

## **DISCLAIMER:**

This document does not meet the  
current format guidelines of  
the Graduate School at  
The University of Texas at Austin.

It has been published for  
informational use only.

Copyright  
by  
Emily Rose Kinney  
2016

**The Dissertation Committee for Emily Rose Kinney Certifies that this is the  
approved version of the following dissertation:**

**American Emigrants: Confederate, Socialist and Mormon Colonies in  
Mexico**

**Committee:**

---

Erika Bsumek, Supervisor

---

Matthew Butler

---

Jonathan Brown

---

James Cox

**American Emigrants: Confederate, Socialist and Mormon Colonies in  
Mexico**

**by**

**Emily Rose Kinney, B.A.; M.A.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2016**

# **American Emigrants: Confederate, Socialist and Mormon Colonies in Mexico**

Emily Rose Kinney, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

Supervisor: Erika Bsumek

This dissertation discusses three different colonization schemes of Americans in Mexico—Confederates in the wake of the US Civil War and Reconstruction who refused to live under the Union government, a group of who tried to establish a utopian society, and Mormons who sought refuge from prosecution in the United States from anti-polygamy laws. In many ways, each of these groups were a far cry from the Mexican government's ideal of colonists, but each also benefitted from the idea that Anglo-Americans were particularly well suited to the “exploitation” of natural resources and the development of an industrial capitalist economy. The Mexican government, particularly under Porfirio Díaz's regime, was willing to grant certain freedoms to these groups that it denied to others. Thus, while millions of people across the world looked to the United States for political and economic freedoms, dissidents in the United States often turned to Mexico for the same reason. The assumptions about white Americans also worked in the colonists' favor on a personal level. Most of these colonists had very little capital and brought nothing to invest in Mexico besides their labor. Nonetheless, they actively sought and established relationships with the Mexican elite—attending parties and hosting

gatherings with some of the richest people in the region. Despite their status as privileged white American colonists, all three groups engaged in some form of justifying their presence in Mexico. The colonists were all aware that their presence in the nation was contentious. Through varying methods, all performed *Mexicanidad*, or Mexican identity, to prove their belonging in Mexico.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	8
A Note on Translation and Transcription .....	19
Chapter 1: Mexican, Indian, Spanish, White-- Confederates and the Navigation of Race in Tuxpan, Veracruz.....	20
The Tuxpan Settlement .....	29
Racializing Mexicans, Racializing Southerners .....	48
Mexicans as Laborers .....	55
Mexicans as Neighbors .....	62
Loss of a Confederate Community .....	72
Chapter 2: Utopia and Empire— The Contradictions of a Socialist Colony in Topolobampo, Sinaloa .....	77
Economic Development in Mexico .....	83
Support for a Socialist Colony .....	95
Weaving the Two Together: Mexico as a Blank Slate .....	107
From Hopeful Vision to Painful Reality .....	116
Chapter 3: Dancing at Haciendas in Rags— Networks across Class and Race in Topolobampo, Sinaloa .....	128
Performing <i>Mexicanidad</i> .....	133
Building Networks with Locals .....	141
Festering Bitterness.....	155
The End of the Colony .....	174
Chapter 4: Barbarians or Civilizers— Mormon Colonies in Chihuahua .....	181
Founding the Mormon Colonies .....	187
Mormon Colonists, the Mexican Government, and the Mexico City Press.....	194
Mormons in the Desert with Mexicans .....	220
Identity and Networks in the Revolution .....	233

Conclusion .....	242
Bibliography .....	247



## Introduction

In 1880, Samuel Brannan, once the richest man in California, had lost all his wealth. In the previous few years his poor investments, contentious divorce and severe drinking problem had left him deeply in debt. However, some twenty years earlier he had lent over thirty thousand dollars worth of aid to the Mexican government. The country's president at the time, Benito Juarez, headed a government in exile while Mexico was occupied by French troops. Brannan had gone so far as to fund an entire military unit that the Juarez government raised in California—providing uniforms, horses, weapons, and 16,000 rounds of ammunition. In 1880, the loan was still almost entirely unpaid, and Brannan saw the opportunity to remake his fortune. Brannan requested that if the Mexican government couldn't repay the loan in cash, he would accept land grants, mining rights and colonization contracts in the state of Sonora instead. Brannan spent most of 1880 and 1881 in Mexico City successfully petitioning President Porfirio Díaz's government for forty leagues of land in Sonora, which came with the condition that he survey and settle the land with colonists.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his success, Brannan recognized that his plans were extremely contentious in Mexico. Many Mexicans were concerned that Brannan's plan to colonize Sonora with American settlers could only lead to "another Texas." They feared that the colonists would either declare their independence or would provide the United States with an excuse to invade Mexico and annex its territory. One newspaper in Mexico City,

---

<sup>1</sup> Newell G. Bringham, "Samuel Brannan and His Forgotten Final Years," *Southern California Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (1997): 139–60; Reva Scott, *Samuel Brannan and the Golden Fleece, a Biography* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1944).

