. He also expressed his
ideas about what constituted a companionate marriage. As Belarde was illiterate and
marked all of his documents with a cross, his *apoderado* Reyes Pérez wrote the Curate of
Guadalupe on Berlarde’s behalf on January 19, 1832. In his letter, Belarde stated his
understanding of what marital obligations should entail, and he asserted that he had
fulfilled his duties as a husband, stating that “for ten years, I have been bound by the
links of matrimony with Bárbara” (they had been married for about eight years at the
time). He further declared, that “at the beginning of our marriage she behaved with
honor, and complied with all of the obligations of fidelity and consideration that she had
pledged to me.”

Francisco Belarde blamed the decline in their marriage on his wife’s mental
instability, which in his argument, led to her vulnerability to commit adultery. “Over the
last eight years,” Belarde stated, “I have observed an extraordinary change in her
behavior and conduct.” He then accused another man of preying on his wife and

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290 Ibid.
undermining his marriage to Bárbara. In the letter, Belarde stated that his “wife has been seduced by the Administrator of Rents (Administrador de Rentas) of the town, Don Alejandro Ramírez, and she had been unfaithful, committing” acts that caused him “great pain.” Bárbara Aguirre, her apoderado Julián Bernal, and all of her witnesses flatly denied these charges of adultery. Alejandro Ramírez was an elusive figure. He never testified in this matter, and appeared in no other church records during this time frame. Eventually, Belarde and his representative Reyes Pérez ceased to use his name, and identified Aguirre’s alleged lover in more and more oblique terms as “Bárbara’s accomplice.” While identified as an administrador de rentas, Ramírez appeared in no contemporary financial, legal, or other records.

Much of Belarde’s letter, drafted by Reyes Pérez, consisted of a rambling statement describing his ongoing anger and sorrow over the breakdown of his marriage. While Bárbara Aguirre denounced her husband’s physical abuse, Belarde claimed that the torment of losing his wife’s exclusive companionship inflicted emotional wounds.

My heart was overpowered by exasperation, and a thousand terrible and disastrous thoughts descended into my imagination. I was unable to think of anything else...I resolve to try any means I could, no matter how reckless to bring her back to my life the wife that my heart so loved.291

Belarde then described how he resolved his anguish. He asserted that his position as the head of the household granted him the right to punish his wife for her misdeeds. Thus, the battery he inflicted on his wife represented an appropriate use of spousal authority. Belarde claimed he “as the father of the family,” had “decided to impose upon

291 ACCJ, roll 2, January 19, 1832.
her moderate punishment...sufficient for her correction.” This interpretation of the duties of a *paterfamilias* was prevalent in Mexico at this time. However, despite Belarde’s assumption he had a “right” to physically and violently discipline his wife, no Hispanic or Mexican legal code explicitly granted men this right to physically punish their spouses.

Francisco Belarde further decried the fact that his wife had aired these family matters to the *alcalde* Juan Federico. Due to this offense against her husband, Belarde charged that his estranged wife had “added a lack of shame” to her “prostitution.” Silvia Arrom, in an analysis of divorce cases from Mexico City, sums up this attitude in an observation that fits Belarde perfectly: “several husbands” in Mexico City divorce cases “viewed a wife’s exercise of her legal rights as an insufferable affront to their authority.” Francisco Belarde went on to state that Aguirre’s “corruption reached extremes,” and despite his best efforts, as a “libertine” she broke away from him to pursue all of her “libidinous passions.” Belarde concluded by demanding justice from these authorities, and stating that his wife’s actions are “worthy of the most severe punishment.” In later documents, Belarde would argue that Aguirre’s disregard for her marriage was more than a personal affront to her husband, but an assault on public order.

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292 Arrom, 235.
293 Ibid., 72.
294 ACCJ, roll 2, January 19, 1832.
295 Arrom, 231.
296 ACCJ, roll 2, January 19, 1832.
On January 22, 1832, Bárbara Aguirre, with Julián Bernal acting as apoderado, forcefully responded to these charges in a remarkable testimony that restated and elaborated upon her earlier charges against Belarde. Aguirre began by refuting her husband’s claim that he acted as an honorable and just paterfamilias, and also countered his claim that she committed adultery.

The gentleman, my husband, says that for eight years he lived in peace and quiet, honorably complying with the duties of being my spouse and that at the end of that time; I was seduced, which he attributes to my lover (amasío) - entirely false charges. From the moment that I made my wedding vows my suffering began, not only through insults and vile language, but through having to work as a slave, not only because my husband said this was to be, but also because he received counsel from his parents to do this: this is the principal origin of our enmity.297

Bárbara Aguirre (perhaps with Julián Bernal) undermined Francisco Belarde’s pretensions of being a paterfamilias who held just authority over his household. To the contrary, she portrayed her husband as weak-willed and dependent on his parents’ counsel. He also turned Belarde’s depiction of his wife as a wanton libertine on its head; Aguirre portrayed Belarde as an emotionally fragile man, given to violent outbursts that demonstrated a lack of self-control. These faults, according to Aguirre, stemmed from his alcohol abuse.

...he added the abominable vice of drunkenness to his perversity. This changed him for the worse, as he became carried away with anger, I became a touchstone (toque de piedra) for him to insult, and lacking the shelter of my beloved mother - seeing myself as being absolutely humiliated and unprotected - I made this plea for judicial protection (amparo judicial) in order to provide remedy for my scandalous life; as I have stated earlier, I and others will provide the necessary evidence for this to take place.298

297 ACCJ, roll 2, January 22, 1832.
298 ACCJ, roll 2, January 22, 1832.
While Aguirre denied charges of adultery, she referred to her “scandalous life.” The threat of public scandal haunted paseños who wished to preserve their family and individual honor. Bábara Aguirre employed several tactics to counter Belarde’s accusations of infidelity and defend her honor. Most significantly, she was able to provide several male witnesses who were willing to stake their reputations on her claims of virtue. The statements of several of these witnesses indicate that members of the community disapproved of Belarde’s treatment of his wife, and expressed sympathy to Aguirre by providing her with food and shelter and testifying on her behalf. Every witness, including those summoned to testify by Francisco Belarde, corroborated her harrowing narrative of abuse. In her January 22, 1831 statement, Bábara Aguirre described her husband’s mistreatment in convincing, and agonizing, detail,

On the last occasion that my husband subjected me to his torture, he infamously brought me to the mountain where my father-in-law has a property known as the mill (el Molino). He confined me and hung me from the rafters, and gave me lashes, leaving me in that state until later that day, when he returned to do the same to me. The following day he untied me as I was almost dead, and he left me there penned up; and later that day he returned, he pulled me by my hair and dragged me outside, telling me I can go in any direction I want to go. I stayed on the mountain, and when night fell, I came to the home of my Aunt Anita; the good lady brought me to my home, that of my husband, which was closed with a lock. I spent eight days in the homes of neighbors to wait for him to open the door to me, and when I realized that it wouldn’t happen, I went to the home of my uncle Don Luis Ortega, who passed on a warning to my husband and also informed the ecclesiastic judge and vicar about the treatment that my indolent husband terms the family punishment (*castigo familiar*) that he claims to be able to impose upon me.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Ibid.
Aside from denouncing his alcoholism and abuse, Aguirre argued for a separation from Francisco Belarde on the grounds that he was an “indolent husband” who gave her a “bad life.” Bárbara Aguirre did not describe Belarde as indolent merely to express the rancor she felt toward her husband; she contended that his inability to materially provide for his wife constituted a failure to live up to the responsibilities of a husband. 300

Marriage in Hispanic America was generally a firmly patriarchal institution, where men cited the Roman doctrine of the *paterfamilias* or *padre de familia* and claimed dominion over their wives and exclusive guardianship over children (*patria potestas*). However, these concepts also involved reciprocal obligations; husbands had the duty to provide for their wives in exchange for domestic support. Women in early nineteenth-century Mexican divorce cases might denounce and divorce their husbands for failing to live up to this ideal and being idle.301 Bárbara Aguirre also cited emotional neglect on the part of Francisco Belarde. Aguirre described her husband’s lack of compassion for her welfare; “It is no less than proof of his love for me that in the more than six months that he has been separated from me, he has not made an effort to know how I am doing or even given me a greeting.” This disinterest in her welfare compounded his abuse and indolence.

Bárbara Aguirre repeatedly asserted an elevated status in her testimony. She was a “*doña,*” as was her mother, and her uncle and other male relatives bore the title of “*don*” in all instances. Even her dissipated husband was a *don* and *señor* in every statement that entered this divorce case’s testimony. In addition to the narrative of physical abuse and confinement, she also deplored her husband for afflicting her with “coarse language” and

300 Arrom, 249.

301 Ibid., 78-81.
other assaults upon her honor and social status. Despite these insults to her calidad, Aguirre had some experiences in common with less advantaged women in Mexico. In her analysis of abuse cases in Mexico City, Silvia Arrom concluded that poorer women tended to describe particularly brutal physical cruelties in divorce cases. Bárbara Aguirre’s denunciation of Francisco Belarde’s mistreatment centers on a graphic account of physical abuse that matches the accounts involving the poor in Arrom’s book.

Certainly, the goriest depictions of wife beating were provided by the lower class litigants. But this simply may be because they used coarser language than the more educated groups and, awed by the court were readier to confess their faults. It may also be that, because of the nature of the recourse, the few lower class women who came before the divorce court were particularly desperate. The only certain conclusion is that wife abuse, to the extent that it existed, was better hidden among the elites, who greatly valued their honor and considered it stained by the admission of such ungentlemanly behavior.302

Aguirre’s abuse at the hands of an indolent, “coarse,” alcoholic, and violent husband matched the accounts by many poor women in Mexico City. However, her composure before Paso del Norte’s authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, stood in contrast to the “awe” that Arrom sees in the working-class women who took their abuse and divorce cases to courts in the Mexican capital. She absolutely denied every charge of adultery, and assertively defended her rights as a wife, citizen, parishioner, and property holder. On the whole, her confidence (at least in her written statements) before the male authorities who sat in judgment of her conduct was remarkable. Aguirre’s statements appeared to ridicule Belarde’s presumptions of acting as a responsible husband. Moreover, Aguirre argued that, in making her allegations a matter of public concern, she

302 Ibid.
had willingly exposed her private life to the scrutiny and judgment of the church and community’s leaders,

It is certainly praiseworthy (digno de alabanza) that after all the suffering I have endured from my husband that the gentleman accuses me of being an adulterer, even though the most ignorant person would be able to sense that I am acting in good faith, for I am subjecting myself to the judgment of the authorities, and in filing this suit on my behalf, I realize my honor will be tested.\(^\text{303}\)

Bárbara Aguirre also denounced her husband’s assault on her property rights. In this line of argument, she betrayed her attitudes toward class and social status. “He has taken away even my clothing,” Aguirre declared, “something that not even a servant girl would endure.” She further accused Belarde of handing “her legitimate property to another woman, with no shame,” and of “planning to travel to New Mexico this month, in order to settle,” acts which, in Aguirre’s view, constituted his abandonment of her.\(^\text{304}\)

Despite a lack of political rights, under Spanish and Mexican law, women maintained property rights, even when married or under the authority of a male head of household.\(^\text{305}\)

On February 1, 1832, Belarde dismissed these claims as “unfounded, unjust, and all the more calumnious…for it is easy for someone so bent to evil to invent slander and spread falsehoods about another,” and insisted that if a divorce were to take place, “she is to be punished judicially for her crimes, for her loose and damnable conduct has brought her to the very precipice.” Belarde also argued that the very “calumnies” of her

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\(^\text{303}\) ACCJ, roll 2, January 22, 1832.

\(^\text{304}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{305}\) Other examples exist of women in 1830s Paso del Norte defending their property rights in the face of usurpations by male authorities. Manuela Ascárate, for instance, sued her father Don Antonio Ascárate, for restitution of property, including a figurine of St. Joseph. CJMA Part II, roll 30, Frames 0102-0112.
documents were evidence of her truly wanton conduct. He concluded his statement with another demand that he “receive justice” from the authorities.\(^{306}\)

On April 2, 1832, Bárbara Aguirre drafted another letter to alcalde Juan Federico in which she pressed her case for a recognized separation from her husband.\(^{307}\) Aguirre recounted in this letter that three years earlier Julián Peña “brought me to the alcalde Don Federico, where they recorded that my husband had beaten me.” Aguirre described her witnesses by names. She stated that Francisco Lucero could testify that in August of last year that she “was confined in my father-in-law’s mill twenty four hours a day, and [Lucero] also knows of the beatings my husband gave me.” According to this letter, Francisco Lucero also brought Bárbara Aguirre to the home of her uncle, Don Luis Ortega, where he witnessed her extensive physical injuries. Aguirre asserted that these men could testify to the “bad life her husband had given her, which comes from his vice of drunkenness.”\(^{308}\) Lázaro Archuleta was the third man Aguirre proffered as a witness to the abuse she had endured, as “he saw the effects of the beatings she endured after leaving the mill.” Finally, Aguirre submitted Francisco Martínez as a witness. Martínez stated that he had seen the effects of another incident of abuse she suffered on the “eighth of the past month.”\(^{309}\) His testimony did not appear later.

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\(^{306}\) ACCJ, roll 2, February 1, 1832.

\(^{307}\) ACCJ roll 2, April 2, 1832.

\(^{308}\) Ibid.

\(^{309}\) Ibid. While this would imply an incident of abuse occurred after their separation March 8, 1832; Martínez might have given this testimony at an earlier time, and is quoted verbatim in this draft. It is also possible that Belarde attacked Aguirre after their separation.
The validity of Aguirre’s charges against her husband appeared to depend, from the onset of her divorce case, on the character of her male relatives, witnesses, and sponsors. Julián Bernal, who acted as apoderado, was a particularly effective advocate for Bárbara Aguirre. Her arguments were drafted in his handwriting, and accompanied by his signature. Aguirre’s case documents were clearly structured and coherent, while Francisco Belarde’s statements had a haphazard structure and alternated between Belarde’s indulgence in self-pity and fits of venomous anger toward his estranged wife. Aguirre’s evident anger is far more controlled; her manuscripts include frequent uses of irony and mockery of Francisco Belarde’s claims.

On April 29, 1832, Julián Bernal filed a formal request for a divorce on Aguirre’s behalf. The resulting investigation included preliminary testimony from observers who related their accounts of Belarde’s abuse toward his wife. José Peña, the first witness with a recorded statement, claimed that he saw Bárbara Aguirre confined in her father-in-law’s mill, “where she asked him to provide her with water…which he [Peña] gave her.” He confirmed the abuse that had taken place in Aguirre’s marriage, noting “the bad life that she had always been given” by Francisco Belarde. José Peña, who Bernal described as a labrador of sixty-two years of age, swore to the veracity of his testimony with a notarized cross.310

The next witness in this testimony, Ricardo Luján, was listed as a servant of Francisco Belarde. Despite this, he corroborated Bárbara Aguirre’s accusations, stating that “his master had confined his wife on two occasions.” These preliminary statements were taken down and entered into the record. Julián Bernal described Luján as a forty-

310 ACCJ, roll 2, April 29, 1832.
year-old *labrador*, an independent farmer, even though he had also been an employee of the Bernal household. Luján appeared reticent to go much further beyond basic testimony. When Bernal asked him if he had any other information, Luján simply stated that “what he already said was the truth,” and marked the paper with a cross.

Afterward, Francisco Carvajal, one of the four witnesses that Aguirre offered in her initial plea for a divorce, gave testimony. In response to an inquiry on whether he had witnessed the beatings and confinement that Bárbara Aguirre claimed to have suffered, Carvajal testified that he had paid a visit to the Belarde home and found Bárbara Aguirre locked out of the home “and left to stay in the street.” He also corroborated the various accounts of her confinement in the mill and the beatings she received there. Carvajal swore his account to be the truth and signed it in his own hand.\(^{311}\)

Reyes Pérez, acting as *apoderado* for Francisco Belarde, sought to challenge these testimonies with his own interrogation. To this end, he drafted a questionnaire, dated March 21, 1832. This document listed Belarde’s witnesses and the questions that each would answer. Reyes Pérez’s lurid inquiries seemed to aim at tarnishing Bárbara Aguirre’s reputation as much as they sought to arrive at the truth.\(^{312}\) To José Peña, Reyes Pérez posed this suggestive question; “Is it true that one night at very late hours, Don Alejandro Ramírez ran from my client’s home with his cloak in the mouth of Francisco Belarde’s dog, for Ramírez had been chased from the patio of their home, where he had been in a woodpile with the wife, and it so happened that he had been frightened away?”

\(^{311}\) Ibid.

\(^{312}\) ACCJ, roll 2, March 19, 21, 1832.
To Ramón Durán, Reyes Pérez drafted a query on “whether he had accompanied Francisco Belarde one night last summer, and witnessed Bárbara Aguirre leave her lover’s home?” Reyes Pérez further stated that Belarde and Durán went to the residence of Alejandro Ramírez and spent the night in a carriage in the street in order to spy on the Ramírez residence. Reyes Pérez further planned to inquire of Durán, “After having kept vigil all night, did you see the said woman leave that habitation?” Reyes Pérez sought to impugn Bárbara Aguirre’s reputation by asking another witness, José Martínez, whether he saw Belarde’s estranged wife at Don Alejandro Ramírez’s home, “arriving at his room at night, and leaving the following morning.”

Finally, Pérez drafted a question to José Peña, who had testified for Bernal. He was to be asked whether “he knew that after my client punished his wife according to his family obligations (castigó familiarmente) in the mill, she spent several days in his home, and if you know that she had fled (se fugó) without permission?” The apoderado Pérez also planned to direct this question at Mateo Gutiérrez, Patricio Lucero, Rafael Lucero, and Ricardo Luján, Francisco Belarde’s servant who had testified for Julián Bernal. Reyes Pérez hoped that these men would all confirm that Bárbara Aguirre had “escaped” her home. According to Silvia Arrom, in Mexican divorce cases during the period, “husbands often referred to their wives’ desertion as an ‘escape’ (fuga) as if she was a prisoner or slave.”

Reyes Pérez and Belarde framed Bárbara Aguirre’s liberation in these terms; she had not only committed adultery, she also had the impudence to defy her husband’s ability to discipline and physically confine her.

313 Arrom, 231
At no point did Reyes Pérez or Francisco Belarde challenge the basic narrative of abuse that Bárbara Aguirre suffered. The whipping and beating at the mill was never in dispute. Belarde’s defense of this treatment was simple; he had exercised his rights as husband and “father of the family,” and administered “corrective” punishments after his wife subverted his authority through adulterous acts. However, Belarde’s countercharge of adultery was not supported by any of Bárbara Aguirre’s witnesses. Her apoderado José María Bernal successfully impeached the testimony of two of Belarde’s associates. Ramón Durán, who Reyes Pérez had offered as witness, was unable to provide a statement on his friend’s behalf. In a letter to the alcalde, dated July 22, 1832, Julián Bernal wryly noted that Belarde’s friend could not offer his account of spying on Bárbara Aguirre on account of an arrest. Aguirre’s apoderado had discovered that Ramón Durán had recently received a sentence of penal labor “according to the laws of theft,” as he had a recent conviction for larceny or fraud (latricinio). Furthermore, another friendly witness for Belarde, José Martínez, was identified as a criminal vagrant (vago), and sentenced to work in Chihuahua due to the “lack of workshops (talleres) in this town.” Therefore, he was unable to declare that he had seen Bárbara Aguirre leave the home of Don Alejandro Ramírez. In short, Francisco Belarde had less competent counsel and the misfortune of having petty criminals as witnesses. In a later note, alcalde Juan Federico confirmed that Ramón Durán had been charged in May 1832 for assaulting and robbing José Antonio Bernal with a knife. On June 2, 1832, Julián Bernal argued that Belarde’s

314 ACCJ, roll 2, July 22, 1832.

315 AACJ, roll 2, July 22, 1832.
witnesses “are unable, and unworthy, of giving testimony inside or outside of this office,”
due to their low character.\textsuperscript{316}

Reyes Pérez offered a final defense of Belarde on July 6, 1832. He repeated that
his client had confined his wife a few times, and administered “punishment,” but not to
the degree that Aguirre alleged in earlier documents.\textsuperscript{317} He also continued to press the
charge that Aguirre was immoral, and that her decadence was plainly evident to all in
Paso del Norte, regardless of the previous testimony. “Even in this time that she lives
apart from her husband,” Pérez alleged, “and she is soliciting the divorce that she so
intensely demands, she has the shame to come through the \textit{plaza pública}, to sleep with
her lover.” Pérez also contended that common knowledge in the community held Bárbara
Aguirre guilty of adultery. “A better confirmation of these circumstances,” Pérez stated,
is that “at daybreak, she leaves the home of a man, who the public voice (\textit{la voz pública}),
and evident deeds, identify as the accomplice in this adultery.” By this point, no name of
an alleged lover appeared in the case documents. Pérez further charged that this man
presented a danger to his client. As the unnamed adulterer had proven himself to be
guided only by lust, Pérez reasoned that he would threaten the life of his client. “How can
one not believe that this man, during a lapse of judgment, will surrender to the empire of
his passions, and allow the rage of jealousy to dominate him?”\textsuperscript{318}

No additional testimony on Aguirre or Belarde entered the records after this
statement. A partial resolution took place on January 28, 1833 when the interim curate,

\textsuperscript{316} ACCJ, roll 2, June 2, 1832.

\textsuperscript{317} ACCJ, roll 2, July 6, 1832.

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid.
Máximo Jesús Irigoyen, drafted a brief statement to Julián Bernal indicating that all testimonies had been duly recorded, and that the ecclesiastic divorce process would continue. While this statement did not sever Aguirre and Belarde’s marital ties, it did lend a sense of legitimacy to the separation. Most tellingly, there was no apparent correspondence from the ecclesiastic judge to Belarde or his apoderado Reyes Pérez.

Two subsequent events do indicate a resolution, of sorts, to this dispute: Francisco Belarde died just over a year later; his final appearance in the Guadalupe parish archives was in a burial entry on May 2, 1834. The libro de difuntos simply stated that he, the “husband of Bárbara Aguirre,” was buried in the churchyard of the Guadalupe Mission. Bárbara Aguirre was finally free from her spousal obligations to Belarde.

**Starting Over? The Second Marriage of Bárbara Aguirre**

A little more than four years after she became a widow, Bárbara Aguirre remarried. On December 30, 1837, Father Francisco Pérez began a diligencia matrimonial after José María Bernal sent a request to marry Bárbara Aguirre in the parish. His letter to the Curate of Guadalupe stated: “I humbly ask that you see fit for my request to be carried out, and that I will receive justice…I pledge that this is not done with malice.” The request was signed with a cross, indicating a proxy signatory, and a note indicating that Tomás Bernal, the groom-elect’s father, consented to the marriage.

319 ACCJ, roll 2, January 28, 1833. Unfortunately, this document, a letter from Padre Irigoyen to Julián Bernal is barely legible after its first lines.

320 This diligencia appears in ACCJ, roll 3; December, 30, 1837, within the first fifty frames. Bernal was a fairly common surname in Paso del Norte during the eighteenth and nineteenth century; as such, no conclusive relationship can be identified between Aguirre’s apoderado Julián and her second husband José María Bernal.
Bernal stated he was twenty-two years old in the investigation. His exact age is unclear. Discrepancies in age were widespread, and in many cases, a person’s attributed birth year fluctuated widely from one set of records to another. No José María Bernal born to Tomás Ygnacio Bernal and Rufina Dábalos appeared in the baptismal registry in the parish of Guadalupe from 1814 until 1821.321

The diligencia began by noting that Bernal was a native and vecino of El Paso. The record identified the groom as the “legitimate son of Tomás Bernal and Rufina Dábalos,” and recorded that he sought marriage with Bárbara Aguirre, native and vecina of the same parish, and a widow from her first marriage with Francisco Belarde. Interim Curate Francisco Pérez took testimony, first from José María Bernal. The groom repeated his age and names of his parents. Bernal claimed that they had no prohibitive degree of affinity or impediments with Bárbara Aguirre, and he affirmed that “he knew her to be a widow.” After Bernal testified and signed with the mark of a cross, Padre Pérez questioned Bárbara Aguirre.

To the first set of questions, Aguirre replied she was a “native and vecino of Paso del Norte, the widow of Francisco Belarde, and twenty-six years of age.” Her baptismal record indicated she was thirty years old at this time. If the age she gave during her first diligencia in 1823 was correct, she would have been thirty-two by 1838.322 In any event,

321 Identifying the exact age of José María Bernal is difficult as Tomás Ygnacio Bernal, his father, had more than one son with a name that began with “José,” and of these, three had very similar names. His sons, in ACCJ, Roll 5, “Libro de Bautismos,” included José Mariano (January 16, 1805), José María (September 20, 1806), and José Nicolás (December 6, 1811), and were born to his first wife Nestora García de Noriega; Tomás and Nestora had married March 1, 1802. After García de Noriega’s death, Tomás Bernal remarried, to Rufina Dábalos, on April 5, 1813. Their sons included José Cosme (September 28, 1814) and another José María (December 1, 1821). The José María Bernal who married Bárbara Aguirre might have been any one of these sons of Tomás Bernal, though the Bernal-Aguirre marriage record listed Rufina Dábalos as the mother of José María Bernal.
significant age discrepancies were not rare between older male grooms and younger brides. Pairings of women in their thirties with adolescent males were rarer.

In addition to the basic inquiries, Father Pérez asked Aguirre if she had arranged to marry Bernal while she had been married to Francisco Belarde; she replied that this was not the case. In addition, Aguirre stated that no impediments existed in terms of blood or legal relationships between the couple. After this short statement, the parish brought in witnesses. None of these additional participants in the diligencia were part of the divorce case from six years earlier. First, Eugenio Romero, aged fifty-three, and listed as a vecino of the parish, testified before the ecclesiastic judge. He indicated he had known the couple for some time, and he also knew that she was a widow. Romero swore that the couple had not been forced to marry, and that no impediments existed. He was likewise asked if any arrangements to marry were made during Bárbara Aguirre’s first marriage; he denied knowledge of any such agreement.