*La Patria*, wrote “It is history, it is the memory of the past, the facts...the painful memory of ’47 [the Mexican American War]” that made them oppose Brannan’s land grants. They thought this “peaceful invasion” was the first step to an armed invasion and the loss of Mexico’s independence.<sup>2</sup> Brannan recognized these fears and worked to dispel them. He consistently wrote in Mexican and American newspapers that he had no intentions of turning Sonora to the hands of the United States. He assured Mexicans that he and his colonists would be loyal Mexicans and “sustain her government, for *her* interests will be *our* interests...We go to Sonora as the friends of Mexico.” As for the United States, “there can be no advantage in annexing foreign peoples.” Any fears on that account, he assured his readers, were not worthwhile. Moreover, he claimed that “we carry with us all the elements of the most advanced American civilization,” which could only be to the benefit of Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

Brannan’s private letters told a radically different story. He often wrote explicitly to his friend and business partner, J.C. Little, about his expectations for Mexico: “This is my lucky year, and before another President takes his *seat*, Sonora will belong to the U. States and will be where we want to be, ‘*under our own vine and fig tree.*’” He claimed that “the advance of Empire is South” and the latent wealth of Mexico—its agricultural and mineral potential—would quickly fall to the US empire. “We commenced the work

---

<sup>2</sup> *La Patria*, August 24, 1881. “The peaceful conquest”—or “*la conquista pacifica*”—and similar variations was a commonly used term, particularly in the conservative press, to describe US investment and colonization in Mexico in the latter half of the 19th century. Conservatives strenuously opposed the process and claimed that it was likely a precursor to armed invasion and annexation. Many historians have continued the use of the term to describe the way that US investment subverted Mexico’s economic goals to those of the United States. See: Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> *The Two Republics*, October 10, 1880.

in '46 [with the Mexican American War] and we will live to see it consummated.”<sup>4</sup> Brannan planned to turn northern Mexico into an “asylum...or a paradise” for “the *poor white* man.” White men needed this asylum, he believed, because the industry of California was “controlled by Chinamen.”<sup>5</sup> Sonora, he believed, had been waiting for just this opportunity: “it is the richest part of the whole earth and I am vain enough to think it has been reserved for me and my friends.”<sup>6</sup> Since the Apaches had “occupied” the land since 1820—he denied that they had any legal or moral right to claim it—and the Mexican and US governments were joining forces to “corral” the Apaches on reservations, he believed the land had no proper owner.<sup>7</sup> It had been waiting for him as “a sealed book.”<sup>8</sup>

Brannan’s colony never got any further than the planning stage. He was ill for much of the 1880s, and struggled with the Mexican government to keep his land rights due to problems with the survey and his failure to actually settle colonists as he had agreed. Eventually the government revoked his grant and in 1888 paid its debt to Brannan in cash. Unfortunately for Brannan, the entire sum went towards paying the debts he had

---

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Brannan to J.C. Little, June 15, 1885, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Samuel Brannan to J.C. Little, June 19, 1885, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Brannan to J.C. Little, February 5, 1885, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Brannan to J.C. Little, May 24, 1885, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

incurred in the previous decade. He died the following year without even leaving enough money for his own funeral.<sup>9</sup>

It could be easy to consider Brannan's story as an outlier. But his struggle to settle Sonora took place at the same time that thousands of Mormons from the United States settled in Chihuahua, thousands of American socialists settled in Sinaloa, and thousands more industrial workers left the United States in search of jobs in Mexican mines, oil fields and on railroads.<sup>10</sup> Just two decades earlier, in the wake of the US Civil War, an estimated 12,000 Confederate emigrants left the United States to settle in Brazil, Cuba, British Honduras and Mexico.<sup>11</sup> In some ways, Brannan's failure to settle anyone on his land may have made him more of an outlier than his efforts to do so in the first place.

When people leave the United States, they fall out of a historical narrative dominated by what is happening inside the United States. Those who leave become invisible to popular understanding of the past. As historian José Angel Hernández has noted regarding Mexican Americans who repatriated to Mexico, "Their narrative ends where the border begins."<sup>12</sup> As early as 1939, Historian Frances L. Reinhold argued that the history of emigrants from the United States to foreign nations had been kept "in the secret closet of America's family history."<sup>13</sup> The status of emigrants hasn't drastically changed in the decades since Reinhold published her article. Histories of American

---

<sup>9</sup> Bringhurst, "Samuel Brannan and His Forgotten Final Years."

<sup>10</sup> John M. Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Donald C. Simmons, *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 166.

<sup>13</sup> Frances L. Reinhold, "Exiles and Refugees in American History," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 203 (1939).

emigrants are often marked by the idea that they were historical oddities. Historian Andrew Rolle's explanation of Confederate emigration to Mexico sums up the sentiment nicely: "Although we are a people whose emigration to distant lands is almost nonexistent, during one moment of our history many believed that their only salvation lay in flight from the United States."<sup>14</sup> More has been written on African Americans who have left the United States. As James Sidbury and others have argued, newly freed slaves sought to build new experiences beyond US borders.<sup>15</sup> Such experiences have been framed by the race of the emigrants. Yet, the frequency with which White people left the United States, especially during this time period, means that this outward flow of migration doesn't deserve the surprised looks, raised eyebrows, and exclamations of "Why would people *leave* the United States?" that I often get when discussing my research. These people were not historical outliers. The White emigrants in this dissertation, like their African American counterparts, sought to new experiences and opportunities outside the borders of their birth nation for a variety of reasons. White immigrants however, expected privileged access to land and elite society.

This dissertation focuses particularly on three groups of 19<sup>th</sup>-century White Americans emigrants in Mexico. While their actions may seem uncommon, Americans have been moving to Mexico as long as the countries' respective claims to territory have

---

<sup>14</sup> Andrew F. Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965).

<sup>15</sup> James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); John Henrik Clarke and Amy Jacques Garvey, eds., *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011); Rosalie Schwartz, *Across the Rio to Freedom: U.S. Negroes in Mexico*, Southwestern Studies; Monograph No. 44 (El Paso: Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1974).

butted against each other. People moved south from the United States even after the border was drawn in its modern form, and they continue to do so today. By 2010, more than half a million US citizens lived in Mexico—many of them on expired tourist visas.<sup>16</sup> Both historically and currently, the flow of immigrants northward from Mexico has made it easy to ignore the smaller—but still significant—flow of immigrants moving south from the United States. In this contemporary context, these American emigrants are a reminder that not all global migrants are people from underdeveloped countries trying to improve their situation in wealthy, industrialized nations. Both today and in the nineteenth century, Americans have also sought opportunities and liberties abroad.

There is a much broader body of literature on other immigrant groups in Mexico than there is on American emigrants from the United States.<sup>17</sup> As historian Mónica Palma Mora has pointed out, the migration of Americans to Mexico remains understudied.<sup>18</sup> Historians have generally emphasized the temporary travels of Americans in Mexico,

---

<sup>16</sup> Sheila L. Croucher, *The Other Side of the Fence: American Migrants in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Mónica Palma Mora, “Los Vecinos Del Norte: Aspectos de Su Inmigración En México En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX,” in *Extranjeros En México: Continuidades Y Nuevas Aproximaciones*, ed. Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez and María del Socorro Herrera Barreda (México: Centro de Estudios Migratorios, Instituto Nacional de Migración, SEGOB, DGE Ediciones, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> See, among many: Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez, ed., *Extranjeros En México: Continuidades Y Nuevas Aproximaciones* (México: Centro de Estudios Migratorios, Instituto Nacional de Migración, SEGOB, DGE Ediciones, 2010); Delia Salazar Anaya, ed., *Xenofobia Y Xenofilia En La Historia de México Siglos XIX Y XX: Homenaje a Moisés González Navarro* (México, D.F.: SEGOB/INAH/ DGE Ediciones SA de CV, 2006); Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970* (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1993); Jürgen Buchenau, *Tools of Progress: A German Merchant Family in Mexico City, 1865-Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So far from Allah, so close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Grace Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012); Luis Aboites, *Norte Precario: Poblamiento Y Colonización En México, 1760-1940* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Palma Mora, “Los Vecinos Del Norte: Aspectos de Su Inmigración En México En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX.”

whether for investment, pleasure or work.<sup>19</sup> Those that do consider American colonists in Mexico, often do so in isolation from other colonies—American or otherwise.<sup>20</sup> Despite the strengths of these works, it is worth considering various colonies together, as it reveals something of what it meant to be a (white) American living in Mexico during the era of the “peaceful conquest.”