Finally, Pérez posed a rather unique question, one that did not appear in other diligencias during the time period. The priest asked Romero if he had “been coerced or paid to serve as a witness,” a charge this witness denied. Romero then made a cross to affirm his testimony. “Immediately afterward,” Francisco Pérez noted, “the second witness, Agustín Montaño, native and vecino of Paso del Norte, twenty-seven years of

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322 As tempting as it may be to attribute a motive to these discrepancies in age, one should consider whether knowing or being overly concerned with one’s specific age would be particularly important in a preindustrial society.

323 None of these three witnesses appeared in the Aguirre-Bernal divorce statements of 1831-1833. Other than brides and plaintiffs, women do not appear as witnesses in any diligencias and marital cases during this timeframe.

324 Indeed, if the baptismal records were accurate, José María Bernal would have been a nine year old boy when Bárbara Aguirre’s marriage failed in 1831-1832.
age, presented himself.” Juan José Vargas, the third witness, followed Montaña. These two testified on whether they knew if the couple had pledged marriage during the lifetime of Aguirre’s first husband, and if the two had any ties of consanguinity or affinity. Neither witness reported any such impediments. Finally, these men both concluded their sworn statements with a pledge that they acted in good faith and in free will, and denied any bribery or coercion. These two men confirmed their testimony with notarized marks. At the end of the investigation, Pérez found no barriers to the matrimony of Aguirre and Bernal, and called for marriage banns to be announced in the parish.  

The Aguirre-Bernal divorce case was a unique event in Paso del Norte; no other marriage in the region’s early history produced such extensive documentation over a course of several years. This undoubtedly speaks to the relatively elite status of the couple. Fees and sacramental requirements excluded a large number of paseños in the eighteenth and nineteenth century from marriage. Men and women who cohabited did not appear in matrimonial ledgers. In the year that Aguirre’s second marriage took place, about a third of all baptized children were born out of wedlock. The Guadalupe Parish marriage records did not preserve the complete story of family formation in Paso del Norte, as they mainly reveal the lives of those with access to resources. Bárbara Aguirre, despite her illiteracy and the clear mistreatment she suffered, was a relatively elite woman in the context of paseño society. She came from a family with property, she counted prominent citizens as family members and witnesses, and she had the advantage of competent legal counsel.

325 After her second marriage, Bárbara Aguirre does not appear in parish records in the next few years.

Entering an Age of Transition

The final statements of the Aguirre-Belarde divorce case took place in 1833, coinciding with the visitation of José Antonio Zubiría in Paso del Norte. There is no evidence that the Bishop of Durango commented upon or ruled on this case. Zubiría was satisfied with the conduct of clergy at Paso del Norte. His wrath fell upon the more remote parishes of New Mexico, particularly in Río Arriba. Bishop Zubiría’s pastoral visitation in 1833 led him to call for more diocesan involvement in the parishes of New Mexico. In many respects, the vicariate of Paso del Norte remained largely self-governing in the years between 1833 and the Bishop of Durango’s second visit in 1845. The diocese would take more interest in Paso del Norte when it became a disputed ground between bishops in Mexico and the United States.

The first decade of Ramón Ortiz’s work in Paso del Norte took place against the backdrop of a deteriorating relationship between Mexico and its neighbors to the north, Texas and the United States. Ortiz and other paseño Catholics confronted invasion and the division of their community by a new international boundary. Paseños were not passive observers of these events; many fought the U.S. Army at El Brazito, in what is now southern New Mexico. Ramón Ortiz was especially outspoken in his resistance to military occupation in 1848, and would later protest the dispossession of Mexicans in lands that came under dispute after the war. Another front in the fight against foreign domination took place in the church as its clergy in Paso del Norte and Durango began a long struggle to maintain institutional ties across the new border.
The ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 was an obvious turning point in the history of Paso del Norte. The treaty abruptly split this community between two nations; those who lived north of the Rio Grande became residents of the United States. To the west of Paso del Norte, the treaty drew a line from the area of Doña Ana, a village settled by paseños, to the Pacific Ocean. Over the following years, thousands of New Mexicans who wished to remain on their nation’s soil settled in Mesilla, then in northern Chihuahua. After facing border disputes and encroachment from American officials, these repatriates endured the indignity of seeing their new land transferred to the United States in the Gadsden Purchase of 1854.

Despite these sudden and often traumatic shifts in boundary lines, paseños did not experience particularly dramatic cultural changes during these years. Labradores worked the cornfields, orchards, and vineyards that lined the river and acequias. Ranchers tended their herds along the edges of the settlements. Merchants continued the trade along the camino real. The mission churches held services much as they did for the previous two centuries. And while the Bishop of Santa Fe claimed parishes that stood north of the new border, paseños maintained their allegiance to Durango. Small numbers of Euro-Americans arrived in the years before and after the war. At first, they did little to challenge the prevailing faith of the region; many sought marriage and kinship with established residents of Paso del Norte. The Catholic Church mediated these ties.
The Partition of Paso del Norte

In 1836, the Republic of Texas declared its independence from Mexico and claimed Mexican lands east of the Río Grande as its territory. From Texas’ perspective, *paseños* in communities such as Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario became part of the breakaway republic. In reality, Texas only effectively governed – over Mexico’s objections – the eastern half of the present-day state. Texas attempted to exercise its claims over the far west. In 1841 its president Mirabeau B. Lamar launched a commercial and military expedition to Santa Fe, New Mexico. A force of 321 teamsters, merchants, and soldiers set out west to establish trade links and develop political ties with New Mexico.

This expedition was a failure, despite many indications that Texans would find success in this region. New Mexicans had rebelled against centralist policies in 1837 during the Río Arriba Rebellion, an event with some superficial similarities to Texas’ struggle against Santa Anna. Commercial ties held even more promise; from the end of the Spanish colonial period onward, *nuevomexicanos* and *chihuahuenses* had sought greater access to trade routes with the burgeoning economy of the United States. In general, Mexicans in the northern frontier extended friendly welcomes to merchants and

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their wares. However, the 1841 expedition to Santa Fe was, foremost, an act of conquest that aimed to extend Texas’ sovereignty over the area. This incursion led to lasting enmity amongst many Hispanic New Mexicans toward “Texans” for decades to come.\footnote{331} When this half-starved party reached the frontiers of eastern New Mexico, they faced prompt arrest, followed by a march along the Camino Real to Chihuahua.\footnote{332} Along their path, Mexican soldiers subjected the Texans to harsh treatment, as to them, these visitors were not prospective trading partners and political partners; they were an enemy force.

While Euro-American accounts of the march through New Mexico and Chihuahua centered on descriptions of their hardships and charges of cruel treatment on the part of Mexican commanders, participants in the Santa Fe Expedition lauded Ramón Ortiz, the cura of El Paso. George Wilkins Kendall, editor of the New Orleans Picayune, published a narrative of the expedition that praised the priest’s hospitality.\footnote{333} After Mexican troops had “manacled, tortured, and starved” him in a march along the Jornada del Muerto, Kendall recounted much kinder treatment at Paso del Norte.\footnote{334} Padre Ortiz provided Kendall with food and wine, money, a fresh horse and saddle, clean clothes, and his first proper bath in months.\footnote{335} Kendall noted, “seldom have I parted from a friend with more real regret than with Ortiz,” whom he described as a “young, generous, and

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\footnote{331}{Mora, 93. Mora describes throughout this book the lingering rancor towards “Texans” in territorial New Mexico. “Tejano” became a label for any unfriendly Euro-American settler.}

\footnote{332}{H. Bailey Carroll, “Texan Santa Fe Expedition.”}


\footnote{334}{Ibid., 87.}

\footnote{335}{Ibid.}
liberal priest.” Another participant in the expedition, the British naturalist Thomas Falconer, praised “the good priest Raymon Orthez” in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1843.

Padre Ortiz’s hospitality aside, municipal and military officials in the region reacted with alarm toward Texas’s uprising against Mexico and the Santa Fe Expedition. In real terms, the Santa Fe Expedition marked the opening round of conflict between paseños and invaders from the north. While members of this party arrived in Paso del Norte as starving, half-naked prisoners, at least in their own accounts, frontier Mexicans would face far stronger opponents in the years to come. After the Santa Fe Expedition arrived, Paso del Norte acutely felt the breakdown in relations between the United States and Mexico. In the summer of 1842, Mexican commanders tried to mend relations with their longtime enemies in the borderlands, and drafted treaties with the Gila and Mescalero Apache. The national government struggled to gain the loyalty of frontier residents. In December of 1845, the Ministry of the Treasury distributed a circular that requested public contributions against the “invasion of Yankees.” Later that year, authorities compiled a detailed census in the partido, in which they listed adult males, as well as the number of horses, firearms, and bows and arrows each man owned. Nonetheless, the array of weapons that paseños catalogued in 1845 would not match the

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336 Ibid.
339 CJMA, Part II, roll 33, sequence 1, 1-9.
340 CJMA, Part II, roll 34, sequence 1, 587-620.
modern rifles of United States forces. The region had only 150 regular, professional troops, and the citizens militia depended heavily on musketeers and archers.  

In 1845, Bishop José Antonio Zubiría returned to the northernmost parishes of his diocese in his second pastoral visit to Paso del Norte and New Mexico. While this event lacked the epochal significance of the 1833 visit, it did further a divide between institutional Catholicism and popular religion that would remain in place for decades to come.  

In New Mexico, the bishop’s attention focused on the growth of hermandades penitentes. These brotherhoods emerged in communities that often lacked permanent or qualified clergy. Bishop Zubiría denounced what he termed the “butchery” (carnicería) they practiced when they performed acts of bodily penitence.

The arrival of the bishop in Paso del Norte provoked far less commentary on local religious observances. Unlike the widely scattered villages of northern New Mexico, most of the communities that formed the Vicariate Forane of Paso del Norte were within sight of the two mountains that flank the pass. The exception was the emerging village community of Doña Ana, approximately eighty kilometers or fifty miles to the north of Paso del Norte. This community formed in 1843, when Bernabé Montoya led paseños to

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341 De la Vara, 83. De la Vara also cites the military census, which found 796 armed men in the region, including those with bows and arrows or with lances.

342 Many studies on the 1845 pastoral visit to New Mexico concern Bishop Zubiría’s relationship with the hermandades penitentes of New Mexico. See Carroll, 13-14 and Weigle, 24-25.


the vicinity of present-day Las Cruces, New Mexico. The surrounding Mesilla Valley would experience a population surge in the following decade, as it became a place of refuge for New Mexicans who wished to remain in Mexican territory after the U.S.-Mexico War.

Relatively little correspondence had taken place between the diocese and Paso del Norte in the years between 1833 and 1845. An occasional stream of printed circulars made their way to Paso del Norte, such as a February 12, 1840, document that described parishioners’ obligations toward the Catholic Church and the *arancel* of 1843 that set fees for sacramental acts in the diocese. No other surviving communications entered the parish archives until 1845, when Zubiría’s northern visitation began. The relative lack of attention directed at Paso del Norte may reflect the confidence that Bishop Zubiría held toward his “much beloved son” (*muy amado hijo*), Ramón Ortiz. Padre Ortiz rose in authority in the years between 1838 and 1845, becoming the permanent vicar forane and ecclesiastic judge on August 11, 1841. The Bishop of Durango often had less kind words for clergy in other frontier communities. In a discussion of Zubiría’s 1845 visit to New Mexico, David J. Weber finds that the bishop found the church of New Mexico in “the same state of decadence as it had been twelve years before,” and the bishop placed

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346 ACCJ, roll 3, February 12, 1840, “Arancel de 1843.”

347 Mary Taylor, “Cura de la Frontera, Ramón Ortiz,” 73.

348 Ibid. Taylor points out that Ortiz excelled in examinations for his 1841 *concurso*, which tested the priest on a variety of sacramental and theological matters.
the blame on the “neglectful priesthood” of the territory. Among the evils Zubiría noted were “priests who set poor examples in their own lives, who failed to baptize infants, who misused sacraments such as confession, and who said Mass with filthy chalices, dirty altar clothes, and shabby or improper vestments.” Padre Ortiz never faced similar reproaches of his conduct.

At the time of Bishop Zubiría’s second visitation, The United States and Mexico were rapidly advancing toward war. James Polk won the presidential election of the United States in 1844 on a platform of expansionism in the west. Even before Polk’s inauguration, President John Tyler and the United States Congress approved Texas’ statehood in March of 1845, but Mexico continued to regard that place as a rebellious district. The United States also accepted Texas’ claim to the Rio Grande border. Once again, a distant government claimed authority over paseños who lived north of the Rio Grande. However, the United States marshaled far greater forces than the irregular military of the Republic of Texas. Armed conflict began when U.S. and Mexican troops skirmished along the lower reaches of the Rio Grande in April 1846, on the present-day boundary between Texas and Tamaulipas.

After the United States’ declaration of war in May of 1846, its armies invaded Mexico on multiple fronts. Colonels Stephen Kearny and Alexander Doniphan led troops to New Mexico, and after taking Santa Fe, they divided their forces. Kearny marched on California, and Doniphan went south. Chihuahua’s Governor Angel Trías responded to this threat with the formation of the Ejército de Operaciones sobre Nuevo México, which

350 Ibid.
set out north to repel Doniphan’s force.\textsuperscript{351} On Christmas Day, 1846, these soldiers faced Doniphan’s force in a battle known as Temescalitos in Mexico and El Brazito in the United States.\textsuperscript{352} Doniphan, with the benefit of breech-loading rifles, prevailed in this clash in the Mesilla Valley and marched to Paso del Norte. On December 27, 1846, Colonel Doniphan entered Paso del Norte, and raised the United States flag in its plaza.\textsuperscript{353}

Despite the praise that Euro-American travelers often lavished on the “good priest” of the Guadalupe Parish, Ramón Ortiz forcefully resisted U.S. occupation. In 1846, facing the prospect of foreign invasion, he reportedly pledged that Paso del Norte will only be taken “over our dead bodies.”\textsuperscript{354} Colonel Doniphan accused Ortiz of maintaining correspondence with Mexican forces during his occupation of Paso del Norte, and held him hostage for several months, threatening Padre Ortiz with death if Mexicans engaged in resistance against his army.\textsuperscript{355} In John Taylor Hughes’ account of Doniphan’s invasion of New Mexico and Chihuahua, Ortiz was one of several \textit{paseños} who “were detected in secretly arranging in correspondence with the troops at Chihuahua, whereby they were endeavoring to plot and work our destruction.”\textsuperscript{356} Hughes described “Ramond Ortiz” as a “shrewd and intelligent man,” qualities which apparently justified his imprisonment. Soon afterward, he described Paso del Norte as having “an

\textsuperscript{351} De la Vara, 86.
\textsuperscript{352} Mora, 23.
\textsuperscript{353} Timmons, 95.
\textsuperscript{354} John Taylor Hughes, \textit{Doniphan’s Expedition; Containing an Account of the Conquest of New Mexico} (Cincinnati: U. P. James, 1847), 115.
\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 141.
industrious and peaceable population of at least 8,000.” By implication, leaders such as Ramón Ortiz could disturb this tranquility through manipulating the people into resistance. Therefore, Colonel Doniphan kept close watch on the priest. Cura Ortiz did not appear in parish records from late December 1846 to around April 19, 1847, as Bernardino Hinojos took charge of the Guadalupe Parish.358

At this juncture, Ramón Ortiz stood as a proud and unshakable defender of Mexican honor in the face of his enemies; according to John Taylor Hughes, the parish priest of Guadalupe described the invading troops as “devils” and not “men.”359 Over the decade that followed the war, he would continue to engage in resistance against U.S. annexation and occupation. Yet, Padre Ortiz balanced his advocacy of Mexican interests with his role as an arbitrator in conflicts between Euro-Americans and Mexicans along the new border. The Guadalupe Parish performed marriages between male settlers and native-born women, and worked to integrate newcomers – including Mexico’s former enemies – into Paso del Norte.

**War and Marriage**

The tumult of the war was apparent in the Parish of Guadalupe, and the war and occupation left a mark on its records. After December 17, 1846, activities at the parish ceased, and the Guadalupe Parish recorded no further baptisms, marriages, or burials until February 1, 1847. The first marriage at Paso del Norte after the United States

357 Ibid. 142.

358 ACCJ, Roll 10, “Libro de Matrimonios,” April 19, 1847.

359 Ibid.
invasion involved Francisco Flecher, a Frenchman, and Bárbara Lucero, a vecina from
the community. While the vast majority of the seventy-four weddings that followed the
Flecher-Lucero wedding involved native-born Mexicans and vecinos of Paso del Norte,
the war brought foreign settlers to Mexico’s northern border. At the very time that Paso
del Norte witnessed the levy of conscripts and patriotic exhortations to defend Mexico’s
territorial integrity and national honor, its citizens began to view Euro-Americans as
merchants, neighbors, and relatives by marriage or affinity. The juxtaposition of often
bitter enmity over land use, economic power, political rights, and racial discrimination
with personal and intimate relationships between ethnic Mexicans and Euro-Americans
emerged as a defining feature of borderlands communities at an early stage.

For the most part, the small numbers of male Euro-American settlers who arrived
in Paso del Norte during the years before the arrival of large-scale migration in the 1880s
often “assimilated” into Mexican culture, at least in the sense that they often adopted
Spanish as a second language, Hispanicized their names, and converted to Roman
Catholicism, especially if they sought intermarriage with paseñas. Euro-American men in
the borderlands styled themselves don and sought to establish homes and estates that
matched or surpassed those of the local Mexican elite. Marriage with the daughters of
prominent Hispanic families constituted another element of this privilege.

Roman Catholic Euro-American settlers might have had less cultural distance
from Mexicans than their Protestant counterparts, but a common faith did not inevitably
lead to mutual tolerance or expressions of religious solidarity among Catholics of
different ethnicities. A Catholic immigrant encountered a different set of impediments to

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360 ACCJ, Roll 10, February 1, 1847.
marriage that new Protestant converts to Roman Catholicism did not face. Andrés Reséndez points out that these Catholic settlers in the northern Mexican Borderlands often faced substantial obstacles to full inclusion. Roman Catholic Europeans or North Americans who sought marriage might have to seek a dispensation for being foreign (*dispensa de estranjería*) or a dispensation for vagrancy (*dispensa de vagos*). These processes ultimately required approval at a diocesan see such as Durango.\(^{361}\) For those who had been Catholics before their arrival in the region, these prenuptial requirements were burdensome and time-consuming as they required considerable expense and relied on fragile communications.\(^{362}\) A requirement to seek dispensation as a vagrant, Reséndez asserts, was a particular insult to the pride of many settlers.\(^{363}\) The requirement that the church thoroughly investigate “vagrants” arose in the context of early modern Europe, where impoverished migrants posed problems of documentation for parish priests. These requirements were less suited for the later realities of international migration and the assimilation of “immigrants” across national and continental boundaries. However, local clergy, especially in isolated frontier regions had fairly wide latitude, and they could choose to approach the marriages of Euro-Americans and Hispanics with relative leniency.\(^{364}\)

Francisco Flecher married Bárbara Lucero with relatively little opposition from the parish of Guadalupe after seeking naturalization in Mexico in 1846. On March 6 of

\(^{361}\) Reséndez, 137.

\(^{362}\) Ibid., 137-138.

\(^{363}\) Ibid.

\(^{364}\) Ibid.
that year, he filed a request for citizenship with the local justice of the peace (juez de la paz) Pablo Meléndrez. In his request, Flecher stated he was a native of Brest, France, unmarried and a laborer by trade. He offered Juan (John) Debar and Santiago (James) Magoffin as witnesses on his behalf. Magoffin, who was a settler from the United States, frequently acted as an advocate for Euro-Americans who sought assistance with Mexican civil and church authorities. Magoffin and Debar vouched for the good character and stability of Flecher, and in an added statement, Meléndrez certified that the Frenchman was of “irreproachable conduct” and had lived in the community for at least two years. The final outcome of Flecher’s naturalization case is unclear, as the U.S.-Mexico War broke out within weeks of his request.

Flecher remained in Paso del Norte at the time of United States occupation, and married Bárbara Lucero of Paso del Norte on February 1, 1847. Francisco San Juan and Nicolás Rodríguez served as witnesses. As Flecher had only two witnesses for his marriage, a diligencia most likely did not take place. However, his naturalization request accompanied other prenuptial investigations in the parish archives. At this time, ecclesiastical and civil authority largely acted in concert, as they had done in the 1833 divorce case of Bárbara Aguirre and Francisco Belarde. After 1867, the triumph of liberal forces in Mexico would separate municipal and ecclesiastical settings.

Francisco Flecher and Bárbara Lucero de Flecher ultimately settled in the New Mexico Territory after its incorporation into the United States. Francis and Bárbara “Flitcher” were residents of the Stevenson Silver Mine of Doña Ana County, New

365 AACJ, March 6, 1846, “Francisco Fletcher to Pablo Meléndrez.”

366 ACCJ, Roll 3, March 6, 1846, “Pablo Meléndrez Statement on Francisco Flecher.”
Mexico in the 1860 U.S. Census. The owner of the mine, Hugh Stephenson, was an early settler from the United States. In the late 1840s, he established a silver mining operation in Doña Ana County, and the presence of Flecher at this site reflected the interwoven histories of many early Euro-American arrivals in the region. Ten years later, in 1870, census takers enumerated Francis and Bárbara “Fletcher” as residents of Doña Ana County with their two children (Cereno and Eleanor/Helena) and two servants (María Ortega and Rosalie Bustera). In 1874, Flecher’s integration into the local community was furthered by the marriage of their daughter, Helena, to Guadalupe Ascárate, whose extended family had several large land grants in the Paso del Norte region. The Ascárate family’s connections brought about the movement of indigenous residents of the old Guadalupe Mission community, Manso, Piro, and Tigua, to the site of Tortugas, near Las Cruces.

Hugh Stephenson, the owner of the mine at Doña Ana where Flecher worked, was among the first immigrants from the United States to arrive in Paso del Norte in the Mexican period. In August, 1828, Stephenson married Juana María Ascárate, and began to work on Ascárate family holdings. Among these sites was a silver ore deposit at


370 Sklar, 15-16.

371 Kohout places his arrival at 1824 with a wagon train along the Camino Real.
Corralitos, where Stephenson began over forty years of work as a miner in the region.\textsuperscript{372} Stephenson profited handsomely from his marriage into the Ascárate family and the experience he gained at Corralitos. At the time of his death in 1870, Stephenson owned mines in both the Organ Mountains near Doña Ana, where Francisco Flecher worked, and exploited his own mines in the Corralitos district in Chihuahua.\textsuperscript{373}

The acquisition of property rights by foreigners emerged as a very sensitive issue in Mexico in the first decades of independence. Mexico had two contrary concerns with land ownership in the northern frontier. On one hand, the impulse to populate and exploit its vast northern territories inspired policies aimed at promoting immigration. The Colonization Law of 1824 granted land, tax incentives, and guarantees of security to new settlers.\textsuperscript{374} This law contained language indicating preferences for settlers who became naturalized Mexican citizens, and affirmed Roman Catholicism as the state religion. However, the weakness of the Mexican government in the region and the presence of many squatters who disregarded even the lenient terms of the colonization laws led to restrictions. On the other hand, filibustering, Texas independence, and “Manifest Destiny” expansionism north of the border led Mexican officials to restrict acquisitions by newcomers from the United States. In 1830, after Manuel Mier y Terán inspected Texas, and found widespread disregard for Mexican authority among English-speaking colonists, Mexico implemented a new colonization policy, the Law of April 6, 1830.

\textsuperscript{372} Kohout. Corralitos is located in northeastern Chihuahua, near Casas Grandes. Later in 1885, Corralitos was purchased as part of the first Mormon colonies in the region; John Mason Hart, \textit{Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War} (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 240. The Stephenson family’s ownership of Corralitos preceded the Mormon presence in the Casas Grandes district.

\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{374} Weber, \textit{The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The United States Southwest under Mexico}, 162.
essential terms of the 1824 law remained in place; however, explicit preferences were
given toward European and Mexican settlers in an effort to counteract the migration from
the United States. In Mexican Texas, these revisions did little to impede the wave of
Euro-Americans and their African American slaves.375

New Mexico and Chihuahua also became open to foreign settlement under the
terms of the Colonization Law of 1824. However, unlike Texas, this region’s agricultural
lands were already inhabited by indigenous and Hispanic towns and villages. Large scale
foreign settlement would not take place until the renewal of mining, the expansion of
ranching, and large-scale irrigation emerged later in the nineteenth century. Early foreign
settlers in Paso del Norte mostly consisted of European and Euro-American merchants
who entered the region when the Santa Fe Trail linked Missouri to the Camino Real.
However, as merchants became established in borderlands communities, they also sought
to acquire land and other real property. According to W. H. Timmons, by the 1840s, only
about twelve Anglo-American men permanently resided in Paso del Norte. These
numbers would only slightly increase over the next decade. Euro-American colonists had
an economic importance far out of proportion to their numbers. James Magoffin and
Hugh Stevenson, both Kentucky-born merchants, and Simeon Hart, a miller from New
York, took part in the affairs of the local elite. Mexican authorities, facing war with the
United States, placed restrictions that encouraged “assimilation.” In 1844, Mexico
forbade foreigners to engage in retail trade “unless they were naturalized citizens,
made to Mexicans, or residents in Mexico with their own families.”376 Another

375 Ibid., 170.
376 Timmons, 82, 88.
powerful incentive that encouraged Euro-American marriage to Mexican women was the prevailing system of women’s property rights and the Hispanic concept of community property.

Settlers from the United States and Europe often encountered concepts of land tenure in the borderlands that differed greatly from their home countries. The croplands of the northern Mexican frontier consisted of a variety of private family grants, and before La Reforma, communal holdings and church estates. Outside of the arable fields along the Rio Grande and the acequias, open range lands or terrenos baldíos offered opportunities for independent ranchers and foragers. Paseños also gathered salt in communal beds east of Paso del Norte. The annexation of lands north of the Rio Grande did not immediately end the practice of Spanish and Mexican doctrines of property law in New Mexico and El Paso. A system of legal “hybridity” emerged, melding Anglo-American common law with Hispanic practices dating from the Siete Partidas of medieval Castile. 377

Married women’s status represented an especially significant difference between Hispanic and Euro-American concepts of property rights in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the United States during the time of the U.S.-Mexico War, married women lacked independent property rights under the principle of coverture.378 Husbands gained


378 A discussion of coverture is in Linda Kerber, No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), xxiii, 35. After the annexation of civil law areas, such as Louisiana and the Mexican Cession, colonial French and Spanish concepts such as community property modified, but did not completely overthrow, coverture in parts of the nineteenth century United States. Kerber, 120.
any assets that their wives possessed at the time of marriage, and acquired anything their spouse earned or inherited during the marriage. By contrast, Hispanic-American women in the early nineteenth century borderlands did not lose their property at the time of marriage. While *paseñas* lived in a thoroughly patriarchal society, nineteenth-century Mexican women enjoyed more ownership rights than their contemporaries in the United States. But these rights were not absolute. As Silvia Arrom states in *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857*, “A married woman could own property, but her husband controlled most of it.” Under the principle of community property, husbands and wives shared the wealth they earned or gained in the course of a marriage. The husband, as head of household administered this property, including any wages their wives earned or any goods they produced.

These landholdings made elite Hispanic women especially alluring to Euro-American settlers who encountered difficulty in acquiring property after the more stringent colonization policies that emerged after 1830. The right to “administer” wives’ estates created lucrative opportunities. Rebecca McDowell Craver, in *The Impact of Intimacy: Mexican-Anglo Intermarriage in New Mexico 1821-1846*, finds that the drive to acquire property played a key role in prompting settlers to marry Hispanic women. While husbands did not take possession of their wives’ holdings, marriage gave these men access to the fruits of community property and the ability to acquire holdings from

379 González, 93.
380 Arrom, 67.
381 Ibid.
new kinship networks. Craver also argues that, despite concerns with foreign expansionism and encroachment, Hispanic families in the borderlands often saw a value to forming alliances with individual Euro-Americans who brought new economic opportunities and connections to emerging trade routes and new sources of income. Members of both communities were often willing participants in this marital exchange.

Immigrants such as Francisco Flecher, a French Catholic who gained the confidence of local residents, had relatively few barriers to marriage in Paso del Norte. However, a growing number of Euro-Americans who had little or no familiarity with Catholicism also sought marriage with *paseñas* in the middle of the nineteenth century, especially after the United States-Mexico War. For Protestants, their requests for marriage uniformly involved baptism into Roman Catholicism.

A generation after Juana María Azcárate and Hugh Stephenson married in Paso del Norte, their daughter Rita Stephenson Azcárate also sought marriage with a settler from the United States, Israel Bush Richardson. Richardson, then an army major and veteran of the Seminole Wars and the recent conflict with Mexico, sought Ramón Ortiz’s assistance in his plans to marry in the summer of 1850. In a request drafted on his behalf in Spanish, Richardson identified himself as a native of Vermont, who “does not

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383 Ibid.

384 Craver points out that, even in the intensive violence of the Río Arriba Rebellion of 1837, Anglo settlers were not targets of reprisal. Craver, 17. Likewise, during the United States-Mexico War, there are no indications of popular anger or retaliation directed toward Euro-Americans and their families, though Mexican officials did imprison American citizens who openly worked for the invasion such as James Magoffin. However, even in this case, Magoffin received mild treatment in prison, and soon after the war, he resettled in Paso del Norte, Chihuahua. Martin Donell Kohout, "Magoffin, James Wiley," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fma13 (accessed July 25, 2012).

profess, until today, any religion (*ninguna religión*), but firmly intends to enter the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church.” He requested a dispensation for foreigners (*dispensa de ultramar*), and expressed his hope that, once baptized, he would be able to marry with no further impediments. Richardson also included a second statement, in which he identified himself as a U.S. Army Major, thirty-one years of age. He affirmed that he had no relationship to the bride and stated that the difference of religion (*la diferencia de cultos*) was the only barrier to their marriage. Richardson offered James Magoffin and Agustín Fischer as witnesses.

Rita Stephenson Ascárate also made a written declaration, apparently in her hand, to Ramón Ortiz. In this letter, she described herself as a native of Paso del Norte, twenty-one years of age, and Roman Catholic. She identified her parents as “Heugh Stephenson” and Juana María Ascárate, and she declared that there “is no impediment, apart from him not being a Catholic.” However, Rita Stevenson Ascárate added that Major Richardson “is willing to embrace the Catholic faith (*abrazar la religión católica*)” to remove this barrier to their marriage. On the 29th of July, Ramón Ortiz also entered statements from James Magoffin and Agustín Fischer. These men confirmed Richardson’s identity and his status as a major in the United States Army, and testified to his free consent to be married, and the lack of any known impediments. They also vouched for his character. Only his religion, or lack of religion, stood as an impediment.

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386 ACCJ, Roll 3, “Israel Richardson to Ramón Ortiz, July 29, 1850.” The document gave the prospective bride’s name as “Rita Estivenson.”

387 Ibid.

388 ACCJ, Roll 3, July 29, 1850, “Rita Stephenson to Ramón Ortiz.”
Richardson appeared before the parish of Guadalupe as a blank slate, who was unbaptized and without any lingering attachments to any other church or sect.

Major Richardson’s ignorance of Catholic doctrine and foreign origin prompted Ortiz to refer the question to the Bishop of Durango, José Antonio Zubiría. In a letter to the Bishop, Padre Ortiz wrote that Richardson’s witnesses established that he freely consented to marriage. Remarkably, while the war with the United States was a recent memory, Ortiz seemed to indicate that Richardson’s status as a major in the United States Army proved his suitability for conversion and marriage. Richardson earned a battlefield promotion to major on September 13, 1847, “for gallant and meritorious conduct acting as a member of the storming party in the Battle of Chapultepec.”

During his service in the U.S.-Mexican War, he earned the name “Fighting Dick,” and by all accounts, he had no moral qualms about the war with Mexico. In his letter to Bishop Zubiría, Father Ortiz spoke of the good reputation Major Richardson enjoyed among those who were “educated with him and who served with him,” and considered him “honorable.” In language that suggested a regard for Richardson’s calidad, Padre Ortiz described the major as a member of “one of the first families of his country.”

Despite Richardson’s reputation, his religious background posed a barrier to his marriage in the Guadalupe parish. Ortiz wrote of Richardson that “he does not know the forms of our religion; he says he knows the Apostolic Creed and the Principal Mysteries of our faith, from having learned them from a Catholic priest from Canada who had been


390 ACCJ, July 29, 1850.
his French teacher. He already wishes to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism." The Bishop of Durango, who was on a pastoral visit to the area in the summer of 1850, responded promptly. Zubiría indicated that the marriage could take place if Richardson was disposed to embrace the Catholic faith, complied with all sacramental obligations, and learned the dogma of the faith. Bishop Zubiría concluded by affirming to Ortiz that he trusted in his “prudence and discretion.” Apparently, Richardson diligently complied with the requirements the Bishop set forth; by August 3, 1850, he was a married man and a communicant in the Roman Catholic Church.

Israel Richardson’s marriage to Rita Stephenson Ascárate was short but eventful; the two traversed the United States in the year after their marriage. After his wedding, the major took a six-month furlough from military service, and brought his bride to the Midwest and New England. The couple visited his farm at Pontiac, Michigan, and his birthplace in Vermont in the months that followed their wedding. Major Richardson and Rita Stephenson Ascárate returned to the borderlands by cutter from New York to New Orleans, a steamer from Louisiana to St. Louis, and wagon train on the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico. They returned to Paso del Norte around the time of the first wedding anniversary; Rita was expecting a child. Tragically, one year and three days after their marriage, Rita Stephenson died while giving birth to Teodoro or Theodore.

391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.
393 Mason, 65-66.
Virginius Stephenson. Their son died in Paso del Norte six months later, as Major Richardson served in central New Mexico’s forts.395

Israel Richardson eventually returned to his farm in Michigan after his discharge from the army in 1855. During the Civil War, he entered the Union Army again and attained the rank of major general. Richardson gained fame during that conflict by being counted among the highest ranking casualties of the September 17, 1862, Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest day in American military history. Richardson received shrapnel wounds, and succumbed to infection and pneumonia in November of that year. Abraham Lincoln visited his bedside to comfort him as he neared death.396 None of Richardson’s biographies or published papers indicated any further adherence to Catholicism after the deaths of his wife and son in Paso del Norte. Richardson did lead an Irish brigade into battle at Antietam. General Richardson was a fervent admirer of his Irish Catholic soldiers; however, his affinities with them appeared to be borne from his respect for their fighting ability, not his religious sympathies. When Richardson heard that one of his subordinates had “hid behind a haystack” as the Irish rushed to fight, Richardson reportedly charged the battlefield, shouting “God damn the field officers!” This seemed to be the extent of his religious expression after leaving Paso del Norte.397

William Corby’s Memoirs of Chaplain Life: Three Years with the Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac offered little insight on Richardson’s beliefs. Corby, a Roman

394 Ibid. 66.
395 Ibid. 74.
396 Mason, 195.
Catholic chaplain who served with the Union Army, recounted Richardson’s gracious treatment toward Roman Catholics, recollecting that he ordered his soldiers “to take good care of the chaplain of the Irish brigade.” Corby also recalled Richardson’s battlefield wounds at Antietam and the prolonged agony that led to the general’s death in some detail. Most tellingly, the chaplain never noted the performance of extreme unction or any other spiritual care. Richardson’s Catholicism had apparently lapsed by this point.

Aside from the pursuit of marriage, there were few indications that personal or spiritual motives drove many Euro-Americans to accept Roman Catholicism in the borderlands. Willa Cather’s remark in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, that Kit Carson “had become a Catholic merely as a matter of form, as Americans usually did when they married a Mexican girl” may very well sum up Protestant settlers’ attitudes toward the faith. Relatively few converts in the borderlands spoke of their experiences as Roman Catholics. Susan Shelby Magoffin, among the first Euro-American women to settle in the region, provided some insights into Protestant Americans’ approaches toward Catholicism. In her diary, Magoffin spoke of attending mass, but inwardly maintaining her Protestant beliefs,

> This morning I have been to mass – not led by idle curiosity, not by a blind faith, a belief in the creed there practiced, but because tis the house of God, and whether Christian or Pagan, I can worship there within myself, as well as in a protestant church, or my own private chamber. If I have sinned in going there in this belief, I pray for pardon for ‘twas done

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400 Susan Shelby Magoffin (1827-1855) was the wife of Samuel Magoffin. They migrated to Paso del Norte in 1846, and, during her journey through New Mexico in 1846 and 1847, she kept a diary.
in ignorance. I am not an advocate for the Catholic faith. It is not for me to judge; whether it be right or wrong; judgment alone belongs to God. If they are wrong we (if alone in the right way) are not to rail at them, but in brotherly love to use our little influence to guide them into the straight path.\(^{401}\)

Susan Magoffin had private reservations about Catholicism. Many other Euro-American travelers in the nineteenth-century borderlands disapproved of Catholic religious practice or the conduct of the priesthood, but these attitudes did not lead to significant efforts to challenge the church or the culture of the borderlands. Major efforts at Protestant or Mormon missionary work came later, as non-Hispanic settlers sought to more thoroughly “Americanize” borderlands society. Aside from military chaplains, Protestant denominations did not rapidly expand into New Mexico. This paragraph in the Methodist Episcopal Church Missionary Society Bulletin of 1888 summed up the trajectory of Protestantism in Santa Fe,

> The first Protestant church building was erected in 1853. It was a Baptist church in Santa Fé, and was built of adobe. In 1866, the Presbyterian Board of Domestic Missions sent Rev. D. M. McFarland, who purchased the adobe church, then in ruins. It was put in repair and occupied until 1882, when it was torn down, and a handsome brick church was erected.\(^{402}\)

This also encapsulated the general outline of Euro-American settlement in much of the New Mexico region, including El Paso County, Texas. The initial wave of newcomers was small and, as their adobe chapel symbolized, they accommodated to the cultural landscape of the borderlands. By the 1860s, this congregation had dissolved, and the Baptist chapel became a ruin. The Euro-American population who arrived in this


region in the first generation after the U.S.-Mexico War was a transient population of merchants, soldiers, and other short-term residents who did little to create permanent congregations. Male settlers who stayed more permanently often married Hispanic women; invariably this encompassed their baptism in the Catholic Church. The resolution of the U.S. Civil War enabled an increase in Euro-American settlement and more permanent Protestant institutions and congregations. Finally, the arrival of railways around 1880-1885 led to a tidal wave of settlement and an explosive growth in the number of denominations. The displacement of adobe buildings with “handsome” brick and stone architecture often signified a cultural triumph to Euro-Americans.

W. W. H. Davis, in his travels in New Mexico, sympathetically described this early Baptist church of Santa Fe in his 1857 book *El Gringo; or, New Mexico and Her People*. He described its congregation as “American residents in Santa Fé, some soldiers from the garrison, and a few Mexicans.”

403 Davis said nothing more of the role that Hispanic New Mexicans had in this congregation, but he revealed its Euro-American members’ attitudes toward their new home,

\[ \text{Breathe, Holy Spirit, light of love,} \\
\quad \text{O’er this benighted land,} \\
\quad \text{Till Christ his majesty shall prove,} \\
\quad \text{And king of nations stand.} \]

404

Despite 250 years of Roman Catholicism in the “city of the holy faith” as of 1857, in the view of Davis and many other Protestants, Santa Fe was virgin ground for “Christian” missionary work. At the time of the war, the United States was experiencing

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403 W. W. H. Davis, *El Gringo; or, New Mexico and Her People* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1857), 271. Santa Fé, with an accent, was the prevalent orthography in the nineteenth century.

404 Ibid.
an unprecedented wave of Roman Catholic immigration. Anti-Catholic politics, often
directed against Irish immigrants, became a potent political force at the very time that the
United States invaded Mexico and annexed its northern borderlands. At times, the clash
between the United States and Mexico in the Borderlands could involve deep-seated
religious animosity. Raymund Paredes states that a legacy of English Protestant
aborrence of Catholicism melded with the anti-Spanish prejudices that stemmed from
military conflicts of the sixteenth century.405 In this line of argument, Anglo-American
frontiersmen brought a deep-seated heritage of Hispanophobia with them when they
reached the Spanish Borderlands. Mexicans could also view the northern invader through
the lens of religious difference. Ángel Trías, the Governor of Chihuahua and commander
of Mexican forces that defended Paso del Norte at the battle of El Brazito, reportedly
warned his soldiers on November 9, 1846 that “the sacrilegious invaders of Mexico are
approaching El Paso,” and cast the U.S. Army as “pirates.”406

Nevertheless, in areas such as Paso del Norte and New Mexico, the collision of
Protestantism and Roman Catholicism was often secondary to the divisions that emerged
within the Roman Catholic Church in the Borderlands. The U.S.-Mexico War not only
redrew the political map of North America, it also resulted in new, and often disputed,
ecclesiastical boundaries for bishoprics and vicariates. The creation of new “American”
dioceses, led by European and Euro-American bishops, ensured that a cultural struggle
would continue well after the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

405 Raymund Paredes, “The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States,” in En Aquel
Entonces: Readings in Mexican American History, eds. Manuel G. Gonzales and Cynthia M. Gonzales

Bishop Lamy Comes to the Borderlands

Changes in diocesan boundaries in the Roman Catholic Church, or the elevation of new bishoprics, often follow adjustments in national boundaries. In the U.S.- Mexican borderlands, these shifts began even before these new boundaries received international recognition. Even before Mexico relinquished its claim on Texas, the Vatican established the Apostolic Vicariate of Galveston in 1842. Its first vicar apostolic was Jean-Marie Odin, a Frenchman who held the titular see of Claudiopolis. Under Odin, Galveston sought to affirm its pastoral authority over all Catholic parishes in the breakaway republic. In 1847, the Vatican elevated Galveston to a diocese, and in recognition of Texas’ annexation, placed the bishopric under the metropolitan archdiocese of New Orleans in 1850.

Bishop Odin would be the first of several French clergymen to head new dioceses and vicariates in the vast region that the United States annexed from Mexico. Odin’s successor at Galveston, Claude Marie Dubuis, served at Galveston from 1862 to 1896.

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407 A controversial example of this principle involved the Germanization of dioceses in occupied Poland during World War II. Pierre Blet and Lawrence J. Johnson, *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* (Paulist Press, 1999), 72-73. Other changes in boundaries have produced similar realignments. In 1880, after the War of the Pacific, the dioceses of Tarapacá (1880) and Antofagasta (1881) were elevated in cities that had previously belonged to the Arequipa Diocese, based in Peru (apparently the Bolivian districts of the Atacama did remain under Arequipa after independence, and Peru and Bolivia had briefly reunited from 1836 to 1839). John Lloyd Mecham, *Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 228-231.


409 Ibid.

The first four heads of the Diocese of Santa Fe were also natives of France; Jean-Baptiste Lamy (served 1850-1885), Jean-Baptiste Salpointe (1885-1894), Placide Louis Chapelle (1894-1897), and Pierre Bourgade (1899-1908). Salpointe and Bourgade had previously served as the heads of the Diocese of Tucson before their investiture in Santa Fe; they led the church in Arizona from 1868 to 1899. The third Bishop of Tucson, Henri Granjon, who served from 1900 to 1922, was born in France as well. Joseph Machebeuf, who accompanied Lamy to the borderlands in 1850, became the first head of the Diocese of Denver, where he served from 1868 to 1889. Denver’s second bishop, Nicholas Matz, also came from France.

An exception to this dominance of borderlands dioceses by French hierarchs took place in California. Monterey in Alta California was the only Mexican town in what is now the United States to become a diocesan see before the United States-Mexico War. This bishopric had two Mexican-born prelates, Francisco García Diego y Moreno from 1840 to 1846 and José María González Rubio, from 1846 to 1849. However, Bishop González Rubio’s tenure ended shortly after annexation, and the Catalan Spaniards Joseph Sadoc Alemany (served 1850-1853) and Thaddeus Amat i Brusi (1853-1878) led


413 Ibid.


this diocese in the early years of California statehood. Bishop Alemany also presided over the new see of San Francisco from 1853 until 1884.416

The formation of dioceses in this region posed a variety of challenges as national and subnational borders were in a state of flux. For instance, the new Diocese of Galveston asserted its ecclesiastical authority over all Catholic parishes in Texas, including Texas’ western land claims. However, due to the great distance and a lack of regular transportation between Paso del Norte and the rest of Texas, no effective connections existed during this time.417 In practice, local parishes remained aligned with the bishopric with which they maintained effective communications. Personal loyalties between priests and superiors also mattered. Despite claims by bishops in Galveston and Santa Fe on Doña Ana and El Paso counties, the entire Paso del Norte area remained under the leadership of Ramón Ortiz in his capacity as vicar forane. In turn, Ortiz regarded the Bishop of Durango, José Antonio Zubiría, as his superior and worked to maintain the influence of their diocese north of the border.

In 1850, the Vatican formed the Apostolic Vicariate of Santa Fe to administer the parishes of the new U.S. Territory of New Mexico. This act separated much of the U.S. Southwest from the diocese of Durango, and Jean-Baptiste Lamy arrived with a mandate to bring all of New Mexico under his administration. Nonetheless, territorial boundaries shifted constantly during the bishop’s term in Santa Fe. The Compromise of 1850 had settled Texas’ western boundary as it definitively placed El Paso County in Texas and it


ended that state’s claims over the entire eastern bank of the Rio Grande to its source.\footnote{Mark J. Stegmaier describes how Texas’ government’s success in forming a county government in El Paso County enabled Texas to secure a claim toward present day El Paso. Mark J. Stegmaier, \textit{Texas, New Mexico, and the Compromise of 1850} (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1996), 28, 34. Likewise, Texas’ inability to form effective county governments to the north of El Paso thwarted the state’s other western claims. Stegmaier 48-49. Stegmaier attributes this to the lines of communication that began to open between Austin, San Antonio and El Paso at this time, including regular wagon trains. 48-49, 58.} 

However, New Mexico’s southern boundary with Mexico remained in dispute. Article V of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had defined the southern boundary of New Mexico and Mexico as the “first branch of the Gila River” and a line “north of the town called Paso” from the Gila River to the Rio Grande or Rio Bravo.\footnote{“The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” Avalon Project, Yale University, \url{http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp} (July 25, 2012).} The imprecise nature of this line and the constantly shifting channels of this river created new border disputes along New Mexico’s southern flank.\footnote{A detailed treatment of the postwar border dispute appears in Óscar J. Martínez, \textit{Troublesome Border} (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 17-21.} Bishop Lamy would arrive in a New Mexico Territory with continuously shifting borders.

In 1927, the American writer Willa Cather published \textit{Death Comes for the Archbishop}. This novel, as much of her work, examined the settlement of the American west in the second half of the nineteenth century. \textit{Death Comes for the Archbishop} was a \textit{roman à clef} closely based on the life and career of Bishop Lamy in New Mexico. Cather’s work did much to popularize Lamy as a historic figure in the American West, and portrayed the French clergy as pioneering apostles, who worked earnestly to bring about renewal of their faith in the borderlands.

In the novel, Jean Marie Latour, a character based on Lamy, enjoyed the aid of another French priest, Joseph Vaillant. This figure most directly represents Joseph
Machebeuf, who accompanied Lamy to Santa Fe and later served as the Bishop of Denver. Father Vaillant also has similarities to Jean-Baptiste Salpointe, who arrived in New Mexico in 1859 to serve with Bishop Lamy. In the early chapters of Death Comes for the Archbishop, Latour and Vaillant shared in the hardships of the long and difficult journey across the deserts of Texas and northern Mexico before serving in New Mexico. 421

For the historical Bishop Lamy and Father Machebeuf, a Spanish priest named Antonio Borrajo also served as a traveling companion and translator during the journey to New Mexico. The apparent friendship that Lamy and Borrajo shared in the 1850s would doubtlessly prove surprising to anyone who encountered Padre Borrajo later in his life. Lamy wrote kindly of Borrajo during his journeys of 1850 and 1851. This was a stark contrast to their later relationship. In a brief biographical study of Father Borrajo’s later career in Paso del Norte, Rick Hendricks convincingly shows that “first and foremost he was a passionate defender of what he termed the ‘Hispano-Mexican’ expression of Catholicism in the face of what he saw as the Franco-Anglo expression of Catholicism.” 422 Over time, Lamy came to represent everything Borrajo despised within his church. Paul Cool, in Salt Warriors: Insurgency on the Río Grande, attributes Borrajo’s deep seated hatred of the French Catholic ascendancy in the Borderlands to his Galician upbringing, and his family’s historical memory of the “godless” Napoleonic


occupation of Spain in the early nineteenth century. This might have been the case by the 1870s; however, in the 1850s, Borrajo was part of the legion of European Catholic clergy who arrived to evangelize in the United States’ new frontier.

Bishop Lamy described, in letters written in French to an unnamed colleague in New Orleans, his encounter with Antonio Borrajo in Texas. Bishop Lamy persuaded Borrajo to accompany him to New Mexico in 1850, and Lamy described at length the camaraderie that they shared in their journey. According to Lamy, at the time, Padre Borrajo had arrived in Texas to serve as the parish priest of Nacogdoches, Texas. Nacogdoches emerged in the eighteenth century as the most significant Spanish colonial settlement in eastern Texas. During the years of Texas Independence, the Tejano population of the town suffered violence and forced expulsion. By the time Borrajo arrived in the area, this region had undergone what Gary Clayton Anderson describes as a violent wave of “ethnic cleansing.”

The “Córdova Revolt,” which involved an alliance of Tejanos and Native Americans in the face of the expansion of slave-holding cotton planters, prompted the government of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar to engage in a violent campaign against east Texas’ Hispanic and indigenous communities. During the crackdown, Texas’ authorities arrested thirty-three Hispanics in Nacogdoches. The revolt and subsequent trials made Nacogdoches a decidedly hostile place for Hispanic Texans by the time of

423 Cool, 39.
424 AASF, Roll 56, Loose Documents, Document 3, March 15, 1851.
Borrajo’s arrival. Antonio Borrajo apparently embraced the opportunity to serve in another part of the borderlands, and managed to become part of Bishop Lamy’s party. At one point, Lamy suggested that Borrajo was instrumental in his decision to forego hopes of a career in Europe and commit to working in Santa Fe.

I have a great desire to understand why divine providence has sent me here. If later the needs of my diocese call me to Europe, then I will know for myself that there is a more pressing need. Monsignor, I have followed the advice that you have given me with kindness. I was very indecisive, but providence has sent me proof that she has not abandoned me. Moreover, I have been able to meet Mr. Borrajo, and I have learned from him, he gives me Spanish lessons daily, and now I can converse a little in that tongue.

When they reached Paso del Norte in the late spring of 1851, Bishop Lamy and Father Borrajo were friends and collaborators, not inveterate opponents who represented competing visions of the Catholic faith. After an arduous journey across the deserts of West Texas, Lamy described his arrival at “a place called Socorro,” where he was met with “ceremonial guards.” The next morning, Lamy gave his first sermon in Spanish (la lengua de Dios) to a “crowded congregation on the banks of the Rio Grande, with the cura of Paso del Norte [Ramón Ortiz], who kindly offered his hospitality.” Lamy then offered his description of the community.

This village of El Paso is truly a beautiful spot. They have here all kinds of fruit, they make good wines. It rains very seldom, it has not rained of any consequence these two years, but irrigation supplies the want of rain water. This is a place very much scattered (sic), it contains at least eight thousand inhabitants. The people seem to be good and docile. Their homes


427 AASF, Roll 56, Loose Documents, Document 3, March 15, 1851.

428 AASF, Roll 56, Loose Documents, Mission Documents, Document 8, 1851.
are of mud, they call it a thick daube (sic), but very clean inside, it is so warm that many go half-naked.\footnote{Ibid. This undated letter, from 1851, is in English.}

The state of the sites of worship in Paso del Norte also drew the bishop’s attention; “The few churches I have seen are of the same material as the houses,” Lamy noted. He added that these buildings “might be kept in better order with very little trouble.” Bishop Lamy then described the challenges he anticipated in his new apostolic vicariate: “From what I have heard and the little I have seen, no doubt I may expect to meet with serious difficulties and obstacles, but my hope is in the God of power (sic).” His doubts did not simply stem from his own perceptions of \textit{paseño} churches; Bishop Zubiría’s experiences also influenced Lamy’s perceptions of the challenges of ministering to New Mexico. In a letter dated July 14, 1851, Lamy described a visit by “the Bishop of Sonora (sic)” to New Mexico in 1850, which resulted in the dismissal of “some young Mexican priests.”\footnote{Ibid., July 14, 1851. There is no indication that the Bishop José Lázaro de la Garza y Ballesteros, who served at Sonora from 1837 to 1850, had any such involvement with New Mexico. Sonora did administer Alta and Baja California until 1840. Cheney, “Archdiocese of Hermosillo,” Catholic-Hierarchy, http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dherm.html (accessed July 25, 2012).} After his visit to New Mexico Territory that August, Lamy stated that “the Mexicans are very attached to their religion, but sadly, the greater number of them has forgotten the practice that, God knows, is needed.”\footnote{AASF, August 15, 1851}

Bishop Lamy was hardly alone in his dismal view of frontier clergy and the overall state of Catholicism in the borderlands at this time. In a pastoral letter at the conclusion of this visit, issued in Paso de Norte May 18, 1845, Bishop Zubiría asked parish clergy to review his 1833 letter, which he stated had not been obeyed in the
territory. The bishop mentioned that priests “dared to confess good women” without sufficiently guarding them from public view and they administered penitence outside of confessionals “before his very eyes.” He also denounced the ongoing activities of hermandades penitentes, who had become stronger and more visible over the previous twelve years.432

While Bishop Zubiría’s visitations of 1845 and 1850 broke little new ground, especially in comparison to his epoch-setting 1833 visitation, they did have one apparent effect. In Paso del Norte, communications between Durango and the Guadalupe Parish became more regular. For instance, on December 22, 1845, Padre Ortiz wrote to the see of Durango concerning Agustín Barela and Dolores Cuarón, who had publically betrothed despite having “an affinity of the second degree.”433 In his description of the case, Ramón Ortiz asserted that both families were “honorable,” and had sought to marry one another for some time. Ortiz added that he had asked Dolores Cuarón whether she could find “another husband of her class,” but she continued to express an interest in marrying Agustín. Apparently, the lack of a suitable alternative candidate for marriage reinforced Ortiz’s case for Cuarón’s marriage to Barela. Ortiz concluded that this marriage was necessary to avoid “public scandal.” While this is hardly an extraordinary case for a frontier Catholic parish, it began a pattern of more frequent correspondence.

A drastic shift in attitudes toward the Diocese of Durango took place in New Mexico after 1850. Bishop Zubiría was no longer a meddlesome bishop of a distant see

432 Lecompte, 8. She asserts that at the time of Zubiría’s second visit “he found the penitents stronger than ever.”

433 ACCJ, Roll 3, “Ramón Ortiz to Bishop José Antonio Zubiría,” December 22, 1845.
who sought to impose elitist and orthodox views of Roman Catholicism over its independent-minded clergy. Instead, the Bishop of Durango became the paragon of a Mexican Church that, after 1850, faced unwelcome changes in the borderlands. Many of New Mexican clergy resisted Jean-Baptiste Lamy’s leadership of the church in New Mexico. The disdain that clergymen such as Antonio José Martínez of Taos and José Manuel Gallegos of Albuquerque expressed for Bishop Lamy became legendary. In the course of the 1850s, Lamy removed a number of priests.

New Mexican clergy resisted Bishop Lamy after their dismissal. Padre Gallegos, who Lamy discharged after an unauthorized visit to Durango, entered politics and served as a territorial delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives and as a member of New Mexico’s legislature. In office, Gallegos drew from supporters of the *hermandades penitentes* and worked to counter the leadership of William Carr Lane, the third governor of New Mexico. At one point during his term as a non-voting member of congress, he even wrote a letter to the pope that denounced Lamy’s work in New Mexico. Cura Martínez of Taos defied Lamy even more directly. When Bishop Lamy defrocked Martínez for various offenses, including charges of cohabitation, Martínez simply ignored the bishop. Until the end of his life, Padre Martínez continued to preach and hold

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services in Taos. Bishop Lamy also briefly clashed with the former Vicar Forane of Santa Fe, Juan Felipe Ortiz. When Lamy arrived in Santa Fe, Santa Fe’s vicar refused to step aside until he received orders from Bishop Zubiría. After Bishop Zubiría ordered Juan Felipe Ortiz to accept Lamy’s authority, he remained in Santa Fe as a priest. However, he did little to mask his annoyance with having to labor under Lamy’s direct supervision, and like Gallegos, sent a letter to Rome that denounced the new Bishop of Santa Fe. Ramón Ortiz, the third cousin of Juan Felipe Ortiz, engaged in similar resistance, in that he continued to assert the primacy of the Diocese of Durango over parishes in New Mexico and El Paso County, Texas. However, Lamy could not dismiss Ortiz. The vicar forane of Paso del Norte enjoyed a level of security in his ecclesiastical offices that his counterparts to the north did not enjoy.

While Bishop Lamy’s arrival in Santa Fe represented a dramatic break with the past, some of his critiques of New Mexico’s parish churches and his calls for obedience to Catholic teachings echoed those of Bishop Zubiría’s 1833 statement. In an 1854 pastoral letter, issued soon after the elevation of Santa Fe to a diocesan see, Lamy threatened to withhold sacraments from those who failed to pay tithes. Bishop Lamy was somewhat sharper than Zubiría in his criticisms of the state of marriage and family life. His epistle bluntly ordered cohabiting couples to “separate or marry.” Bishops Lamy and Zubiría had met in Durango in 1851 to discuss the conditions in New Mexico, and

437 Willa Cather, in Death Comes for the Archbishop, presents Padre Martínez (with no change of name) as an especially unscrupulous and morally dissipated character.


440 AASF, Roll 56, Loose Documents, 1854-3.
the two continued to correspond, albeit with decreasing frequency, until Zubiría’s death in 1863. Bishop Zubiría did little to publically encourage resistance to Lamy within New Mexico, at least within its 1850 borders. In most cases, the Bishop of Durango strictly followed the Vatican’s orders concerning the frontier. On November 1, 1851, Bishop Zubiría explicitly acknowledged that Lamy had become the Vicar Apostolic of the Territory of New Mexico. Nonetheless, the Bishop of Durango asserted that Doña Ana and Mesilla in New Mexico and El Paso County, Texas remained under his diocese.

The Church in Divided Paso del Norte

In a September 17, 1852, letter to Bishop Zubiría, Ramón Ortiz extensively reported on the state of the church in “the lower valley towns” (los pueblos de abajo). The arrival of Bishop Lamy and Father Borrajo in 1851 coincided with the restoration of the Socorro and Ysleta Missions. San Elizario, the former Spanish presidio, emerged principal town and seat of El Paso County after its annexation to the United States. From 1843 to 1852, a Franciscan missionary, Andrés de Jesús Camacho, led the effort to rebuild the missions. Camacho served as the parish priest of Socorro from approximately 1843 onward and also supervised work at Ysleta and San Elizario. On March 31, 1852, he delivered the mission to the care of Ortiz.

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442 AASF, November 1, 1851.

443 Ibid.

1852, Father Camacho turned these missions over to Ramón Ortiz’s care. Soon afterward, Texas authorities arrested and imprisoned Father Camacho. In the September 17, 1852 letter, Ortiz mentioned Camacho’s status as a “prisoner of Texas,” but did not elaborate on the charges or circumstances that led to this incarceration.\footnote{Ramón Ortiz to José Antonio Zubiría,” September 17, 1852. Frank Louis Halla, “El Paso and Juárez: A Study of a Bi-Ethnic Community” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas, 1978), 94-95. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/302887492?accountid=7121 (accessed July 25, 2012).}

In light of Camacho’s difficulties, the arrival of a new secular cleric in the region in 1851 might have been very welcome. Ramón Ortiz welcomed Bishop Lamy’s suggestion that Antonio Borrajo remain in the region to minister to San Elizario, Socorro, and Ysleta. However, Cura Ortiz maintained Durango’s claims over the parishes of El Paso County, stating that “they will not be delivered to the jurisdiction of Lamy or Odin” but they “remain subject to Durango.”\footnote{ACCJ, Roll 3, “Ramón Ortiz to José Antonio Zubiría,” September 17, 1852.} Furthermore, while Borrajo arrived with the Apostolic Vicar of New Mexico, in Ramón Ortiz’s view, the Spanish priest now served under his vicariate. For his part, Antonio Borrajo appeared careful to cultivate Ortiz’s trust, and he consulted with the Vicar of Paso del Norte on various pastoral matters.

On July 17, 1852, Borrajo wrote Padre Ortiz over a burial that took place in the Ysleta Pueblo. In the letter, Borrajo described Ysleta as one of the pueblos “in his charge,” and requested Ortiz’s advice on a burial. According to Padre Borrajo, a “young single woman (soltera) had died during childbirth.” Borrajo stated that “she had not been confirmed, and I am doubtful if I can provide a church burial without incurring the penalties that the church has in place against parishes that provide burial for those who do
not merit this.” Father Borrajo viewed Ramón Ortiz to be the most appropriate official to consult on such matters, and deferred to his judgment in such cases. Borrajo, unlike the more independent-minded Franciscan Camacho, would continue to consult with Ortiz in the course of the next three decades. In time, Padre Borrajo became a leader in Hispanic Catholics’ efforts to maintain cross-border allegiances to Paso del Norte and Durango in the face of efforts by Santa Fe or Tucson to extend their hold to the Mexican border. By May 26, 1855, Padre Borrajo even more explicitly sided with Mexican authorities; in a letter to Ramón Ortiz, he explicitly stated that his parish in Socorro remained part of the Diocese of Durango.447

Bishop Zubiría and Vicar Ortiz waged a determined fight to maintain their authority over the parishes north of the border. When Bishop Zubiría acknowledged Lamy’s possession of the New Mexico territory’s churches in 1851, he asserted that *paseño* towns such as San Elizario, Ysleta, and Socorro remained in his diocese. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war between the United States and Mexico, but did not resolve all border disputes. The line between the Gila River and the Rio Grande that marked the boundary near Doña Ana proved to be especially problematic.448 That region experienced a population surge after the war, as New Mexican repatriates arrived to settle Mesilla. A chief concern of Father Ortiz in the years immediately after the war was the care of these Mexicans who had been dislocated by the United States’ annexation of New Mexico. Father Ortiz led much of the effort to resettle Mexican citizens who wished to remain under Mexican governance, and aided in the establishment of Mesilla,


at that time remaining in northern Chihuahua. When the last administration of President Santa Anna sold the region in the Gadsden Purchase of 1853-1854, Ortiz was an outspoken defender of the territorial rights of the Mesilla repatriates, and further contributed to their ultimate relocation to Chihuahua.449

In 1853 New Mexico’s governor William Carr Lane protested to Mexican officials - with no apparent sense of irony – that Ramón Ortiz has “violently dispossessed several citizens of the United States of their homes and lands” by asserting Mexican claims over disputed lands in the Mesilla area. Governor Lane also denounced Ortiz as “a belligerent priest, who had the impudence to come to this town during my absence, and issue barbaric threats against my person in the event that I enter in the disputed territory.”450 Padre Ortiz not only assisted in the relief and resettlement of New Mexicans; he also actively engaged in resistance and protest. While the cura of Guadalupe generally enjoyed amicable relations with Euro-American travelers and settlers, Ortiz could be a fierce opponent of foreigners who – from his perspective – oppressed Mexicans.

The Gadsden Purchase, or La Venta de Mesilla (The Sale of Mesilla), settled this border dispute at the expense of Mesilla’s Mexican loyalists, and satisfied U.S. backers of a transcontinental railway. While the southern boundaries of New Mexico and Arizona


took their present form in this agreement, the new border created a quandary for the Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Zubiría maintained that Doña Ana and Mesilla, despite their annexation by the United States, remained in his diocese. Zubiría maintained these claims through 1859, when he finally instructed Ramón Ortiz to relinquish control of the Doña Ana parishes.451

Despite their troubled relations with Euro-American civil and ecclesiastical authorities, Paso del Norte’s clergy performed marriages between Euro-American newcomers and vecinos. At the height of Zubiría’s fight with Lamy over the Doña Ana district, Antonio Borrajo presided over the marriage of Santiago (James) North, an Irish-American Catholic, to Paula Rubio Zambrano on September 20, 1855. In his preparations for the marriage, he duly sought the advice of Ramón Ortiz on whether a dispensation was necessary. The marriage took place only a month after Borrajo’s initial request, indicating that North did not face the barrier of “vagrant” status.452 In later years, Padre Borrajo would face charges of bias against Euro-Americans, including the Irish. At this point, Borrajo displayed no evident anger toward non-Hispanic settlers.

In the years that followed, several of the bonds that linked Paso del Norte and Doña Ana to Durango grew weaker. Bishop Zubiría died on November 28, 1863, at the age of seventy-two, and with Mexico at war, his see remained vacant through 1868. In that year, José Vicente Salinas e Infanzón took over the bishopric.453 Bishop Salinas

451 AASF, Loose Documents, 1859, 14. Anthony Mora,

452 ACCJ, Roll 3, “Antonio Borrajo to Ramón Ortiz,” August 22, 1855. Borrajo requested permission to marry North and Rubio in light of the foreign provenance of the groom.

lacked the level of rapport with clergy in the northern Borderlands that Zubiría enjoyed with Padre Ortiz. Furthermore, Ortiz would leave Paso del Norte between 1866 and 1872, creating a void in the Parish of Guadalupe’s leadership. With Durango’s cathedral vacant and Paso del Norte missing the services of Padre Ortiz, the Apostolic Vicariate of Tucson would make a concentrated effort to administer Doña Ana and El Paso Counties in the late 1860s. These efforts would ultimately prove successful by the 1870s, but in time, this takeover would lead to violent resistance on the part of Hispanic Catholics in Paso del Norte. Antonio Borrajo would emerge as a leading figure in local resistance to the French-American hierarchy of the southwest by the 1870s.

The 1850s was a time of turmoil for both the United States and Mexico. On one level, the condition of these bordering nations could not have been more different. The United States emerged victorious in its war with Mexico, and set its sights on further expansion in Latin America. Its population, economy, and self-confidence as a nation surged in the middle of the nineteenth century. While a number of Americans excoriated the U.S.-Mexico War as an unprincipled land-grab, the triumph of the United States in this conflict appeared to ratify popular notions that white Americans possessed racial, moral, and cultural superiority over their indigenous and Mexican neighbors.

For Mexico, its defeat left profound and enduring scars. After the humiliation of having its capital occupied by foreign troops and losing half of its national territory, the nation faced a bitter internal divide in the 1850s. On one side stood a new generation of liberal reformers who sought radical solutions for what they saw as the lingering ills of colonialism. Their drive to transform Mexico eventually reached Paso del Norte and led to the creation of a civil society that challenged the centrality of Roman Catholicism in
everyday life. On the other side, conservative forces in Mexico – including many in the Roman Catholic Church – resisted liberal changes. Opposition to *La Reforma* led to the War of the Reform (1857-1861) and, after their defeat, reactionaries backed a French effort to form a monarchical regime. War would continue to devastate Mexico through 1867, when the monarchists and conservatives faced a final defeat at the hands of President Benito Juárez.

The War of the Reform and the French Intervention, at first, were remote to Mexicans in the borderlands. However, the retreat of Benito Juárez’s forces to the far north brought *La Reforma* to Paso del Norte. By 1865, the presidency of the Mexican Republic relocated to the very streets that surrounded the Guadalupe Parish Church. While Benito Juárez’s stay in the city was brief, it left an inedible impression on Paso del Norte; la Villa del Paso took the name Ciudad Juárez in 1888 to honor the president. On a more intimate level, the arrival of *juaristas* brought liberal reforms to the area. *Paseño* clergy faced challenges from Mexican authorities; Ramón Ortiz and Antonio Borrajo both left la Villa del Paso during Benito Juárez’s stay in the region. Most significantly, a secular, civil society arrived in the northern Mexican frontier. By 1870, the Roman Catholic Church no longer enjoyed hegemonic power over marriage and family law in Paso del Norte.

Despite its confident veneer, the United States also faced disunity after the Mexican War. Tensions over the extension of slavery in western territories and the moral crisis posed by slavery tore the Union apart by the end of 1860. Paso del Norte and Mesilla, while distant from the main theaters of the American Civil War, witnessed the effects of disunion in the 1860s. Union and Confederate armies battled over New Mexico
and Western Texas, and Mesilla briefly became the capital of the Confederate Territory of Arizona. The Civil War created a breakdown in communications in the southwest, interrupted plans to build a southern railway across the region, and inhibited Euro-American settlement. This conflict also delayed the onset of major economic and cultural changes on the north bank of Paso del Norte.
Chapter Five

“She Will Only Leave My Home by Gunpoint”: La Reforma Arrives in the “City of Juárez,” 1860-1870

After the downfall of the last Santa Anna regime in Mexico, La Reforma brought radical changes to Mexican society during the 1850s. A new generation of Mexican leaders promulgated far-reaching laws that shook the foundations of the Roman Catholic Church. By 1859, Mexico’s liberals had enacted measures such as the creation of a secular school system, the abolition of fueros, new laws guaranteeing religious freedom, the privatization of ecclesiastical property, the government registration of births and deaths, and the creation of civil matrimony.

These reforms faced deep-seated conservative opposition, and the Roman Catholic hierarchy rallied opposition to the liberal government. Monarchists invited Maximilian of Hapsburg to reign as emperor. His imperial regime, with French backing, controlled most of Mexico by 1865. At one point, the French reduced the republican government of Benito Juárez to an isolated corner of northern Chihuahua. Paso del Norte became a rallying point from which liberals regained the offensive and ultimately prevailed against imperial forces by 1867. The economic results of this triumph for Mexican liberalism would come to fruition later in the nineteenth century. In the social sphere, Benito Juárez’s victory helped to entrench secularism in Mexico. Later, the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) would partially reconcile the state with Catholicism, but the achievements of La Reforma in forging a secular society remained intact, and anticlericalism endured in Mexican politics for well over a century.
Mexico’s Social Revolution: La Reforma

Between 1833 and 1855, Antonio López de Santa Anna was the dominant figure in Mexico. During this period, Mexico witnessed the ignominy of Texas Independence and bloody insurgencies in regions as diverse as Zacatecas, the Republic of the Rio Grande, and the Yucatán. The fact that Santa Anna’s political career did not end with the debacle of United States invasion and the forced loss of half of the national territory spoke to his charisma and his ability to maneuver in a fractured political landscape. Santa Anna’s influence over the military and the ambivalence of the Roman Catholic Church—who feared a return of the brief liberal awakening of 1833—enabled his rule. Santa Anna’s sale of the Gadsden Purchase, which his government made for the sake of replenishing his treasury, proved to be a final insult. These repeated humiliations sapped the authority of conservative forces in Mexico. Gathering anger over the power of the military, elite landowners, and church institutions came to the fore in the 1850s.454

In 1855, President Antonio López de Santa Anna’s last term in office ended with the Revolution of Ayutla, which marked the beginning of Mexico’s Age of Reform or La Reforma. After the downfall of Santa Anna, an energetic group of statesmen emerged in Mexico who sought to restructure the nation. Among the principal lawmakers of La Reforma was Ignacio Comonfort, the president of Mexico during the initial stages of La Reforma.

454 One incident that provoked liberal outrage against the Roman Catholic Church was the refusal of a Michoacán priest to bury a man whose widow could not pay the sacramental fee. “When asked by the woman what she was to do with the body, the pastor replied that she should salt it and eat it.” Michael Meyer, William Sherman, Susan Deeds, The Course of Mexican History, 7th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2002), 329, identifies this incident as a “cause celebre” which catapulted Melchor Ocampo from state legislator to national advocate for reform. Ocampo was the primary author of the 1859 Ley de Matrimonio Civil or “Law of Civil Matrimony” that established secular marriage as an option under Mexican law.
Many of the significant reformist laws were drafted by the liberals who made up his cabinet, among them Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Melchor Ocampo, and – perhaps most significantly – the Zapotec Indian lawyer Benito Juárez. These leaders sought to transform Mexico through efforts such as the privatization of communal lands and the development of foreign trade and private investment. They also sought to assert the primacy of the state over competing bases of power such as the Roman Catholic Church. Chief among the reforms were attempts to bring marriage, along with the registry of births and deaths, under the authority of civil government. This was a direct challenge to the primacy that the clergy had long enjoyed in regulating community and family life.

In the months after the overthrow of Santa Anna, Mexican liberals convened to draft a new instrument of government for the nation. The spirit of La Reforma permeated the Constitution of 1857, as it succinctly expressed liberal principles. Article Two simply declared “in the Republic all are born free. Slaves who set foot on Mexican soil recover, with this single act, their freedom, and they have the right to be protected by law.” Subsequent articles called for free education and granted each male citizen the right to pursue the “profession, industry, or work that suits him.” The new constitution granted Mexicans the right to free expression, the freedom to petition the state, and the liberty to associate freely for political purposes. The new regime encompassed reforms in the justice system, and reformists guaranteed a variety of rights in civil and criminal proceedings. A particularly radical and contentious aim of the Constitution of 1857 was its assault on age-old privileges enjoyed by the military and the Roman Catholic Church.

Article Thirteen abolished *fueros*, or the special privileges of the clergy and military. This restricted the Catholic Church’s ability to enforce its own laws on parishioners and ended the immunity that clergy enjoyed from prosecution from civil authorities. In many respects, the Constitution of 1857 stood among the most liberal governing documents of its era, in any part of the world.456

Other major reforms that struck at the bases of conservative authority in Mexico accompanied this constitution. These liberal laws included Miguel Lerdo de Tejada’s *Ley Lerdo* of 1856. This policy transferred church and communal holdings into private property (*desamortización*), thus “releasing” them into the marketplace and laying the groundwork for capitalist investment.457 In theory, this liberalization sought to create a new society of freeholders and entrepreneurial farmers and ranchers. In practice, it replaced the old clerical elite with a new class of capitalist landowners. The economic aspects of *La Reforma* would not come to fruition until after the restoration of the republic in 1867, and particularly, during the years of the *Porfiriato* (the era of Mexico’s dominance by Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1911). In time, the Ley Lerdo enabled the emergence of a new commercial economy based on large-scale ranching, farming, and mining operations. Foreign investors also gained access to many of the properties that emerged after the *desamortización* of ecclesiastical holdings. This land reform came at the expense

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456 Chapter Two deals with the first attempt at secular reform under Vice President (and *de facto* head of government) Valentín Gómez Farías in 1833.

457 Hugo G. Nutini and Barry L. Isaac, *Social Stratification in Central Mexico, 1500-2000* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 81-82, cites that the Ley Lerdo “targeted the Catholic Church because it had accumulated vast, tax-free landholdings through donations and purchases. By the 1850s, the Church owned perhaps one-fifth of the country’s nearly seven thousand haciendas and held mortgages against many more.” Nutini and Isaac argue the expanding upper-middle class pushed for the breaking up of Church properties, and the *Reformistas* hoped this expansion of land tenure and renewed investment would be a “powerful stimulus for the country’s economic development.”
of peasants who often lost their economic livelihoods from the privatization of communal holdings, particularly in indigenous communities. 458

Reformistas also sought to challenge the Catholic Church’s monopoly over religious practice, secularize education, and forge a secular national culture. Since the Spanish conquest and subsequent Christianization of Mexican society, missions and churches stood at the center of village, town, and neighborhood life. The clergy baptized and confirmed community members, bound people in matrimony, baptized children, anointed the sick, and interred the dead. During La Reforma, the state assumed the duty of registering births and deaths, supervising the burial of the dead in cemeteries, and creating civil marriage. Furthermore, the dismantling of ecclesiastical properties and the abolition of mandatory fees effectively reduced the economic influence and political power of Catholic clergy.

A century before, during the Bourbon Reforms (and particularly under King Charles III, from 1759 to 1788), the Spanish crown sought to promote reform by expelling the Jesuit Order, and secularizing Franciscan mission communities. The diocesan church sought to fill the void that resulted from the secularization of missions and the expulsion of the Jesuit Order. The new regime that Charles III envisioned would remain entirely Roman Catholic, with matters such as baptism and marriage under the

458 The Ley Lerdo’s effects were certainly not uniform. Nutini and Isaac view more immediate results in Central Mexico. Ibid. Karen Deborah Caplan, Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatán (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), 179, describes Ley Lerdo as having “little immediate impact on property distribution in the state.” However, Caplan does not argue that the law was ignored; instead, the Ley Lerdo “prompted negotiation between state officials and indigenous villagers.” In this account, this law contributed to an ongoing “conversation” over individual rights, communal rights, and the role of citizens and the state. In other contexts, such as Chihuahua under Luis Terrazas or Nuevo León under Santiago Vidaurre, this law directly enabled the consolidation of large-scale ranching, farming, and mining enterprises at the expense of peasants and indigenous communities. In short, the law had multiple effects – often far removed from its stated objectives – and had vastly differing effects in Mexico’s diverse economic and social landscape.
sacramental authority of the church. Nevertheless, clergy would be clearly subordinate to
the interests of an “Enlightened” government. A century later, in a more intensive wave
of “secularization,” the state would attempt to displace Catholicism itself.

The Ley Lerdo undermined the economic power of the church, but – as with Vice
President Valentín Gómez Farías’ reform of tithing practice in 1833 – it did not directly
interfere with central aspects of religious doctrine. La Reforma, in its course, would move
beyond desamortización and engage in social reorganization. The most direct assault on
the sacramental authority of the Roman Catholic Church was The Marriage Law of July
23, 1859, which established civil marriage in Mexico. Until this time, marriage in Mexico
came exclusively under the authority of ecclesiastical authorities. Furthermore, the
marriage law did not recognize marriages performed by religious clergy as valid for
purposes of legal registration. Couples who married in the church had to wed in a
separate civil ceremony. The Marriage Law created a dilemma for couples who sought to
marry. On one hand, the property rights of the children produced by these unions as well
as claims made by widowed spouses were in legal jeopardy in a marriage that had no
state recognition. However, in canon law, partnerships that were solely registered by the
state would be regarded as invalid, and their children faced the stigma of illegitimacy.
One unintended consequence of these competing regimes, according to historian Carmen
Ramos-Escandón, was an overall decline in marriage in Porfirian Mexico. As church
ceremonies no longer carried legal validity, they declined in importance. However, civil
marriage did not fill this void; the state lacked the power of moral persuasion. Reformist
attempts to cast marriage as an essential duty of citizenship had limited successes.
Mexicans of the late nineteenth century encountered two “incomplete” and competing
forms of marriage, and increasingly chose not to invest in either civil or ecclesiastical matrimonym.

In 1859, Agustín de la Rosa represented the views of the Roman Catholic clergy and many lay Catholics when he stated that civil marriage was the adoption of “the bastardized policies which irreligious writers of the Old Continent have given us, which disgracefully, have invaded many Mexicans.” He denounced the law for opening the nation to an “epoch of degradation, immorality, and misfortune.” De la Rosa argued that civil marriage, unlike Roman Catholic matrimony, would lead to the downfall of patriarchy itself, as “matrimony provides aid, shelter, and defense to the woman” and “carries the burden of caring for infants, providing direction to youths.” For de la Rosa, the new law not only limited the power of the Catholic Church, it waged war on the family itself.

The Marriage Law of 1859 was a radical attack on age-old church prerogatives, yet it also contained decidedly traditional views of the family and sexuality. Paradoxically, civil marriage, as practiced in the age of Benito Juárez, continued a variety of essentially “Catholic” notions concerning gender, sexuality, and family formation.

Adriana Y. Flores Castillo, in a study titled “La Ley de Matrimonio Civil (23 de Julio de

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460 Agustín de la Rosa, El matrimonio civil, considerado en sus relaciones con la religión, la familia, y la sociedad Guadalajara: 1859), 4. According to Arturo Almaguer, Pensamiento filosófico mexicano del siglo XIX y primeros años del XX (Mexico: UNAM, 1999), 139, de la Rosa (1824-1907) was a priest and a lecturer in canon law in Guadalajara, who issued many critiques of liberal reform in the nineteenth century.

461 Ibid., 14.

462 Ibid., 3.
“Ley de Matrimonio Civil (23 de Julio 1859)” makes the argument that this law, despite its liberal aim to secularize marriage and make matrimony a civil contract, upheld several fundamentally conservative precepts. Marriage was to be celebrated only “between one man and one woman,” making bigamy and polygamy illegal. This definition of strict monogamy extended to separated spouses, as the marriage law of 1859 included an explicit defense of the indissolubility of marriage. The 1859 law allowed for separation, but not remarriage; only the death of a spouse dissolved the contract. The law also reduced the age of consent for marriage; for men the minimum age fell from twenty-five to twenty one, and for women from twenty-five to twenty.

Overall, the Reformistas of the 1850s and 1860s did not seek to transform gender relations or the power dynamics between men and women in Mexico, and hardly challenged existing constructs of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, defenders of the Ley de Matrimonio Civil passionately argued that they sought to uphold patriarchy by melding it with the power of the state. The Marriage Law of 1859 contained an admonition to married couples to uphold “mutual respect, fidelity, trust, and tenderness,” to one another. The primary author of this law, Melchor Ocampo, believed that husbands and wives had decidedly distinct reciprocal obligations. Ocampo elaborated on a secular, albeit patriarchal, view of civil matrimony in his “epistle,” frequently read during Mexican Civil Marriages.

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465 Magdalena León and Eugenia Rodríguez, ¿Ruptura de la inequidad?: Propiedad y género en la América Latina del siglo XIX 48. (Bogotá: Impresión Panamericana Formas e Impresos, 2005), 48.
Man, whose sexual attributes are mainly courage and strength, should give to woman protection, sustenance, and guidance, and always treat her as if she is the most delicate, sensitive, and refined part of himself, and extend to her the fairness and generosity that the strong owe to the weak, particularly when this weak woman is delivered to him, and when society has entrusted her to his care. Woman, whose principal attributes are self-denial, beauty, compassion, intuition, and tenderness should give to her husband obedience, gratitude, assistance, consolation and counsel, treating him at all times with the reverence owed to one who supports and defends us, and with the tact that one must exercise to avoid aggravating the rougher, ill-tempered, and harsher aspects of one’s own character.

While the marriage law remained grounded in the conservative idea of matrimony as a permanent union of one man and one woman, and its author extolled reverence to customary gender roles and spousal duties, these features of the law did nothing to blunt the Roman Catholic establishment views on this law. Agustín de la Rosa denounced the new law as a negation of the sanctity of marriage. “From the first instance that marriage appeared in the world,” de la Rosa wrote, “it already carried the seal of holiness.” He further warned that “the true Catholic would never view marriage as a simple matter of convenience,” and by reducing marriage to a mere civil contract, the very foundations of all aspects of society would sink into “illegitimacy.”

The following year, the Bishop of Linares (Linares became the Archdiocese of Nuevo Léon in 1891), Francisco de Paula Verea y González, exhorted the Governor of Tamaulipas to “grant the liberty for priests to administer marriage and baptism at all


467 Agustín de la Rosa, El Matrimonio Civil, considerado en sus relaciones con la religión, la familia, y la sociedad (Guadalajara, Imprenta de Rodríguez, 1859), 7.

468 Ibid., 6-7.
times that the faithful request,” and essentially requested that the state government nullify the federal Marriage Law of 1859. Mexican clerics openly assailed this law in the years after its adoption, and called for popular resistance to its secular aims on the part of faithful Catholics and local civil officials. To be certain, liberal caudillos did not always respond favorably to this resistance. Bishop de Paula Verea, for instance, was expelled from his seat at Monterrey by Santiago Vidaurri, the liberal caudillo of Nuevo León, at the outbreak of the War of Reform in 1859. The Bishop of Linares took refuge in Brownsville, Texas, and issued missives against La Reforma from exile over the following years.

The Marriage Law of 1859 and other measures that aimed to create a civil and secular society had divergent effects in a highly fragmented nation that lacked modern transportation and communication at the time. Conservative resistance and the poor state of transportation and communications in Mexico before the late nineteenth century led to divergent outcomes in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In some regions, La Reforma came early. In the liberal stronghold of Veracruz, Benito Juárez registered the birth of his daughter, Francisca Juárez Maza, who was the first entry of the civil birth registry of

469 Francisco de Paula, Comunicación que dirige el Illmo. Sr. Obispo de Linares al Gobierno de Tamaulipas (Mexico City, Imprenta de Lara, 1860).  
470 Mora-Torres, 46. Mora Torres cites this as an example of “anticlericalism” among Nuevo León liberals.  
472 Veracruz, in particular, is noted as a “Liberal stronghold” and a base for Juárez during the War of the Reform, in William Beezley, Mexico in World History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68.
Veracruz.\textsuperscript{473} In much of the rest of the country, internal conflicts, and the French intervention of 1861 prevented the emergence of civil marriage for a number of years. In Paso del Norte, local parishes continued to record relatively consistent numbers of church weddings.\textsuperscript{474} Unlike Nuevo León, where Santiago Vidaurre quickly put into place anticlerical policies, Chihuahua was slow to adopt the Marriage Law of 1859.

Chihuahua’s liberal strongman, Luis Terrazas, was decidedly less anticlerical than his counterpart to the east. Terrazas, while a freemason, subscribed to the more “conservative” brand of liberalism that became dominant in the Porfiriato.\textsuperscript{475}

In Paso del Norte, civil marriage only became viable after the restoration of the Republic in 1867. Overall, \textit{La Reforma} emerged at a time when the relationship between paseños and the national government experienced a rapid redefinition. Before 1846, Paso del Norte had little relevance to authorities in distant Mexico City. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo placed Villa del Paso at the border with the United States, and transformed the town – by force – into an international city. However, the rhythms of local civic life changed far less than one might expect after the war. Alcaldes (municipal officials) in “American” Ysleta and San Elizario continued to send reports to the prefecto (an appointed leader of a district) of Paso del Norte. In December of 1848, residents of what is today the Lower Valley of El Paso County petitioned the Governor of Chihuahua, not the state of Texas or territory of New Mexico, to seek redress for property lost during

\textsuperscript{473} Rafael Zayas Enríquez, \textit{Benito Juárez: Su vida, su obra} (México, 1906), 251.

\textsuperscript{474} \textit{de la Vara}, 103.

the war, and requested relief for cattle taken by an occupying army, the U.S. Army.\textsuperscript{476} According to Martín González de la Vara, “before 1853, almost no person or event in the region had any contact with what took place in Mexico City, and what happened in Chihuahua City rarely had consequences for the border.”\textsuperscript{477} While this was an overstatement, as \textit{paseños} had connections to earlier national events such as independence, the reforms of 1833, Santa Anna’s centralism, and Mexico’s military preparations for invasion. However, the consequences of the war between Mexico and the United States, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the Gadsden Purchase forced \textit{paseños} to interact with Mexico’s national government on more frequent basis.\textsuperscript{478}

In Mexico City, according to Patricia Seed, the Marriage Law of 1859 brought about the seizure of parish records, which formed a broader attempt to wrest administrative power over marriage from ecclesiastical authorities.\textsuperscript{479} By contrast, in Paso del Norte, the Catholic Church retained custody of the Guadalupe Parish archives. \textit{Paseños} had strong affinities to Mexican liberalism in economic matters, in part from the influence of local prefect José María Uranga, as well as the growing importance of a merchant class who supported the \textit{zona libre} or free customs zone. The Benito Juárez administration’s support of this policy in 1862 perhaps did more than any other measure

\textsuperscript{476} CJMA, Part II, Roll 35, seq. 3, 197-200. December 1848.

\textsuperscript{477} de la Vara, 103.

\textsuperscript{478} CJMA Part II, Roll 36, 40-43 (1851) and CJMA, Part II, Roll 37, 83-90 (1852) document the role of the state in delineating not only international boundaries, but also private and communal lands, along the Rio Grande.

to engender political support for his regime in the borderlands.\textsuperscript{480} Economic liberalism emerged as a powerful and enduring political force as international trade and cross-border traffic in people, goods, and ideas grew more important and commercial and industrial elites became the primary power brokers in the region.

Despite the secular aims and anticlerical policies of Mexican liberal leaders such as Benito Juárez, adherence to \textit{reformista politics} did not result in the separation of the Roman Catholic Church from civic governance in Paso del Norte, or an immediate decline in religiosity in this nominally “liberal” district of Mexico. While liberalism under Benito Juárez generally took an anticlerical stance, the local variant in Paso del Norte was largely concerned with economic matters, and above all, trade.\textsuperscript{481} In Chihuahua overall, landowning magnates such as Luis Terrazas saw little conflict between support of a “radical” \textit{juarista} agenda on a national scale and an aggressive defense of elite interests at a local level.\textsuperscript{482} In the case of the Terrazas family, \textit{reformista} anticlericalism took the form of the break-up or \textit{desamortización} of church holdings. Don Luis acquired many of the best tracts of privatized lands in his family estate, and had others parceled to Chihuahua’s congressional deputies.\textsuperscript{483} This secularization mirrored earlier attempts to break up mission holdings in the northern frontier. In general, a new upper class of merchants, ranchers, and industrial interests welcomed the assault on the

\textsuperscript{480} de la Vara, 103.

\textsuperscript{481} Juan Mora Torres identifies a unique form of liberalism developing in the border states that encompassed “federalism, liberalism, and anticlericalism,” as well as a “capitalist economy more complex than that in the rest of Mexico”; Juan Mora Torres, \textit{The Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo León, 1848-1910}, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 3.


\textsuperscript{483} Ibid.
privileges of the ecclesiastical and military elite that took place during *La Reforma*. This liberal ascendancy would become more firmly entrenched during the presidencies of Porfirio Díaz, but its emergence is apparent under President Juárez, even during his years of “northern exile.”

However, despite these challenges to the power of the church hierarchy, in many aspects of daily life, *paseños* frequently supported ceremonial acts that blended popular religiosity and Mexican patriotism. *Guadalupanismo*, in particular, allowed for the coexistence of Catholicism and adherence to nationalist ideology. The *cofradía* (brotherhood) of “Santísima María de Guadalupe” in Paso del Norte continued to count prominent citizens among its members, such as *mayordomos* Juan Aragón and Lázaro Viescas, who directed the activities of the lay brotherhood in 1862. 484 The *cofradía* performed ceremonies in honor of *la virgen*, and engaged in charitable activities in the name of the patron of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos*.

According to Rick Hendricks, the *Cofradía* of Guadalupe first emerged in 1745, in the wake of a rebellion by the Suma Indians in southern New Mexico and Paso del Norte. 485 Until this point, indigenous *paseños* led in the public veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. However, efforts to suppress this indigenous revolt led local “Spanish” settlers to take over these festivities. The brotherhood was led by a committee of twelve leading citizens who collected fees from the *vecinos* of Paso del Norte, and organized celebrations such as fireworks, public displays of candles and iconography, and

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484 CJMA, MF 513, Part II, Roll 41, Seq. 2, 0001-0025, 1862. The *cofradía* periodically made accounts that listed members and gathered financial records.

bullfights. These patterns of community life, which emerged in the late colonial period, remained largely intact through the nineteenth century, through independence, territorial losses, and successive waves of reform.

In Paso del Norte, some of the tenets of La Reforma appeared to blend with traditional social values and religious observance. Public education in Paso del Norte conformed to Article Three of the Mexican Constitution of 1857 that simply stated “education is free” (libre). At Paso del Norte, local school officials compiled lists of poor students, in an attempt to demonstrate adherence to Article Three; however, the curriculum did not turn away from religious beliefs. An 1861 inventory of school supplies for Paso del Norte primary school included a number of Christian Catechisms and “Tests of Religion,” and a subsequent schedule for primary schools indicated a following program of instruction, offered by the schoolmaster Andrés Velarde, based on “reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, Christian doctrine, and good manners” in sessions that took place six days a week, each month of the year.

Instruction will be divided in four hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. The four morning hours will consist of two hours of reading, one of writing, and another of arithmetic. In the afternoon, two hours will consist of reading, and one will be of writing. In the hours of reading, in the morning and afternoon, group reading, grammatical and mathematical readings, and readings in Christian doctrine are to be included. During the hours of writing, handwriting and copying exercises will be performed. On Saturdays, students will be required to recall and explain Christian doctrine.

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486 Ibid.

487 Constitución Política de la República Mexicana de 1857, http://www.juridicas.unam.mx/infjur/leg/conshist/pdf/1857.pdf. (accessed July 25, 2012). In Spanish, libre means free in the sense that it constitutes a right. Education was not necessarily free for all in monetary terms (gratis). However, the framing of education as a civil liberty placed an obligation to public authorities to grant educational access to the poor.

488 CJMA MF 513, part 2, Roll 41, 0291-0319, 1861.
This educational curriculum was firmly in the mold of the schooling that emerged in the early years of the Mexican republic. According to Andrés Resendéz, a flurry of school-building from 1827 to 1834 created “public schools of first letters” in Texas and New Mexico communities. Among the directives of these schools, as issued by New Mexico’s territorial assembly, was “to observe the Christian doctrine within school, to teach the principal mysteries of our holy Catholic faith, devotion and respect toward the sacred images of Christ and his holy mother.” In addition, these schools were to “instill in pupils the love that they must profess toward the fatherland, giving them ample illustration of our federal system and the liberality of our government so that they will grow up to become valuable citizens.” Reséndez argues that this “educational crusade” in the northern frontier was short-lived, as scarce funds were diverted toward military expenditures after 1834. However, in Paso del Norte, primary schools continued to function, and paseño students of the 1860s, as those from earlier decades, continued to attend classes that melded “first letters” and arithmetic with patriotic readings and Catholic instruction.

Benito Juárez in Paso del Norte

While elements of La Reforma reached the north-central frontier of Mexico in the 1850s, the French invasion of Mexico in 1862 brought La Reforma and President Benito Juárez to the very heart of Paso del Norte. From the Revolution of Ayutla until 1865, the implementation of La Reforma in the northern borderlands was subject to negotiation.

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489 Reséndez, “National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821-1848,” 674, 675.
with state and regional elites, and complicated by internal conflict in Mexico. However, in 1865, Paso del Norte briefly served as the center of Mexico’s liberal government. President Benito Juárez abandoned Mexico City on May 31, 1863, after the French campaign to take Puebla. Juárez set up a series of provisional capitals in northern Mexico, in advance of French armies. By October of 1864, the Juárez government had relocated to Chihuahua, and faced continued assault from French troops. Less than a year later, juarista forces abandoned the city of Chihuahua and took refuge in Paso del Norte. At the very edge of Mexico, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Juárez’s minister of foreign affairs and interior secretary, bravely declared on August 15, 1865,

> In this place, as in any other location in the Republic where circumstances force the government to stand, the Constitutional President will do as much as he possibly can to comply with his duties, with resolve and loyalty, thus conforming to the vote of the Mexican people, and he will not cease in fighting the invader on all fronts, and in the end, the defense of our independence and republican institutions shall triumph.

Despite these stirring words, the Juárez regime faced dire circumstances. Emperor Maximilian and his French backers viewed the juaristas’ retreat to Paso del Norte in 1865 as the effective abandonment of Mexico, and on October third of that year the imperial regime declared remaining juaristas to be outlaws and traitors, subject to be shot summarily. Mexico’s tattered republican forces no longer constituted a legitimate belligerent force in the eyes of the emperor’s government. On August 15, 1865, the French seized Chihuahua, leaving Benito Juárez with, at most, 300 soldiers under his

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491 Correspondencia de la Legación Mexicana en Washington durante la intervención extranjera, 1860-1868, Vol. 6 (Mexico: Imprenta de Gobierno, 1877), 268.
A month later, Juárez gave the Independence Day “Grito” in El Paso, with the vice consul of the Mexican post at Franklin – now El Paso – giving a speech praising the adherence of *paseños* to Juárez. In these accounts, the pronouncements of *juaristas* at Paso del Norte did not represent an agenda of secularization or liberalism; instead, they extolled a popular republicanism rooted in Mexican independence and patriotism. Celebrants at the Sixteenth of September festivities in Paso del Norte witnessed a program featuring the “popular bard” Guillermo Prieto, “who, with his characteristic vigor, gave a speech in verse that provoked impassioned applause from all who assembled there, including many residents of nearby towns and ranches.” His call to arms contained no references to a secular program or advocacy for liberal reform. Instead, he called for a holy crusade to drive Maximilian and his French allies from the fatherland. A sample of his lines included these verses, which – despite their nationalist bravado – refer to the constrained conditions *juaristas* faced at the moment.

Ah! And they will vanquish the enemy  
The strong arm of power and fortunes  
The wealth of their navies on the seas,  
And the treason of their hellish militia,  
The cause of your fatherland, Oh Juárez!  
Is the might of the God of justice.

Ah! And they will triumph….From God’s own hand,  
Full of outrage, the day will open,  
For the great and free Mexican people,  
The earth will say, “Vengeance is Mine.”

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492 Robert Ryal Miller, “Arms Across the Border: United States Aid to Juárez during the French Intervention in Mexico,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 63, No. 6 (1973), 1-68. This article makes the case that United States intervention at Paso del Norte, primarily through clandestine arms trading, created a turning point for *juaristas*. According to Almada, reports of French scouts at El Carrizal, twenty kilometers south of the central square of Paso del Norte, prompted plans for a last stand in the mountains overlooking the provisional capital (now known as Sierra Juárez). Almada, 94-95.
At this point, *juaristas* could take comfort in little more than this conviction that they were morally superior to their imperial foes. While the imperial forces of Marshal François Achille Bazaine treated the republican resistance as mere outlaws, President Juárez still enjoyed broad recognition outside of Mexico as the nation’s legitimate head of state. The Congress of Colombia expressed its support by declaring Benito Juárez *El Benemérito de las Américas* on May 2, 1865. The U.S. government, under Abraham Lincoln and his successor Andrew Johnson, also backed the Juárez government. During the American Civil War, French forces in Mexico conducted a significant trade in cotton and other contraband with Confederates in Texas – providing one of the few reliable sources of export income during the wartime blockade of the South. In general, Benito Juárez enjoyed a positive, laudatory reception among American observers and journalists. A rare note of discord appeared in the Catholic press of the United States at times, where his death was remarked upon in *Catholic World* with a scathing assessment.

In Mexico, the death of President Juarez [sic], the murderer of the unhappy Maximilian, as well as of countless others, whom “people who ought to know” were never tired of calling the savior of his country, the true patriot, and the like, oddly enough put an end to the internecine strife which was ravaging the country, and everybody suddenly collapsed into peace: “Yet Juarez was an honorable man.”

However, such critiques of President Juárez in the United States were relatively rare. The Lincoln administration’s opposition to the French intervention and a shared ideology of republicanism and liberalism formed a significant partnership between the governments of the United States and Mexico. In many respects, official relations

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between the two neighbors had never been better. Lincoln and his successor Andrew
Johnson boosted the fortunes of _juaristas_ at a critical hour. Lincoln and Juárez shared
several “liberal” values; a belief in a wage labor system, support for railroads and other
state-backed private enterprises, and sweeping social reforms in their respective
countries.

In contrast to the Mexican Revolution half a century later, the transnational nature
of _La Reforma_ in the borderlands region has received less attention. Apart from studies of
arms trafficking and diplomatic histories that center on the intersection of the American
Civil War and Mexican War of Reform, few scholars have looked at how residents of the
immediate borderlands participated in _La Reforma_, engaged with the _juaristas_ during
their stay in Paso del Norte, and carried out reforms or opposed secular changes on a
local level. However, much as the case in the events of 1910-1920, _paseños_ had an
intimate and up-close view of a pivotal, revolutionary moment in Mexican history.
President Juárez’s presence in the region did much to create new relationships between
_paseños_ on both sides of the new border with the Mexican state. The commitment that the
residents of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso had to the overthrow of Díaz and support for rival
movements during the Mexican Revolution had direct antecedents in the tumultuous
1860s.⁴⁹⁵

When news of Benito Juárez’s death reached the United States, Catholic World
published a vivid account of the Mexican president’s interaction with U.S. citizens as
well as Mexicans during his stay at Paso del Norte. “Personal Recollections of the Late

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⁴⁹⁵ See David Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution, an Underground History of El Paso and
Juárez, 1893-1923* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005) for a study of _paseños’_ participation in the Mexican
Revolution.
President of Mexico” – a piece with no identified author - described a visit by “nearly all the Americans of any standing about El Paso.” While largely praising Mexico’s president, it does not fail to indulge in contemporary obsessions with race and physiognomy:

The Pueblo Indian was marked in every lineament of his face – the aquiline nose, the small bright black eyes, the straight cut mouth showing no trace of redness in the lips, the coal-black hair, the swarthy complexion. Yet he was, as it were, an Indian idealized; his forehead was high, capacious, and the light of intellectual cultivation illuminated his face.496

By contrast, the president’s second in command, Lerdo de Tejada, was evidently – if judged so merely from appearances - a man of great intellectual ability, as his skin “was as white as that of the fairest daughter of the Anglo-Saxon.”497 The account further described a celebratory ball held in Paso del Norte. American and Mexican dignitaries from both sides of the border attended this grand celebration. The old mission church of Guadalupe was part of the “festal array.”

The cathedral was covered with shining lamps from foundation to steeple. The Plaza was brilliantly illuminated and crowds of both sexes were already assembling for the grand open-air baile of the profanum vulgus. Class lines of demarcation are very sharply drawn in El Paso, and the gente fina alone were admissible to the president’s ball.”

On some level, this stood in stark contrast to the egalitarian liberalism professed by many juaristas; however, the Mexican leader’s apparent regard for class and social divisions gained the approval of this essay’s author. The article further complimented the Mexican hosts for the tastefulness of the occasion and the moderation displayed by the

496 Ibid., 280.
497 Ibid., 280-281.
ball’s musicians. This came as a surprise to Euro-Americans who anticipated a more
garish spectacle. “The music, softly and sweetly played, was placed in a side room,
entirely out of sight. No braying cornet flayed at your ears, and no howling fiddler,” the
author noted with admiration. The scene compared favorably to New York City high
society, according to the piece. “There may have been more glare, more glitter, more
diamonds if you will,” in the United States, “but there certainly was not more good taste,
more elegance and refinement, more genuine good-breeding and gentlemanly and
ladylike good humor.” The author averred that American officers “were responsible for
all breaches of good taste.” In one anecdote, an overly enthusiastic American “dignitary”
at the ball took to addressing the Constitutional President of the Mexican Republic as
“Ben,” slapping his back and exclaiming “he was ‘a brick’ and bade him ‘never say die’
till he was dead.”498 This rather folksy characterization of President Juárez was all the
more surprising in a stridently Catholic publication. This tale, while second hand, served
the purpose of presenting Mexico’s indigenous president to a nineteenth-century U.S.
audience that lauded the rise of self-made “common men” to high office.

Benito Juárez certainly fascinated a number of Americans with his firm
commitment to republicanism, his liberal economic principles, and the unusual
juxtaposition of his high standing against his humble indigenous background. His secular
policies did not find uniform criticism among American Catholics, and met with approval
in Protestant circles.499 Juarista anticlericalism was cited in a positive manner in The

498 Ibid.

499 During the time period, American Catholicism was bitterly involved in a struggle with Rome
over the alleged doctrine of “Americanism,” namely, American “accommodation” of Protestant and secular
values. A benign view of Benito Juárez in a Catholic periodical in the United States is part of this dialogue.
In other issues of Catholic World from the 1870s, the coexistence of Catholicism and Protestantism in the
Mesilla Valley Independent from 1877 to 1879, where supporters of New Mexico’s territorial governor Samuel Axtell waged a political campaign against Roman Catholic education and sought to deny the Jesuit Order the right to incorporate in New Mexico. However, these attempts to claim the mantle of Benito Juárez were largely opportunistic and drew little in terms of meaningful intellectual inspiration from La Reforma.

Ultimately, religious matters or antipathy to Catholicism had little to do with U.S. support for juaristas. President Juárez had reached Paso del Norte at an auspicious moment. In the summer of 1865, the neighboring United States was more willing to provide substantive assistance, as it had brought its own civil war to an end. On a practical level, the United States now had a considerable surplus of weapons and faced a steep decline in munitions prices. In the final stages of republican resistance to imperial forces, Americans served as arms merchants to Mexican forces; and Paso del Norte served as a critical depot for weapons shipments. Volunteers and mercenaries, freshly discharged from U.S. military service, also bolstered juarista numbers.

The United States’ support was not the only factor that bolstered the juaristas in 1865. The order to punish republican sympathizers as common bandits at that time also created a popular backlash against imperial forces. The French withdrew from Chihuahua at the end of October, and Benito Juárez extended his mandate as president of Mexico on November 8, 1865. While opponents of the juaristas charged the president with

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United States is favorably contrasted with the Kulturkampf, or campaign against Roman Catholic influence by Prussian rulers in the newly united Germany.

500 The next chapter in the dissertation will expand on the “School Wars” in the context of anti-clerical campaigns in the United States borderlands in the 1870s.

501 Miller, 7.
hypocrisy for extending his term of office, Juárez communicated his intent to lead the drive to defeat Maximilian’s forces from his base in the far north.

When Benito Juárez returned to the border in December of 1865, his forces and the people of Paso del Norte engaged in a religious and civic festival that celebrated popular Catholicism, the mission heritage of Paso del Norte, and the Mexican nation. On December 12, 1865, paseños and refugees alike celebrated the patron of the parish church of Villa del Paso with a rapturous enthusiasm that had most likely had no precedent in the history of the community up to that time. Benito Juárez did not arrive in the town during the day of Guadalupe itself, as unusually icy weather, “the coldest in years” according to Sebastián Lerdo, delayed his travels in the region. However, as word of his return to Paso del Norte had reached the town earlier in the week, the fiesta extended through the following days. The president’s entrance to Villa del Paso, on December 18, 1865, brought forth a rapturous welcome. This celebration, much as Benito Juárez’s presence during Mexico’s Independence Day the previous September, brought forth “an immense concourse of people from the neighboring country.” Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada described the festive scene in a dispatch to Matías Romero, Mexico’s representative in Washington.

When it became known that the republican President was nearing the city a large body of horsemen, including all the principal men of the place, preceded by a band of music, sallied out to meet and escort him to the residence assigned to his use. An immense crowd of persons, of all ages and sexes, lined the principal street and plaza from an early hour of the day, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the cavalcade…The most enthusiastic expressions of joy and welcome greeted the President as he slowly rode through the dense crowd of citizens who filled the streets as he passed. Vivas upon vivas burst from a thousand tongues; the bells of the cathedral [sic] rang out their merriest chimes; deafening volleys of small-
arms rent the air, while peal after peal of heavy artillery shook the loftiest peaks of the Sierra Madre. 502

Benito Juárez’s stays at Paso del Norte, while brief, had a lasting impact on the historical memory of Paso del Norte. Among these reminders are the renaming of the city as Ciudad Juárez in 1888 and the many monuments and local place names that commemorate the juaristas’ stand at Paso del Norte. The example of Paso del Norte as an isolated place of refuge from the Mexican capital and a springboard for challenges to entrenched Mexican regimes resonated in later revolutionary movements that took place in Ciudad Juárez, particularly from 1910 to 1920. However, evidence of the impact of juarismo on local affairs on the Paso del Norte during the 1860s is more elusive.

La Reforma in the “City of Juárez”

Benito Juárez’s anticlericalism did not preclude the melding of nationalism, republicanism, and popular religiosity. By all appearances, many paseños saw no conflict between their admiration for the liberal president and their adherence to Catholicism. The bells of the old mission church tolled in honor of a president who, for many members of the Catholic hierarchy, was an enemy of the faith. However, there were dissenting voices among the vivas that echoed in the streets of Paso del Norte. Antonio Borrajo gave a sermon at the Guadalupe Mission in Paso del Norte that denounced liberalism. In a report by the jefe político of Paso del Norte, dated June 3, 1866, which described Borrajo’s arrest, the Spanish priest allegedly denounced “the laws that give liberty to all to

celebrate religious activities.”503 As Juárez remained in Paso del Norte through June 10, 1866, Borrajo’s sermon was a bold expression of defiance to the president. The offices of the presidency were immediately adjacent to the old adobe mission. Padre Borrajo’s pronouncement against La Reforma earned him an immediate expulsion from Mexico to the north bank of Paso del Norte.504

Ramón Ortiz continued to minister to the parish at Guadalupe until December 1866. While his departure might have been a result of tensions between the state and his church, Padre Ortiz did not leave Mexico. Instead, he served in the Santo Tomás and Temosachic in the remote Sierra Tarahumara until his return to Paso del Norte in 1872.505 These absences in the borderlands church came at a difficult time for the entire Diocese of Durango. Bishop José Antonio Zubiría died on November 28, 1863, during the French occupation.506 The see remained vacant until the consecration of José Vicente Salinas e Infanzón in 1868. While it is difficult to ascertain that this expulsion of Antonio Borrajo and rural “exile” of Ortiz was an example of anticlericalism coming to Paso del Norte, church institutions faced new stresses in the borderlands. Paso del Norte did not witness the level of systemic anticlericalism that other parts of Mexico endured during La Reforma. Despite the presence of Benito Juárez in the community, the Guadalupe Parish maintained control of parish records concerning baptism, marriage, and burial through

503 Also cited in Cool, 43-44.

504 CJMA, Roll 3, Seq. 3, 0138-0154, June 3, 1866. “José María Uranga to Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada”

505 Mary D. Taylor, El Camino Real de Tierra de Adentro, Vol. 2 (Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, 1999), 274.

the twentieth century, while similar records were seized by civil authorities in other parts of Mexico. Patricia Seed notes that eighteenth and early nineteenth century marriage records in Mexico, unlike those of contemporary Spain and the rest of Latin America, are often inaccessible to researchers as a result of Mexican authorities’ seizure of the records after the Marriage Law of 1859. However, in Paso del Norte, matrimonial registries remained in the Catholic Church’s hands through the early twentieth century.  

The Secular Nuptial Investigation

Civil society gradually took hold in Paso del Norte in the years after the arrival of Benito Juárez, and the state eventually joined the church and the family as sources of authority in matters that had long belonged to private domains. A vivid example of the local government’s increasing involvement in family law occurred in the case of Martiniano Parra, a twenty-two-year-old man in Paso del Norte, who sought to marry sixteen-year-old María Martea Álvarez in a civil ceremony in August 1870.  

That month, Parra sent a letter to the jefe político, requesting that civil authorities allow their marriage to take place over the objections of the bride’s father, Demetrio Álvarez. Parra claimed that Álvarez refused to consent to his daughter’s marriage, as she was a minor.


508 CJMA, Roll 46, Frame 0216, Paso del Norte, August 25, 1870.
Reportedly, Álvarez warned Parra that María Martea would “only be brought out of his house by gunpoint.”

The municipal government office received the letter, and Parra’s request for the intervention of the jefe político prompted an investigation of the Álvarez family on the part of municipal authorities. The tenor of the inquest was quite similar to that of a church nuptial investigation or diligencia matrimonial. The investigation noted that Martiniano Parra was the “legitimate son of Clemente Parra and Maria Manuela Lopez,” and also listed his paternal and maternal grandparents, all vecinos of Paso del Norte. The report further stated that “none of the impediments that the laws indicate” existed between Parra and María Martea Álvarez, “a native and vecina of the town, legitimate daughter of Demetrio Álvarez and Maria Pilar Horcacitas.”

There was little in this civil marriage record of Parra and Álvarez that differed from the tenor of a Catholic diligencia from the time and place. The municipal investigation closely matched the formula of church records, only with information concerning the occupations of participants. The bride and groom’s grandparents were listed, as were two sets of witnesses, “citizens Santos Gonzales and Antonio Mendoza,” a stone mason. In another section, officials noted the presence of two other men who worked in similar trades, “Ramón Córdova, a carpenter,” and “Luis Delgado, a stone mason.” Córdova and Gonzales signed the marriage act as witnesses. Despite the Catholic tenor of this documentation, the record noted that this conformed to “Article Eight of the Law of July 23 1859,” the Law of Civil Matrimony. Another essential detail in this case was the fact that María Martea was no longer in her father’s custody. She had

509 CJMA, MF 513, Part II, Roll 46, 0217.
left home and moved in with her maternal grandmother despite Demetrio Álvarez’s claim that only “bullets” would separate his daughter from his home. Even though the bride’s father appeared at the jefatura and pleaded for a delay in the marriage, the municipal government allowed the marriage of Martiniano Parra and María Martea Álvarez to proceed.\footnote{Ibid.}

The state’s intervention in this marriage over the objections of the father was a radical innovation and represented an unprecedented level of government intervention in family affairs; nevertheless, it agreed with Roman Catholic directives concerning matrimonial choice. Few, if any, truly “new” ideas concerning marriage were apparent in this case other than one fundamental idea. The various parties in this marriage did not seek the church’s intervention. They all sought the mediation of the state in a highly personal family dispute. This case indicated that La Reforma had finally arrived in the homes and bedrooms of nineteenth century Paso del Norte.

The restoration of Benito Juárez as the President of Mexico in 1867 marked the consolidation of liberal reforms after a decade of civil war and foreign intervention. During the preceding decade, the United States had also wrestled with a fundamental divide between an agrarian vision of the nation, based on slavery, and an industrial capitalist economy based on wage labor. Along both sides of the border, liberalism triumphed, and the late 1860s and 1870s was marked by sweeping economic and political changes. The rise of railroads in both nations, and the formation of mining, agribusiness, and industrial concerns in the United States-Mexico Borderlands, transformed Paso del Norte. Modernization and secularization challenged Catholic institutions and brought
new ideas concerning the centrality of civil society. However, the forces of liberalism and industrial capitalism did not simply result in an assault on conservative religious values, they created new traditions and they introduced new forms of religious expression. Individual Protestants had migrated to the region in previous decades; however, the 1870s marked the entry of formal Protestantism and organized missionary activity in the region. Mormon settlers and missionaries also made inroads during the time period, a fact that did not escape the attention of Catholic clergy. Residents of Paso del Norte witnessed several major transformations in the years from 1860 to 1870, but the deluge would come in the following decade, as *La Reforma* would come to fruition and railroads and industrialization arrived in force along both sides of the border.
Chapter Six

“Testing the Bonds of a Common Faith”:

El Paso County, 1860-1881

Before the 1870s, the small number of Euro-Americans in the Paso del Norte region accommodated, at least outwardly, to Mexican cultural norms and often converted to Roman Catholicism. This was especially true of men who sought marriage, and with it, access to kinship networks and land rights in the Paso del Norte region. Regardless of the motives that these newcomers had in accepting Mexican culture, by the 1870s, a new group of Euro-Americans who had less interest in acquiring the Spanish language, intermarrying with Mexican women, converting to Roman Catholicism, and respecting Hispanic concepts of property rights eclipsed these earlier colonists.

The arrival of railroads in 1881 brought about a revolution in the economy of the borderlands and drew thousands of settlers and immigrants from many parts of the world to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. These changes did not obliterate the mission society that emerged in the Spanish colonial period, but they did marginalize many Hispanic and indigenous families who had ranched and farmed in Paso del Norte for many generations. This wave of settlement also brought about the final realignment of the Roman Catholic Church in western Texas and southern New Mexico to dioceses based in the United States. While the mission churches still stand and form a sacred space for many paseños, they no longer served as central institutions for many of the community’s residents, especially in communities north of the Rio Grande.
El Paso in the Shadow of Conquest

As Mexico faced the War of the Reform, French intervention, and the struggle between republican and imperial forces, the United States experienced disunion. Paso del Norte was far from the main theaters of the American Civil War, but the conflict had a definite impact on western Texas and New Mexico. Union and Confederate forces contested Ft. Bliss, near El Paso, and fought over Mesilla, the capital of the Confederate Arizona Territory. The war interrupted Euro-American settlement and disrupted travel and communications. Plans for a southern transcontinental railroad, which prompted the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, did not come to fruition until 1881. The Civil War helped preserve, at least for another decade, a mostly Hispanic, Catholic, and agrarian society where religious life still took place in former missions.

El Paso County remained a rural area in these years; less than five thousand people lived there in 1860. The majority of the county’s permanent residents were Hispanic or indigenous.\footnote{The U.S. Census Bureau did not enumerate Hispanics or Mexican Americans as a distinct ethnic or racial category in the nineteenth century. Most paseños appeared as “whites” in the 1860 census. The census recorded 170 “Indians,” mainly in the towns of Ysleta and Socorro.} In many respects, its cultural landscape underwent few substantive changes after the U.S.-Mexico War. William Wallace Mills, in his memoir from 1901, described the county seat, San Elizario, as a site where “court proceedings and arguments to juries and political speeches” remained in Spanish through the 1850s and 1860s.\footnote{William Wallace Mills, Forty Years at El Paso, 1858-1898; Recollections of War, Politics, Adventure, Events, Narratives, Sketches, Etc. (1901; repr. El Paso: Hertzog, 1962), 16.} Early Euro-American settlers, who were predominantly men, often married Hispanic women if they remained in Paso del Norte permanently. Men who came from
Protestant and other religious backgrounds generally adopted Catholicism when they married in the region. While the overall state of race relations in El Paso County gave the impression of calm in 1860, there were significant disparities in wealth. A few recently arrived Euro-Americans amassed properties that greatly surpassed those of even the most prosperous Hispanic paseños. Their participation in the Catholic Church mitigated some of the ethnic divisions in El Paso and created ties of intermarriage, kinship and affinity. However, the participation of non-Hispanic Catholics from a variety of backgrounds also created new tensions within the church.

In previous decades, the small number of Protestant Euro-Americans in Paso del Norte converted to Catholicism, principally in order to pursue marriage with Hispanic women. Ramón Ortiz was generally lenient in these cases; he baptized, confirmed, and married a number of Euro-Americans in the Guadalupe parish. In some cases, such as the marriage of Israel Bush Richardson to Rita Stephenson, only a month had passed between the initiation of a neophyte and his marriage within the church. Antonio Borrajo followed Ortiz’s example; in 1855 he married James (Santiago) North and Paula Rubio Zambrano soon after seeking Cura Ortiz’s advice in the matter.

A falling out between Padre Borrajo and El Paso’s Euro-American community became evident by 1858. A group of thirty residents of El Paso County issued a letter to Ramón Ortiz to protest Borrajo’s conduct. The signatories of the letter, who were mostly non-Hispanic whites, included several of El Paso County’s wealthiest and most politically powerful citizens in the years before the Union Army’s seizure of Ft. Bliss in

\[513\] Father Borrajo’s first stint in Socorro and San Elizario lasted from 1850 to 1858. He appeared in the Socorro and San Elizario archive from the time of his arrival with Bishop Lamy in 1851 until May, 1858. ACCJ, Part 2, Roll 2, 1852-1858.
The signers of the letter petitioned Ramón Ortiz, then Vicar Forane of Paso del Norte, to remove Borrajo from the parishes of Socorro and San Elizario. The authors of the letter praised Padre Ortiz as “a man in whom we have the greatest confidence in as a Christian priest.” To the contrary, the authors described Borrajo as one who had troubled the citizens of El Paso County for “the last four or five years,” and they further stated,

In his sermons to the Mexicans of this country [Borrajo] has preached that citizens who are native to the United States, France, Germany, and Ireland are all heretics and enemies of the Catholic Church, and as a consequence, enemies of Mexicans, and they out of ignorance believe in him. Thusly, at all times he has used his power as priest to incite Mexicans against the governments of Texas and the United States, and he has interfered with the duties of their political officials. His path has been to create a difference of allegiances, feelings, and interests between the different races that live together in our communities, a spirit that is contrary to the teachings of religion and the rights of man.⁵¹⁵

The last name to appear on the document was that of Simeon Hart. A merchant and flour miller, Hart was El Paso County’s wealthiest man in the years between the U.S.-Mexico War and the Civil War. His fortune reached $350,000 in 1860, a sum that was three times greater than that of any other resident of the county.⁵¹⁶ Another prominent signer was Benjamin Dowell, who arrived around 1852. Dowell served as the first mayor of El Paso, Texas, after its incorporation in 1873. Most of the other

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⁵¹⁴ There are two versions of this document in the Archive of the Cathedral of Ciudad Juárez. One is in Spanish, and undated., ACCJ, Part 1, Roll 3, at the beginning of 1850s documents. The other version is in English, and accompanied by about thirty signatures, dating from the 1870s, ACCJ Roll 3. This document is also undated. Anthony Mora, in Border Dilemmas cites this document as “dating from shortly after the Mexican War.” However, the petition’s language (“for the last four or five years”) and the identities of its signatories suggest a date closer to 1858. Many of its signatories left during the Union Army’s seizure of El Paso; Mills, 18. William Wallace Mills, a prominent Unionist, was a long-time political foe of Hart, and describes Hart’s imprisonment in El Paso during the Civil War.


signatories appeared in the United States Census of 1860. A much smaller number appeared in the census a decade later.\footnote{Mills, 20. Mills identified a number of men who fled during the Confederate retreat from El Paso in 1862. They included signers Henry Gillette, A. O’Bannon, and James Cook. Fred Pierpont, another signer, died of rabies in 1869.}

While nearly all signers were Euro-Americans - R. Hernández was the only bearer of a Spanish surname - the petitioners represented a variety of social stations. Attorney Joseph Nangle and A. O’Bannon, a customs officer, signed the petition. Aside from these prominent civic leaders, many of the petitioners were businessmen and merchants. Those who appeared in the 1860 census as merchants included Henry Gillette, James Buchanan, W. B. Shields, William Evans, A.C. Hyde, and W.H. Mitchell. Augustine Bombach, a carpenter, James W. Cook, a grocer, and David Sperry, a “peddler,” also signed the letter.\footnote{U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Tenth Census, 1860, El Paso County, http://archive.org/stream/populationschedu1293unix#page/n0/mode/2up (accessed July 25, 2012). All following records on individuals and families in El Paso County are from the 1860 U.S. Census. This census documented the names of free persons; the census enumerated slaves on a separate schedule. The census listed first and last names, sex, age, race, occupation, and for each household, recorded real property and personal property in U.S. dollars.} Luther Sargent was the owner of a hotel in Concordia, a community in present-day El Paso.

The signers included a transitory population of military men, merchants, and peddlers and a few more long-term residents of El Paso. Hart, Dowell, Buchanan, and Sargent were the only signatories with wives listed in the 1860s census; their spouses all bore Hispanic names. These men fit the term that Shawn Lay gave to Euro-American settlers during this period in his study of race relations in El Paso, “Anglo-Saxon Gachupines.”\footnote{Shawn Lay, War, Revolution, and the Ku Klux Klan: A Study of Intolerance in a Border City (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1985), 4. *Gachupín* was a derogatory term for Spanish colonists, or} The names of their wives, children, and other family members
suggested a thoroughly Spanish-speaking and Roman Catholic cultural environment in their households. Simeon Hart shared a home with Jesusita Siqueiros Hart, of Chihuahua, and their children: Leonardo, Antonio, Juan, Clara, and the newborn Corina. Luther and Elcaria Sargent had a four-year-old son, Jesús.

Unlike his contemporary in the White House, the James Buchanan who signed the protest against Antonio Borrajo was married. He lived with his wife Magdalena (Elena) Díaz and their children in a homestead in Concordia. Santiago Buchanan, as he appeared in the Guadalupe Parish records, was one of the few signers of the letter to remain in El Paso after the 1860s. Over the course of their marriage, James and Elena Buchanan baptized several children in the Guadalupe Parish in Paso del Norte, including his son James (Santiago), William (Guillermo), and daughters Juana, Ana, twin daughters Rafaela and Teófila, and María.520

Their children married spouses from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in local Catholic parishes. On May 10, 1873, Juana or Joana Buchanan, the oldest daughter, married Morritz Larrenstein, a German immigrant listed as the son of Isaac Larrenstein and Joan Orfeld, in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, the old Ysleta Mission.521 Morritz Levenstein settled in the area and became the head of a large, multi-ethnic household in the Lower Valley in the 1870s and 1880s. In the 1880 U.S. Census, the forty-four year old retail merchant’s family included his twenty-six year old wife Juana Buchanan, their four young children, Moritz, Isaac, Albert and Julius, and Juana’s peninsulares, in colonial Mexico. In the caste system, peninsulares held the highest positions in the colonial government, military, and church.

520 ACCJ, Roll 10, February 15, 1864, February 17, 1868.

521 ACCJ, Roll, May 10, 1873.
younger brothers James and William. Manuel Durán, a fifty-five-year-old “servant,” R. M. Keating, an Irish-American “hide inspector,” aged thirty, and Guadalupe García, a twelve-year-old girl, completed the extended Levenstein household.522

The Buchanan family crossed international as well as cultural boundaries in the late nineteenth century. Their daughter Mary or María, born in 1869, married in the Guadalupe Parish on September 11, 1888. María, identified as the “legitimate daughter of Santiago Buchanan and Elena Díaz” married Cristóbal Puertas, a resident of Ciudad Juárez. James Buchanan Jr. married Josefa Elías in December 8, 1892; this couple had a number of children baptized in the Guadalupe Parish of Ciudad Juárez over the following years.523 The extended Buchanan family provided an example of the extent of intermarriage in the nineteenth century borderlands, as well as the extensive ethnic, cultural, and religious blending that took place in Paso del Norte.

In some respects, despite the violent conquest of 1846-1848, a high degree of intercultural tolerance seemed to prevail in Paso del Norte the three decades after the U.S.-Mexico War, at least in spatial and personal relationships. Boarding houses and shops often had a mixture of U.S.-born and immigrant Euro-Americans, Hispanic Texans and New Mexicans, and men and women from neighboring Mexico. However, white settlers had ambivalent feelings about their adopted community. Out of genuine affection or pure necessity, they integrated into the Spanish-speaking, Roman Catholic culture of Paso del Norte. However, as their letter to Ramón Ortiz revealed, they had an acute awareness of their position as cultural and social outsiders in Paso del Norte. At times,

522 The surname appeared as Larrenstein in parish records, and Levenstein in the U.S. Census.

their positions on race might appear contradictory. Ben Dowell’s wife, Juana Márquez Dowell, boasted of “full blood” Tigua lineage; her father was a cacique. Yet, when news of the Texas secession from the Union reached El Paso, Ben Dowell was the first to raise the Confederate Flag over the Pass of the North. Dowell and Simeon Hart suppressed unionist, Republican Party sentiment in El Paso County when they held power.  

The census also revealed the presence of slavery in the county in 1860. El Paso was well beyond the margins of the plantation south, and only three men in the county owned slaves. The largest holder was Thomas Rhett, an army paymaster from South Carolina who brought seven enslaved men and women to Fort Bliss. Hugh Stevenson, a widower since the death of his wife Juana Ascárate in 1856, had had three slaves: a thirty-six-year-old woman and two children (aged one and three). The mother was listed as “black,” the two children were termed “mulatto” in the census. Simeon Hart had five slaves, a man and a woman in their forties, a young man aged twenty-two and two young children, termed “mulattoes”. While this number of slaves was too small to have a significant impact on the labor system or greater economy of the region, slavery had enormous symbolic value. To Hugh Stephenson and Simeon Hart, their slave holdings bolstered their social standing. The presence of slaves gave these men political and cultural affinities with the American South, and by all accounts, they enthusiastically backed secession in 1861. Many non-slaveholding Euro-Americans in the borderlands were also conscious of their position as privileged elites, and they overwhelmingly


sympathized with the Confederacy’s defense of an agrarian economy that exploited a racialized, subordinate work force. Only two Euro-Americans in El Paso County openly opposed secession in 1860.\textsuperscript{526}

Despite the fact that many of the area’s white settlers shared workplaces, dinner tables, and beds with Hispanic and indigenous \textit{paseños}, the Census of 1860 also revealed the emerging economic gap between a new Euro-American commercial class and the larger Hispanic population of farmers and servants. This class divide was not absolute. A small number of Hispanic El Pasoans had occupations that suggested a degree of economic mobility. José Tafolla, a prosperous tailor in Ysleta, had $1,200 to his name in 1860. Fernando Rubio, a farmer whose fortune reached $6,500 and Martín Alderete, his neighbor in Ysleta with $4,000 in assets, were among the few with substantial holdings in that mission community. Juan Olguín of the neighboring town of Socorro had $10,000 in property; he was most likely the richest Hispanic man in El Paso County. However, this wealth paled in comparison to Henry Cuniffe’s $26,000 of property, Hugh Stevenson’s $40,000 estate, James Magoffin’s $100,000 in holdings, and the even more substantial wealth of Simeon Hart. The vast majority of Hispanic and indigenous \textit{paseños} were small farmers and servants with modest cash properties.\textsuperscript{527} A typical case was that of Antonio Montolla, a Native American farmer of Ysleta, who reported fifty dollars of real property and twenty more in personal holdings that year. Vicenta Domínguez was among the few women in Ysleta with substantial holdings ($560); she was a midwife. Many farmers and


\textsuperscript{527} A few \textit{paseños} had less usual occupations; Jesús Herrera, Marcelo Barela, and Ramón Guerra were working musicians in the Lower Valley; Guerra had $400 in assets. Julio Rivera of Ysleta was a “pyrotechnist,” a trade that allowed him to amass twenty-five dollars.
laborers in the Lower Valley towns of Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario had no enumerated assets in 1860.

**The Realignment of Diocesan Boundaries**

The period between the end of the U.S. Civil War and the arrival of railroads in the borderlands was a period of rapid economic and political transition in the region. One significant component of this transformation involved the final realignment of Roman Catholic institutions in the borderlands. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase, the Bishopric of Durango continued to govern the parishes of El Paso County, Texas, and Doña Ana County, New Mexico. This took place as a result of several factors. One was the continuity in church leadership and the “personalism” that bound the hierarchy, clergy, and ordinary parishioners. Bishop José Antonio Zubiría, who strove to renew the bonds between the See of Durango and the far northern reaches of his diocese, remained in office until his death in 1863. The bishop’s death and Ramón Ortiz’s absence, from 1866 to 1872, greatly undermined the personal ties that linked Paso del Norte to its diocese. Geographic factors also tied southern New Mexico and west Texas to the Guadalupe Parish and alienated the area from Santa Fe. The growth of the Euro-American population, and improvements in communications in the western United States undermined these ties and led to increased pressure to align churches in El Paso County with U.S. Catholic dioceses.

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528 During Ortiz’s absence, José Antonio Real y Vásquez served as interim parish priest. He also ministered to the parishes of Franklin and Concordia, north of the border. When Ortiz returned to Paso del Norte, Real y Vásquez remained in what is now El Paso, Texas.
The U.S. Civil War disrupted transportation and communication and inhibited Euro-American settlement in Paso del Norte during the 1860s. The war also delayed the onset of social and economic change, as it temporarily weakened the power of the United States government in the region and uprooted a number of colonists who arrived before the war. According to William Wallace Mills, many of the pro-Confederate whites in El Paso left during the Union Army takeover of Ft. Bliss in 1862. C. L. Sonnichsen, in a history of the community, asserted that El Paso was “wiped out by the Civil War.”

This was most true of the area’s settler population. A few of the more prominent men who had ties to Hispanic paseño families eventually returned and remained in the region. However, after the Civil War, another wave of Euro-Americans, mostly supporters of the Union, arrived and formed a new economic and political elite. A number of these men set out to develop capitalist enterprises that exploited the region’s natural resources, low-wage labor, and connections to markets in two nations.

In addition to the challenges of realignment to U.S. dioceses, the Roman Catholic Church of the borderlands also faced unprecedented pressure from both secular institutions and competing faiths. One important pillar of Catholicism in Paso del Norte continued from an earlier time. Ramón Ortiz, who first served as a parish priest at the old Guadalupe mission, returned to Paso del Norte in 1872 and served there until his death in 1896. While his long career at the Guadalupe Parish provided for some continuity, Vicar

529 Mills, 20. These departures included Hart, Gillett, Magoffin, Cook, and Dowell, all signatories of the protest against Borrajo.

530 C. L. Sonnichsen, Pass of the North: Four Centuries at the Rio Grande (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982), 168. The Civil War certainly did lead to the expulsion of a number of settlers who sided with the Confederate States of America, and disrupted the commercial enterprises of men such as Simeon Hart, the owner of the county’s primary grain milling operation. The war also led to a decline in population between 1860 and 1870.
Ortiz faced the growth of civil society, the growth of non-Catholic religious groups, and an increasingly bitter religious and cultural divide across the Rio Grande. The second presidency of Benito Juárez accompanied the rise of a more secular society in Paso del Norte by 1870. In his earlier years in Paso del Norte (1838-1866), Ramón Ortiz occupied a singular position as the community’s senior authority figure on religious matters. During his second period at Paso del Norte, Padre Ortiz lived in an increasingly pluralistic community. The first formal non-Catholic congregation in El Paso County was St. Clement’s, an Episcopal congregation established in El Paso by Joseph Wilkin Tays in 1870. This minister, originally from Nova Scotia, had worked as a civil engineer and minister before his arrival in the area around 1867. During his time in El Paso, “Parson Tays” engaged in a wide variety of interests, including work as a co-founder of the El Paso Times. Tays died of smallpox in 1884 after presiding over the funeral of a victim of that disease. By the time of his death, ministers from Baptist, Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches joined Tays in El Paso.

When Ramón Ortiz returned to Paso del Norte, he encountered a new jurisdictional framework across the northern border. In 1868, the Vatican created the Apostolic Vicariate of Arizona at Tucson, which became a diocese in 1897. Jean-Baptiste Salpointe, a native of France and a close associate of Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy

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532 Cool, 290.


in Santa Fe, served as its first head. The emergence of Tucson as Vicariate Apostolic brought the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church even closer to Paso del Norte, and resulted in the end of Durango’s claims on parishes north of the United States-Mexico Border. On December 11, 1871, Pope Pius IX issued an Apostolic Brief that transferred the parishes of Doña Ana County in New Mexico and El Paso and Presidio Counties in Texas from the Diocese of Durango in Mexico to Tucson. Over twenty-three years after the end of the United States-Mexico war, one of the remaining vestiges of Mexican governance in its lost territories came to an end. José Vicente Salinas e Infanzón, who occupied the see of Durango at the time, lacked the strong connections to the region that Bishop Zubiría cultivated from his first visitation of 1833 to his death in 1863.

The area’s Hispanic clergy stridently opposed this transfer. Antonio Severo Borrajo, José de Jesús Baca, José Antonio Real y Vásquez, and Juan de Jesús Trujillo, who respectively formed the parish clergy of Socorro and San Elizario, Doña Ana, and Mesilla, Franklin and Concordia, and Ysleta, opposed the effort to assign their parish churches to Tucson. In 1872, these four priests petitioned for a new diocese, centered in El Paso, which could better serve the large Roman Catholic population of the region. In the proposal, the clergy cited a distinct Mexican Catholic heritage and past conflicts with Bishop Lamy and the mostly French-born clergy that arrived in the southwestern United States after 1850.

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536 Mora, 115, Bishop Salinas simply “conceded authority to the French Bishop of Tucson” at this time.

In their proposal, the four likened the French-American clergy to “a devastating flood, erasing the footprints of the first apostles of the new world.”538 Despite his later career as a fervent opponent of the French ascendancy in borderlands Catholicism, Antonio Borrajo’s career in Paso del Norte had begun at the side of Jean-Baptiste Lamy. According to the bishop, he and Borrajo arrived in the region in 1850 as close friends and collaborators, not inveterate opponents who represented competing visions of the Catholic faith. In the course of the next twenty years, Padre Borrajo became the sharpest detractor of Bishop Lamy and the forces that he represented in the borderlands.

In the view of these clergymen, the Euro-American Catholic hierarchs who administered the U.S. Southwest after 1850 differed little from their Protestant countrymen in their secular approach to church-state relations and their attitude toward their religion in general. These priests’ apparently charged Bishops Lamy and Salpointe with what many Catholic leaders of the late nineteenth century termed the “Americanist” heresy, an alleged willingness by U.S. clergy to accommodate modernism and an acceptance of religious pluralism.539 This critique came in spite of the traditionalism that these French clergy represented. From the perspective of the paseño clergy, the new hierarchy of the U.S. Southwest appeared “as Protestant as they do Catholic,” and were

538 Ibid.

539 A larger debate over “Americanism” became a full-fledged crisis in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. These critiques culminated with the 1899 publication of Testem Benevolentiae, in which Pope Leo XIII denounced Roman Catholics in the United States who accepted a secular, modernist, and pluralistic approach to religious life. Patrick W. Carey, Catholics in America, a History (Westport: Praeger Press, 2004), 55.
“much in agreement with the new conquerors for whom religion is nothing more than a word that means nothing in particular, neither positive or negative.”\

The first Vicar Apostolic of Tucson, Jean Salpointe, removed Antonio Borrajo, and placed Pierre or Peter Bourgade (who would later succeed Salpointe as Bishop of Tucson) in Socorro and San Elizario in 1872. Borrajo relocated to Guadalupe Bravos, Chihuahua, a community formed by relocated New Mexicans after the Gadsden Purchase. This settlement is immediately across the border from San Elizario, Texas. Padre Borrajo moved to Mexico, but remained close to his old Lower Valley parishes and continued his battle against Euro-American religious influence.

**Antonio Borrajo’s Crusade against Euro-Americans**

Daniel Webster Jones, a missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or Mormon Church, provided a vivid account of his arrival at Paso del Norte and his encounters with Padre Borrajo in *Forty Years Among the Indians: A True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences Among the Indians*, published in 1890. Jones was a direct emissary of Brigham Young, the President of the Mormon Church who led the sect to its western home in Utah. Jones had a dual mission; Young charged him with evangelizing in Mexico and scouting possible sites for new colonies for Euro-American Mormons. In his own account, Jones’ stay in the area in 1876 provoked an

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540 Hendricks, 3-4.

541 Ibid., 3-4.

initial sense of shock in the community and some angry resistance on the part of Antonio Borrajo as well as Euro-Americans in El Paso.

At first, the authorities of Paso del Norte impeded Jones’ initial effort to preach in the community. The *jefe político* reminded the missionary that any sect holding religious services had to have a building for this purpose and that Mormons could not engage in street preaching. However, Jones suggested that these obstacles stemmed from the municipal government’s implementation of anticlerical laws that primarily aimed at restricting Roman Catholic clergy, and did not constitute a bias against Mormons. Indeed, Jones suggested that the *jefe político* quietly enabled his early missionary work. Jones, an experienced saddle maker, offered to establish a shop in Paso del Norte, which met with the approval of the authorities in Villa del Paso. He then used his saddle making enterprise as an opportunity to discretely proselytize, as “there was no law against conversation.” Jones argued that he and his fellow Mormons, who stayed along both sides of the border, “were all diligent and acted in a manner to create respect for our people and our religion.” This strategy, of establishing a presence in the community and developing friendly personal relationships well before engaging in overt missionary activity, would benefit the Mormons in the years to come.

543 Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians: A True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences Among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 258-259. Jones never named the *jefe político*. The occupant of that office in the general timeframe of Jones’ visit, according to the Paso del Norte Municipal Archives was Jesús Padilla. CJMA, MF 513, Part 2, Roll 70, Seq. 3, 15-18.

544 Ibid., 260.

545 Ibid., 263.
Mormons increasingly became a permanent presence in Chihuahua over the following years, and would eventually become among the largest religious groups in the borderlands.\footnote{546} Mormon interest in Mexico stemmed from missionary interests as well as their church’s struggle with the United States’ government. In the 1870s some members of the church practiced polygamy. “Plural marriage,” as practicing Mormons termed it, was a source of vehement controversy in the nineteenth-century United States. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints undertook several mass migrations during the nineteenth century, often prompted by violent opposition to their practice of polygamy. Under the leadership of the church’s founder, Joseph Smith, Mormons from the eastern United States set out to the west in the 1830s to form the city of Nauvoo, Illinois. The destruction of Nauvoo in 1842 and subsequent violence in Missouri prompted Brigham Young, Smith’s successor, to lead Mormon settlers to the far west. In 1847, Mormons created Salt Lake City and other settlements in Utah during its final year as a Mexican territory.\footnote{547}

In the isolation of Utah, Mormons practiced their faith and marriage practice in relative freedom from angry mobs. However, they frequently clashed with appointed territorial governors. Polygamy remained a major point of contention as federal authorities enacted a series of measures that prohibited plural marriage. Daniel Jones’ efforts at establishing friendly relationships with authorities in Chihuahua eventually resulted in the largest wave of U.S. migration to Mexican soil since the Texas


Revolution. In 1886, Mormon settlers established settlements near Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, including Dublán and Colonia Juárez. Mexico’s 1859 matrimony law, still in force in the 1870s and 1880s, did not permit any marital union that did not involve one man and one woman; however, the isolation of these settlements permitted Mormons to retain polygamy. In the U.S., the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, in 1887, placed many restrictions on Mormon marriage practices. The leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints reacted by enacting its own ban on polygamy in 1890. Mormons who wished to continue plural marriage saw the Mexican colonies as a refuge.\textsuperscript{548}

Catholic clergy did not fail to notice the Mormons in Paso del Norte. Daniel Jones provided a vivid account of his encounter with “Padre Borajo” during his visit to an unnamed Catholic Church in 1876. During his homily, Borrajo catalogued various plagues that mankind had endured, before intoning,

Now of all the plagues that have ever visited the earth to curse and destroy mankind we have the worse just come to us and there stand the representatives of this plague. Look at them. Their faces show what they are…

Borrajo directed to congregation’s attention to the visitors, and continued,

These men represent all that is low and depraved. They have destroyed the morals of their own people, and have now come to pollute the people of this place. They have no virtue. They all have from six to a dozen wives. Now they come here to extend the practice into Mexico. I denounce them. Yes, here in the presence of the image of the Virgin Mary, I denounce them as barbarians. And I want you all to get their books and fetch them to me and I will burn them.\textsuperscript{549}

\textsuperscript{548} Bennion, 47, 77, 130.

\textsuperscript{549} Daniel W. Jones, 257.
This unease over the arrival of the Mormons was hardly confined to Hispanic Catholics. Daniel Jones related an incident in Franklin (now El Paso, Texas) where a “crowd of Irish Catholics” plotted to “rotten egg” the Mormons during their services.\textsuperscript{550} Jones wrote that the hostile crowd was won over by a plea to religious tolerance and his pledge not to interfere with existing religious practice.\textsuperscript{551}

In addition to “heretical” religious practice, Antonio Borrajo also condemned what he viewed as attempts by the state to impose secular values on the communities under his care. His denunciations of liberalism and government-backed secularism did not solely take place in Mexico under Benito Juárez; the northern side of the border saw similar quarrels between the state and clergy. Borrajo clashed with local authorities in Texas over public education. A school law, signed by Governor Edmund Davis in April, 1871, created a centralized school system in Texas, with a state board that certified all the state’s teachers, and set a single curriculum and set of books for public school students throughout the state.\textsuperscript{552} Antonio Borrajo’s heated denunciation of the school law led to conflict with the government of Texas. The law so “incensed” Padre Borrajo that he forbade his parishioners to send their children to public schools.\textsuperscript{553}

When Ramón Ortiz returned to Paso del Norte in 1872, the economic scene of the region had changed perceptibly. Martín González de la Vara, in an overview of Paso del

\textsuperscript{550} Ibid., 263-264.

\textsuperscript{551} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{552} General Laws of the Twelfth Legislature of the State of Texas, First Session, 1871 (Austin: J.G. Travy, State Printer, 1871), 57-60.

\textsuperscript{553} Cool, 53.
Norte during this period, identifies the formation of an “embryonic binational elite” in the 1870s, whose fortunes were based on trade and industry. This new elite included some families with roots in northern Mexico’s farming and ranching gentry, but also consisted of many European immigrants and Euro-American settlers who sought to establish capitalist ventures such as commercial farming, mining, and industry. This new class drew from long-distance networks of political influence and credit, as well as traditional bases of economic power such as land ownership and ties to priests and municipal authorities. The influx, and emergence of a new middle class, brought with it novel religious and social values and resultant challenges to traditional church authorities. Antonio Borrajo, and his fellow clergy, took note of the economic transition that emerged by 1872.

Mexicans under the government of the United States are like the Jews in the Babylonian captivity, the Irish under the government of Great Britain, and Poland under the rule of Russia…the only difference in favor or against the Mexicans is that in those nations the people were oppressed more for religion than anything else, here the Mexicans are stripped of their property and political rights without being bothered about their religion.

These property and political rights would provoke intense battles over the following decade. Disputes over the leadership of Catholic Churches in the borderlands intertwined with an armed conflict, the El Paso or San Elizario Salt War of 1877. While this struggle was largely a dispute over the privatization of local salt flats, a long-term cause was the erosion of Mexican political power and ecclesiastical authority north of the Rio Grande, especially over the previous decade. Borrajo not only saw challenges to his

554 González de la Vara, 100-101.

religious authority in El Paso County, he also inveighed against a new economic order in the borderlands during the 1870s. The end of the American Civil War enabled a triumph of liberalism in the United States, as slavery in the south gave way to a rural proletariat. The war also bolstered the growth of heavy manufacturing and finance and created a new plutocracy in the north. The war spurred a “Second Industrial Revolution” in the northern states, which in turn, created an enormous demand for raw materials such as metals. According to Eric Foner’s study of Reconstruction, “nowhere did capitalism penetrate more rapidly or dramatically than in the Trans-Mississippi West.” 556 Its timber, mineral wealth, and agricultural resources fueled industrial growth. Copper mining and smelting, of particular importance in the age of telecommunications and electrical transmission, created vast new enterprises on both sides of the United States-Mexico border during the late nineteenth century. Railroads hauled ores and refined metals, and carried an unprecedented number of settlers to El Paso after 1880. The United States’ rapid population growth, the emergence of canning and refrigeration, and the construction of railroads also led to a surge in ranching and commercial farming in the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. Regardless of which side of the border these enterprises took place, Mexican workers provided much of the essential labor for mining, railroad building, ranching, and farming operations. 557

Padre Borrajo reportedly retained financial interests in El Paso County after the realignment of church boundaries in the borderlands. This supposed wealth was not


557 Chinese labor would also prove essential into the later nineteenth century. African-Americans and European immigrants would also follow these new enterprises.
apparent in the 1870 Census, where fifty-two-year-old “Servaro Berajo” appeared in San Elizario as a “Catholic priest” and a “native of Spain.” The U.S. Marshal did not record any real property or personal assets for Borrajo in the census, but noted that he lived with a servant, Elmir Chávez, aged twelve.558 A contrary view of Borrajo emerged in accounts by his rivals; he reportedly loved money, fast horses and fine buggies, and had numerous financial interests in the area. Paul Cool details Padre Borrajo’s involvement in the controversy involving the exploitation of salt mines east of El Paso. According to Cool, Borrajo proposed a scheme to privatize the salt beds in 1869 to Albert Jennings Fountain, a prominent Republican politician who arrived after the Civil War. The failure of this deal reportedly outraged Borrajo, and the padre’s exclusion from this venture led him to denounce later efforts to exploit the salt flats.559

In the fall of 1877, the Paso del Norte region was the scene of a violent conflict that pitted many of its Mexican residents against Anglo-American settlers, the Texas Rangers, and the United States Army. The Salt War was also the culmination of three decades of dispute over competing legal jurisdictions and contested sources of community authority in Paso del Norte. The Roman Catholic Church and its clergy were especially central to this power struggle, as it took place amidst bitter disputes over diocesan boundaries and the relationship between the church and the state along both sides of the border.560 The Salt War began as a popular protest by paseño farmers and

559 Cool, 40.
560 The most detailed study of the Salt War is Paul Cool’s Salt Warriors: Insurgency on the Rio Grande. A concise treatment is in Óscar Martínez, Troublesome Border, 80-83, and C. L. Sonnichsen, “Salt
ranchers against several successive efforts to exploit previously communal salt beds. Charles Howard, a Democrat who became the District Judge of El Paso County in 1874, used his authority to file a claim on the salt beds. In September of 1877, Judge Howard had two men arrested for “trespassing” on his salt claims. These arrests provoked an angry reaction on the part of many Hispanic residents of the Lower Valley, as a mob captured and imprisoned Howard in the San Elizario jail. Howard bargained his way out of captivity by promising to leave the state and pledging to relinquish his claim on the salt beds. Charles Howard left for Mesilla; however, he soon returned to El Paso to exact revenge on Louis Cardis. Cardis, an immigrant from Italy, was a political rival of Howard. Cardis, who spoke Spanish and enjoyed the support of many Hispanic paseños, had his own interests in the salt mines. Cardis also worked closely with Borrajo to appeal to paseños who opposed Howard’s plan to privatize the mines. On October 11, 1877, Howard confronted Louis Cardis in his store and murdered him. Texas Rangers, who served as a paramilitary law enforcement body in the state, arrested Howard for this murder, but after an arraignment and bond, the judge left El Paso County on bail and returned to Mesilla.

On the first of December, paseños directly challenged the privatization of the mines by organizing a caravan of sixteen wagons to collect salt in the east. Howard

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561 Sonnichsen, “Salt War of San Elizario.”
562 Ibid.
563 Mills, 176-177. William W. Mills described the murder in detail, and also quoted extensively from a diary he retrieved from Cardis.
564 Sonnichsen, “Salt War of San Elizario.”
renewed his claims, and returned to San Elizario to file suit. This act prompted Francisco “Chico” Barela, a local rancher, to lead a militia to seize Howard and take over government facilities in El Paso County.565 This force included Mexican citizens from Villa del Paso, San Lorenzo, Senecú, and Guadalupe Bravos. Padre Borrajo, from his post in Mexico, reportedly incited the mob in a fiery sermon that called upon Mexicans to avenge the loss of their lands and political rights. Borrajo reportedly told his congregation, “Shoot the gringos, and I will absolve you!” This declaration, while anecdotal, perfectly encapsulated the reputation that Borrajo held amongst most Euro-Americans in the borderlands.566

The Texas Rangers in El Paso County lacked the numbers to confront Barela’s force, and Judge Howard agreed to surrender to the mob. Peter Bourgade, the French priest who took Borrajo’s place in San Elizario, served as a negotiator in this crisis. Bourgade attempted to broker a deal between the militiamen and the Texas Rangers. Charles Howard agreed to surrender to salineros in order to prevent an assault on the outnumbered rangers. The judge also agreed not to prosecute any of the men who participated in his detentions. The priest was not successful in sparing Howard’s life, but his arrangement did prevent a full-scale battle between the rangers and the militia at this stage. In his service as an intermediary, Father Bourgade often placed himself in physical

565 Ibid.

566 This quote was reported in the Congressional hearings titled “El Paso Troubles in Texas,” and in the region’s newspaper accounts of the Salt War, such as the January 12, 1878 edition of the Mesilla Valley Independent. However, this quote it is not dated or included as part of a longer sermon in any reference.
danger during the Salt War, and his courage won notice among both sides of the conflict.\footnote{567}

After Charles Howard surrendered to the militiamen, a firing squad, reportedly from Mexico, executed the district judge and two of his allies. The U.S. Army in Fort Selden, New Mexico, after receiving reports of looting and murder by Mexican citizens in El Paso County, responded with a show of force and many of the participants in Barela’s militia withdrew to Mexico. The Salt War ended with the deaths of approximately fifty people from both sides of the border and extensive property damage. Reports of Mexican incursions north of the border inflamed public opinion in the United States and spurred congressional hearings in Washington.\footnote{568}

Accounts of the Salt War, both from contemporary observers and later historians, often commented on the central role that Catholicism had in that conflict. Euro-American settlers in the 1870s regarded the priests of Paso del Norte as either arbitrators between warring factions, or as agitators, who summoned their parishioners to acts of violence. Despite diocesan realignment, the church also operated as a decidedly transnational institution during the Salt War, due to the personal ties its members had with clergy on both banks of the Rio Grande. A hearing on this outbreak of violence took place in the United States Congress, titled “The El Paso Troubles in Texas.” Its report, issued May 1, 1878, described Paso del Norte and its Catholic society in these terms,

The inhabitants of the adjacent towns on both sides of the river have hitherto, for many years, lived in a state of amity, and are intimately connected by the bonds of a common faith, like sympathies and tastes, and

\footnote{567}{Cool, 116-117. Cool elaborates on Bourgade’s role as an intermediary.}
\footnote{568}{Sonnichsen, “Salt War of San Elizario.”}
are related in numerous instances by marriage; hence each would naturally support and defend the other, if occasions real or fancied demanded their aid, to any sacrifice. In the words of one who ought to know them well, if they have a good man to lead them, there is not a more pacific, easily governed, and loyal people on the face of the earth; if they have a bad one they will be just as bad as he would have them.  

The Salt War took place in the context of several years of heated debate over the leadership of the Catholic Church in the parishes of El Paso and Doña Ana. Many Euro-American settlers were concerned with the question of whether “good” or “bad” priests, in their view, held sway over Hispanic Catholics in the borderlands. Ramón Ortiz provided expert testimony, in the form of a written and translated statement, to the U.S. Congress. His account expressed his “opinion about the causes which led to the late dissensions between the citizens of the two republics, the Spanish-Americans and the Anglo-Saxons on this frontier.” Ortiz firmly sided with paseños who felt that their rights to collect the salt remained protected by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Nonetheless, he denounced the lawlessness that prevailed in Paso del Norte. According to Father Ortiz, “The absence of Federal troops on both sides of the river is the reason why the authorities of one or both sides of the river cannot chastise or punish the bandits or criminals which abound on both sides.” He further described the numerous raids that had taken place in Mexican settlements from Indians or “bad men” based in the United States. Ortiz said that the chaotic situation in the Paso del Norte did not simply consist of alleged Mexican predations on settlements across the border to the north.  

While the priest was sympathetic to the complaints of farmers and ranchers who confronted the privatization


of communal salt beds, he argued for a firmer national presence in the borderlands that, in his view, would safeguard the property and security of all *paseños*.

In many respects, the Salt War marked the last military phase of the United States’ conquest of El Paso. The landscape of the region still bears many marks of this conflict. Fort Bliss, which had experienced closure and abandonment after the American Civil War, became a large and permanent fixture that served as a powerful instrument of U.S. military power in the decades to come. The Salt War also had devastating effects on Mexican American participation in politics. San Elizario, at the time the largest settlement in El Paso County, lost its political status as El Paso became the county seat. El Paso would quickly eclipse the Lower Valley in the years after the Salt War. These developments set the stage for the radical transformations of the 1880s. The arrival of railroads would transform El Paso into a modern industrial and commercial city nearly overnight. Ysleta (now part of El Paso), Socorro, and San Elizario would experience poverty and political marginalization in the following century.

**The Deluge**

What Antonio Borrajo and the other parish priests of the area saw as a “devastating flood” of conquest became all the more powerful in 1881, as railroads brought settlers by the thousands. Paso del Norte had already become tied to international trade earlier in the nineteenth century along routes such as the Santa Fe Trail (opened 1822). In the mid-century stage coach lines such as the Butterfield Overland Mail (1858-1861) brought El Paso within two weeks’ communications of San Francisco to the west,
and St. Louis or Memphis to the east. The Civil War ended this brief period or relatively fast communications, and continued Apache resistance to white settlement hampered travel even in the most optimal conditions. Paso del Norte, while connected to events and processes in both nations, remained remote through most of the nineteenth century.

This isolation ended suddenly in 1881. The Southern Pacific Railway, which formed a second transcontinental route across the southern tier of the United States, arrived in El Paso in May, 1881, from California. The connection to Ft. Worth was in place by November of that year. Railroads also arrived with telegraph wires, leading to rapid communications across the American Southwest. The Mexican Central Railway connected Paso del Norte to Mexico City by 1884. The impact of these railroads is evident in El Paso County’s dramatic population growth, surging from about 4,000 in 1880 to around 16,000 in 1890. By 1920, over 100,000 lived in the county. Nearly four-fifths of these residents lived in the city of El Paso. Ciudad Juárez’s population growth was less dramatic than that of El Paso in the late nineteenth century, as it already had several thousand residents before the arrival of the railways. In 1910, the


572 Annual Report of the United States Army Signal Corps (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 35. April 1, 1881 marked the arrival of west to east telegraph lines to El Paso. El Paso also had telegraph connections to Ft. Davis and San Antonio by this point; 36, 791.


574 David Lorey, United States-Mexico Border Statistics since 1900 (Los Angeles: University of California Latin American Center Publications, 1990), 33.
municipality had just over 10,000 enumerated residents; this did not include the rural population along the valley to the east of the city.\textsuperscript{575}

These migrants included people of many backgrounds from many countries. Not all arrivals were equally welcome. In 1886, a group of civic boosters, named the “El Paso Bureau of Information” published a guide for “the future great metropolis of the Southwest.” The guide’s preface celebrated the fact that the railroad radically altered the demographic make-up of the city. In the view of the bureau, made up of prominent Euro-American businessmen, “the population of El Paso County hitherto has not, unfortunately, been of the progressive kind.” However, the advent of the railroads caused the “Spanish or Mexican Indian race” to decline from “about ninety-nine hundredths” of the population to “one-half” of El Paso. The march of time, in the view of the authors, would further the transformation of the city.\textsuperscript{576} To further this change, the authors included a chapter titled “Class of Immigrants Wanted.”

We want population from every State in the Union, and from every country in Europe. We want the thrifty and industrious, with a few hundred or a few thousand dollars, to join us in occupying and building up the vacant places in our favored country, that they may receive pleasant homes for themselves and their families. We want them to identify themselves with our present population and enjoy all the rights and privileges of the native born, which the laws of the State fully guarantee to them. We need population. We want immigrants of kindred races, that we may be a homogenous people.\textsuperscript{577}

\textsuperscript{575} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{576} The El Paso Bureau of Information, The City and County of El Paso, Texas (El Paso: Times Publishing Co., 1886), 4. Not a single Hispanic surname appeared in its list of members. Indeed, only one name from the “old settler” families from the 1860s appeared. Joseph Magoffin, the son of James Magoffin and Juana Ascárate, was then the collector of customs.

\textsuperscript{577} The El Paso Bureau of Information, 71.
El Paso’s establishment often worked to marginalize Mexican Americans, immigrant and long-time resident alike, after the railroad boom. Many settled around the margins of the city; in the far south the Second Ward or Segundo Barrio emerged along the southern stretches Santa Fe and Oregon Streets. To the southwest, Chihuahuita grew in the shadow of the rail yards. These neighborhoods remain the Chicano heart of El Paso. Other neighborhoods no longer stand as such; Stormville emerged as a barrio along the rocky northern edge of the city limits of the early twentieth century. Later, as El Paso expanded outward, Stormville’s hovels gave way to the well-appointed homes that now overlook the city along Rim Road.578

The railroad brought a large “floating population” that converged on El Paso at the time the railroads arrived, including “bankers, merchants, capitalists, real estate dealers, cattlemen, miners, railroad men, gamblers, saloon keepers, and sporting people of both sexes.”579 To this array, one may add preachers; several mainline Protestant denominations established their first churches in El Paso in the months after the railroads came. In 1881, John Carter founded the forerunner of the current Trinity-First Methodist Church. A year later the First Baptist Church of El Paso formed under George Baines Jr., and John Alexander Merrill founded the First Presbyterian Church.580 Also in 1882, the Methodist Episcopal Church arrived in El Paso as part of a “Mexican Border Mission.”

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578 For a detailed study of the lives and labor of the immigrants that the El Paso Bureau of Information did not favor, see Mario García, Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).


By 1886, the El Paso Bureau of Information could boast of “substantial structures owned by the Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Catholic societies.”

Jewish settlers also came to El Paso; by 1898 the Temple Mount Sinai opened to serve this community.

According to Ferenc Szasz, by the end of the nineteenth century, the mainline Protestant churches of the United States viewed El Paso as an ideal base for missionary work and educational activity in Mexico. Several denominations established thriving publishing houses, schools, and charitable foundations. Significant examples that continue to operate in El Paso include the Lydia Patterson Institute, a Methodist school founded in 1913, and the Southern Baptist Convention’s Spanish-language publishing house, which moved to El Paso from León, Guanajuato, in 1916. A number of paseños embraced Protestantism and left the Roman Catholic Church. By 1916, about a thousand Hispanic El Pasoans belonged to Protestant Churches. While the percentage of Mexican-American Protestants remained relatively small, at around 3% of the population, Protestant churches and institutions established a modest foothold in the community.

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582 El Paso Bureau of Information, 9. The guide claimed that the “old adobe buildings are fast giving way to business blocks as substantial and elegant as can be found in Texas.”


584 Szasz, The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915, 139.

585 In The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915, 139. Szasz finds that, despite extensive work in the El Paso, these churches “secured relatively few converts.”

586 García, 219-222. Mario García elaborates on the role of these Protestant missionary societies in the period between 1880 and 1920,
Many of these Protestant institutions in El Paso reached a binational population that crossed the border for schooling or religious services. The Baptist church emerged in Ciudad Juárez proper in 1906, when Frank Marrs, his wife Effie Marrs, and Donato Ruiz arrived in the borderlands after performing missionary work in Durango. Their church, la Primera Iglesia Bautista de Ciudad Juárez still stands in the old center of the city. While the U.S. side of the border became highly diverse after the arrival of the railroads, Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua also attracted newcomers of many backgrounds by the early twentieth century. Chinese immigrants, who faced official exclusion from the United States, settled in both border cities. Euro-American Mormons arrived in significant numbers. Many of these settlers would leave Mexico after the 1910 Revolution; a number returned in the 1920s along with the German Mennonite colonists who settled in agricultural regions throughout Chihuahua and northern Mexico. Christian Arabs, from Lebanon and Syria, came to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez and established businesses on both sides of the border. Mexicans who came to Ciudad Juárez from distant states did not leave their country, but they could encounter cultural settings that drastically differed from their former homes.

The Roman Catholic Church also saw a potential for missionary activity in Paso del Norte during this period among this diverse population. Peter Bourgade invited the Sisters of Loretto to open a school for girls, St. Joseph’s Academy, in San Elizario in 1879. The arrival of the railroad in El Paso two years later prompted the Sisters to move their school there in 1892. That same year, they opened another school at the new Sacred Heart Parish in Segundo Barrio. Over the course of the next few decades, they sponsored other parochial schools for girls: St. Mary's at the Immaculate Conception Parish in 1903,
St. Ignatius in 1905, Guardian Angel in 1912, Holy Family in 1922, St. Joseph, and St. Patrick’s in 1923 (this was separate from the school for boys that bore this name). That year, they also established the Loretto College and Academy, which still stands as the largest Catholic school for girls in the city. The Jesuit order, which evangelized among the Raramuri people of the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua during the colonial period, arrived in El Paso County in 1881. That year, three Jesuit brothers came from Albuquerque to Ysleta, and began to administer the old Franciscan mission to the Tigua. Over the next three decades, Jesuit clergy – in particular Carlos Pinto – were instrumental in the formation of several Catholic parishes in El Paso, beginning with the foundation of San José del Río, Sacred Heart, and Immaculate Conception in 1892-1893.

New industries followed the railroad, in time adding a large population of industrial workers to the “floating” population that sought business and professional opportunities. Smelting ores from mines in northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest emerged as a significant industry in El Paso in the decade after 1881. The forerunner of the smelting operation that became known as the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) opened in 1887. At first the company refined lead and processed silver ores, but in time it became a central operation for one of the world’s most important copper smelting operations. Phelps Dodge, a rival firm, also began significant operations in El Paso in 1902. These industries brought a large number of workers from


589 More on Carlos Pinto’s career appears in the conclusion of this dissertation.
the United States and Mexico. Garment and shoemaking industries also emerged. In
the 1910s and 1920s, Mansour Farah’s garment enterprise gradually grew from a small
shop to a plant that employed a large workforce, heavily comprised of Mexican
immigrant women and their daughters.

In the years before the Mexican Revolution, Mexicans began to seek work in
cities such as El Paso, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. The new industries of the U.S.
Southwest pulled these migrants northward; likewise, rapid economic change drove many
Mexican campesinos away from their lands. In the second half of the nineteenth century,
Mexican landlords acquired many new lands, as a result of the divestment of church
properties during La Reforma and the taking of lands from indigenous pueblos and
nomadic tribes. Many peasants lost access to communal farmland and range lands during
this privatization, prompting them to seek work in the United States. Mexican artisans
also lost work as mass produced goods penetrated their country’s market.

The railroads that linked central Mexico to Ciudad Juárez and El Paso brought
workers as well as ores, produce, and manufactures across the border. The El Paso
Bureau of Information, amid its triumphant calls for white settlement and progress, also
noted “a fact that will seem incredible to many,” that “the Mexican Central Railway, in
its 1,225 miles between here and the City of Mexico, passes through twenty-one cities
(including two termini) having a population of 950,000.” A substantial number of the

590 Monica Perales, Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 33-34. Perales’ book examines the community,
Smeltertown, which emerged around this industrial plant.

591 Mora-Torres, 129.

592 El Paso Bureau of Information, 8.
Mexicans who lived along this railway took the journey north, where they provided much of the labor for El Paso’s smelters, mills, shops, and service industries. This “incredible fact” would dash the Bureau’s hopes for an overwhelming Euro-American majority in El Paso.

William Wallace Mills, in his memoirs, disparaged these new migrants even as he detailed the conditions that prompted campesinos to leave their lands. “The Mexican population” that Mills recalled from the 1850s were, as of 1901, “nearly all passed away by death or removal. He added that they “were of a much better class than those who came in later with the advent of the railroads, to sell their labor-and their votes.” Other settlers and visitors made similar distinctions between Hispanics of different social groups. Euro-Americans often recognized the internal diversity within Mexico, but generally in order to disparage the majority of that country. Rudolf Eickemeyer, a noted photographer from New York, visited El Paso and Ciudad Juárez in 1894. On the “Mexican” people of Juárez, Eickemeyer wrote, “you must remember they are of all kinds and types, from a tawny yellow, such as you frequently see in the Dago in the ‘promised land’ (right behind my house), to the deep red of the Indian, and even as black as a Congo negro.” Eickemeyer perceived some Mexicans, namely the chief officials of Ciudad Juárez, to be “pure white Castilians,” but they were a small elite.

In his memoirs, William W. Mills also spoke of the agricultural crisis that took place in late nineteenth century. Immediately after his remarks on the “better class” of

593 Mills, 16.

Mexicans that prevailed in the past, he commented on some of the causes of their “removal.” “The villages below El Paso were more prosperous then than now,” Mills recalled, but to their misfortune “the lack of water in the river in recent times has caused great discouragement and even distress.” The memoirs further contrasted the lush vineyards and the tall and imposing cottonwood trees that lined the banks of the river in his earlier years in Paso del Norte with the scarcity that prevailed by 1901. This lack of water drove many *paseños* out of farming; these displaced families sought low wage work in cities and along the railways. The enclosure of range lands and the privatization of salt beds limited opportunities for independent ranchers.

The ecology of the region rapidly changed with railroads, commercial farming, and the industrial-scale irrigation that spread along the entire upper course of the Rio Grande. After 1881, overgrazing, the fall of the water table, and invasive plant species transformed the landscape. Earlier travelers to Paso del Norte wrote of the fields of fine green grama grasses that blanketed the plateaus that surrounded the Franklin Mountains, the Sierra de Juárez, and Hueco Tanks. By the early twentieth century, these once grassy steppes became parched scrublands.

A poignant example of the environmental trauma that visited upon Paso del Norte’s landscape was the rapid collapse of viticulture. Wine entered the region with the arrival of the Franciscans. Fray García de San Francisco y Zúñiga planted grapevines

595 Mills, 16.

soon after the formation of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos* in 1659.597 These vineyards expanded over the following two centuries, and became the chief source of income for Paso del Norte during the Spanish colonial period and into much of the nineteenth century. Travelers, from Bishop Pedro Tamarón in 1760 to Zebulon Pike in 1807, Antonio Barreiro in 1828, and Thomas Falconer in 1843 extolled the virtues of “vino del paso” or “Pass Wine,” a red dessert variety.598 John T. Hughes, who arrived with Colonel Alexander Doniphan during the U.S Army invasion of Chihuahua, described the scale of wine production as 200,000 gallons per year.599 Hughes effusively praised Paso del Norte’s wines as among the “richest and best” in the world.

The El Paso wines are superior, in richness and flavor and pleasantness of taste, to anything of the kind I ever met with in the United States, and I doubt not that they are far superior to the best wines ever produced in the valley of the Rhine, or on the sunny hills of France.600

Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy had less fulsome praise than Hughes. When he arrived in 1851, he described *paseño* wine as “good,” a fair compliment for a New World wine from a man of Auvergne. Lamy remarked favorably on the agriculture that resulted from Paso del Norte’s fortuitous blend of a dry climate and a reliable irrigation system.601

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598 Ibid.

599 John Taylor Hughes, *Doniphan’s Expedition; Containing an Account of the Conquest of New Mexico* (1847), 103.

600 John Taylor Hughes, 104.

601 Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Roll 56, Loose Documents, Doc. 8, 1851. A long trek through the desert by coach, wagon, or on horseback undoubtedly imparted a superior flavor to “Pass Wine” during the nineteenth century. Rudolf Eickemeyer’s letter from May, 1893 contained a vivid example of how a forbidding environment enhanced the taste of a drink. After an arduous journey off the beaten path in New Mexico during his travels to El Paso, Eickemeyer wrote, “we had made a trip over hill and dale of more than twenty miles, and the sight of a sign – ‘Anheuser-Busch’ – on one of the houses was
The diversion of water to large scale irrigation would be unkind to small-scale farmers along the *acequias*. El Paso’s vineyards were largely gone by 1900. A pillar of the economic and social life of the borderlands came to a sudden end. 602

Modernization did not completely obliterate mission culture. The Guadalupe Mission still stands, although it is now in the shadow of the cathedral that serves the Diocese of Ciudad Juárez. The Ysleta and Socorro missions and the San Elizario presidial church of the Lower Valley continue to serve as parish churches for Roman Catholics in these communities. The Tigua of Ysleta and the Manso-Piro-Tigua of Tortugas, New Mexico preserve the indigenous cultures that defined these missions. And while Paso del Norte is now home to over two million people, who reflect a variety of ethnic, religious, and cultural heritages on both sides of the border; the region today is, much as it was in the late eighteenth century, a predominantly Spanish-speaking, *mestizo*, and Roman Catholic society. While relatively few residents of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez in the twenty-first century today trace their ancestry to families that lived in this place in the colonial era, all of today’s *paseños* are their heirs.

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602 Hendricks, “Viticulture in El Paso del Norte during the Colonial Period,” 198. Commercial viticulture returned to the region later in the twentieth century, with small-scale production in the Mesilla Valley south of Las Cruces, New Mexico.
Epilogue

On October 23, 1894, Martín Magayanes, a native of Aldama, Chihuahua, and Felicitas Suárez, who had lived in “Paso del Norte for four years,” took wedding vows at the old mission church of Guadalupe. Ramón Ortiz’s stamped rubric appeared in the matrimonial registry; however, he did not preside over this wedding. Carlos Pinto, a Jesuit who ministered to the Sacred Heart Church across the border in El Paso, joined Magayanes and Suárez in matrimony that day. At the edge of the entry in the register, Pinto wrote a note to Padre Ortiz, who remained curate, ecclesiastic judge, and vicar forane and continued to bear responsibility for sacramental acts in the Parish of Guadalupe. The Jesuit noted that Magayanes was “at the point of death” (en artículo de muerte). Pinto then stated “at the same day I took their hands, for the man was very sick, and lived in sin.” This marriage was brief; Magallanes’ burial entry appeared days later, November 2, 1894.

By the end of 1894, when this wedding took place, the specter of death cast a pall over the Guadalupe mission. Its venerable priest, Ramón Ortiz, was over eighty and faced a final battle against cancer. The cura had been ill for some time, and his once tidy

church had fallen into a noticeable state of disrepair. In that year, the first Bishop of Chihuahua, José de Jesús Ortiz, sent a request to Carlos Pinto to assist in the administration of the Guadalupe mission church. In an 1899 report to the Woodstock Jesuit College in Maryland, the Jesuit Mission of El Paso described Carlos Pinto’s labor in Ciudad Juárez.

Father Superior’s (Carlos M. Pinto) parish in Ciudad Juárez, on the other side of the Rio Grande, numbers 9000 souls scattered over an area of several miles. Besides bearing the burden of the Mission, Father Pinto attends regularly to his immense parish. Every morning about 5:30 he leaves the residence in El Paso, says Mass at the Mexican church, hears confessions, administers baptisms, marries some and buries others, not to mention a thousand other occupations with which the Mexicans burden their pastors; for they appeal to them in all imaginable difficulties.

While in Ciudad Juárez, Pinto conducted baptisms, weddings, and burials in the Guadalupe Parish church much as Padre Ortiz had for decades. The formula of the matrimonial entries in the last decade of Ortiz’s life did not differ from that of his first entries. However, parishioners often bore quiet testimony to the economic and social upheavals of Mexico’s Age of Liberalism in the pages of the Libro de Matrimonios. In earlier times, phrases such as oriundo de la Villa del Paso (originating from the town of Paso) and vecino or vecina de la parroquía (“neighbor” or “citizen” of the parish) were ubiquitous. After 1884, a greater number of people from other places, such as José Rincón and Ana Benítez, both from the city of Chihuahua, sought marriage in Ciudad Juárez. These migrants largely came from elsewhere in northern Mexico, such as Francisco Mallen, of Sonora and Braulia Sanches of El Paso, who married on January 19, 1887.

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606 Owens, 95.
607 Owens, 105.
608 ACCJ, Roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios,” June 10, 1887.
1893. Not all newcomers were men. Patrocina Fresquis, of Chihuahua (though a vecina of Paso del Norte for ten years) married Francisco Torres. He was from Villa del Paso – the name Padre Ortiz used until his death. He either wrote this out of habit or he pointedly refused to acknowledge the renaming of his city after an old enemy. In other respects, Ortiz retained the language of an earlier time. The men and women who married in the parish were still vecinos and vecinas, a term with roots in Spanish colonial settlement.

While he might have become thoroughly set in his ways in his later years, Ramón Ortiz began to make additional notes on the margins of matrimonial entries with some frequency. In March, 20, 1892, when Félix Jacques married Pilar Candelaria, the priest wrote “el matrimonio se hizo en tiempo para impedir algo de malicia” (the marriage took place in time to impede some evil). While this comment was rather cryptic, a little more context for this marriage materialized in the Guadalupe parish baptismal record of next year. Their child, María Manuela Jacques, appeared a little more than nine months later, on January 4, 1893.

Not all such marriages took place between young or healthy partners. The same day as the Jacques–Candelaria wedding, Ramón de la Cruz married Juana Guzmán “at the point of death.” This marriage most likely took place after a long period of


610 After Ramón Ortiz’s return to Paso del Norte in 1872, he did not apparently list any parishioners as indigenous. However, not all entries indicate a person was a vecino.

611 AACJ, Roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios, March 20, 1892.


613 AACJ, Roll 3, “Libro de Matrimonios, March 20, 1892.
cohabitation between the couple. Ramón Ortiz and Carlos Pinto took note of other such late-in-life marriages, such as the 1894 marriage of Felicitas Suárez and Martín Magayanes, which Pinto described as “en artículo de muerte.” Carlos Pinto described many other extenuating circumstances that surrounded marriages. On April 4, 1894, he noted in the marriage of Abel Martínez and Francisca Lucero that “I married them out of charity as they lived in poverty” (los casé de limosna porque vivían mal). Later that year, he described the marriage of Francisca Telles and Felix Girón. In November, they married in the church. Pinto added that “they had been married, but civilly” (estaban casados pero civilmente) and “they gave nothing” in terms of alms.

In the course of 1895 and 1896, Padre Pinto divided his time between ministering to the Parish of Guadalupe, maintaining correspondence with Jesuits in the United States, and attending to the ailing Cura Ortiz. The man who served the borderlands for nearly sixty years died on November 11, 1896, in his home in Ciudad Juárez. Ortiz’s will called for a simple funeral; however, paseños from both sides of the border filled the streets to view a procession of eighty carriages and fifty horsemen. The casket, laden with wreaths and flowers, made its way through the city before the interment at the burial ground of San José. Only a few weeks later, Carlos Pinto buried another priest. Antonio Severo Borrajo quietly died in Ciudad Juárez on December 12, 1896, the feast

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616 Ibid., November 14, 1896.
day of Virgin Guadalupe. While his voice thundered from the pulpits of Paso del Norte in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, his last years in Porfirian Mexico were rather quiet and free from controversy.

In many respects, the transfer of the parish duties from Ramón Ortiz to Carlos Pinto symbolized the transition that Catholic institutions in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso underwent by the end of the nineteenth century. Padre Ortiz was, to his core, a son of the Mexican frontier, grounded in an age before foreign conquest, liberalism, capitalism, and religious pluralism. Pinto, by contrast, was a transnational figure, Italian by birth, American by citizenship, and while he accommodated Hispanic culture in many respects, he also forged a new order in El Paso’s Catholic Church. Despite his stint at the Guadalupe parish and his close ties to Ramón Ortiz, Padre Pinto would help complete the “Americanization” of Catholicism in El Paso and accommodate Euro-Americans’ concerns about the church in the borderlands.

Pinto, who was born in Italy in 1841, arrived in El Paso in 1892. In his first year in El Paso, he would work to create three new churches. The church with which he spent much of his career was the Church of the Sacred Heart in Segundo Barrio. Pinto built this church specifically for the Mexican-American community of El Paso. Pinto established another church in 1893, Immaculate Conception, for the benefit of “English-

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619 Owens, 108. Owens states that Pinto became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

620 Ibid., 90.

621 Ibid., 93.
speaking” Catholics.\textsuperscript{622} This church stands in the heart of the business district of downtown El Paso. Pinto also helped to build another church in 1892, San José del Río, later named San José de Cristo Rey in Smeltertown, west of El Paso. This church opened on Christmas Day, 1892, and has served as a community center and place of refuge for the Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans who lived around the ASARCO plant over the following century.\textsuperscript{623}

Monica Perales points out in her study of Smeltertown that the Catholic Church in El Paso had a complex, and at times contradictory and tense, relationship with Mexican Americans. Mexicans on both sides of the border drew from a long heritage of popular Catholicism. For historical and cultural reasons, they often viewed this church as their home. Parish churches such as San José and Sacred heart formed vital community spaces during a time when many other institutions closed their doors to Mexican Americans or only welcomed the Hispanic elite. Yet, the Catholic Church’s division also bolstered the walls that confined Mexican Americans to a delimited economic, political, and educational status in El Paso. The Catholic hierarchy of El Paso during the twentieth century was largely Euro-American until the investiture of Bishop Patrick Flores in 1978. Many Mexican Americans – especially in working class immigrant neighborhoods such Smeltertown – saw the diocese as remote and unconcerned with their spiritual needs.\textsuperscript{624}

While his desire to accommodate differences in language and culture might have led Carlos Pinto to create separate churches, in time, the emergence of these ethnically

\textsuperscript{622} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{623} Perales, 85.
\textsuperscript{624} Ibid. 85-87.
and socially segregated parishes underlined the hardening racial divides in El Paso. For much of the twentieth century, El Paso had separate Euro-American and Mexican American parishes, schools, and other institutions. This de facto segregation was a fact of life for residents of the borderlands, especially during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. Its existence in the Catholic Church was particularly galling, as it took place in an institution that preached a universal faith and the brotherhood and sisterhood of all members. The tragic fact that this church engaged in segregation despite teaching that “its members agree in one faith, are all in one communion, and are all under one Head” continues to engender conflict in the borderlands.

The Roman Catholic Church also accommodated the division of Paso del Norte into two nations and differing dioceses in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, a strong transnational impulse still animates the denomination. The inherent power of religion, to transcend and subvert - or ultimately reinforce - international boundaries will always provide a fascinating and illustrative topic of study. In the case of El Paso, while Mexican bishops no longer have direct oversight over parishes north of the border, many families who live north of the border continue to marry, baptize their children, and seek burial in Mexican parishes. These interpersonal connections, much more than hierarchical structures, preserve the bonds that Roman Catholics have forged along the camino real de tierra adentro for the last four centuries.
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