At least 20,000 Americans resided in Mexico in 1910 on the eve of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>21</sup> This dissertation discusses three different colonization schemes that took place in the decades leading up to that event. First, in the wake of the US Civil War and Reconstruction, thousands of former Confederates refused to live under the Union government and sought refuge in Mexico, believing they could reclaim their past lives across the border. Between 1867 and 1875 about two hundred Confederate families settled in Tuxpan, Veracruz on Mexico’s Atlantic coast. Others left the United States in disdain of what they felt was capitalism’s destructive influence. A group of socialists under the leadership of Albert Kimsey Owen, established a utopian society in

---

<sup>19</sup> For example: Hart, *Empire and Revolution*; Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014); Jonathan C. Brown, “Foreign and Native-Born Workers in Porfirian Mexico,” *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (1993): 786–818, doi:10.2307/2167551.

<sup>20</sup> William Schell, *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Books, 2001); Karl Jacoby, “Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895,” in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Distrito Galeana En Los Albores de La Revolución: Rancheros Y Mormones: Espacio Regional, Comercio Y Un Proceso de Desamortización Tardío*, Biblioteca Chihuahuense (Chihuahua, México: Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, Secretaría de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2011); Sergio Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido: La Colonización de Topolobampo, 1886-1896* (México, D.F.: Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1978); Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico*.

<sup>21</sup> Palma Mora, “Los Vecinos Del Norte: Aspectos de Su Inmigración En México En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX,” 206.

Topolobampo, Sinaloa, on Mexico's Pacific Coast. Between 1886 and 1896, about two thousand people moved to the colony in hopes of establishing a working socialist paradise. Finally, between 1885 and 1912 over four thousand Mormons—most fleeing persecution for their polygamous relationships—settled in Chihuahua and Sonora. These settlers had the support of church leaders in Salt Lake City as well as Mexican President Porfirio Díaz.

In many ways, each of these groups were a far cry from the Mexican government's ideal settlers. The Confederates wanted to recreate the labor relations of the Old South as best they could in Mexico, relying on Mexican laborers as peons. The Mexican government, on the other hand, wanted to bring the Mexican labor force into a capitalist economy. The socialists supported communal ownership—a practice that the Mexican government had spent years trying to erase from Mexico's indigenous population. And the Mormons sought a place where they could follow their own practices—including the supposedly “barbaric” practice of polygamy—without governmental oversight. The Mexican government, however, wanted immigrants who would become Mexicans and help “modernize” Mexico's Indian population. Moreover, many Mexicans, particularly Conservative Mexicans, were wary that any colony of Americans would become “another Texas,” leading to further loss of Mexican territory.

Despite the “undesirable” aspects of these various groups as colonists, they simultaneously benefitted from assumptions about the modernity and economic potential of white Americans. Moisés González Navarro's key 1992 work *Extranjeros en México y México en el Extranjero* argues that the underlying premise of the Mexican government's



immigration policy was that Mexico had immense natural wealth that it lacked the capital and labor to exploit. Many Mexicans—indeed, many people the world over, including Americans—believed that Anglo Americans were particularly well-suited for the development—or “exploitation”—of resources. In doing so, they hoped that the colonists would help develop Mexico into a modern, industrial-capitalist economy. This meant that the Mexican government, particularly under Porfirio Díaz’s regime, was willing to grant freedoms to some that it denied to others. Thus, while millions of people across the world looked to the United States for political and economic freedoms, dissidents in the United States often turned to Mexico for the same reason. For dissident groups—like unreconstructed Confederates, polygamous Mormons and socialists—Mexico was a libertarian haven where they thought they could construct their own societies. The assumptions about white Americans also worked in the colonists’ favor on a personal level. Most of these colonists had very little capital and brought nothing to invest in Mexico besides their labor. Nonetheless, they actively sought and established relationships with the Mexican elite—attending parties and hosting gatherings with some of the richest people in the region.

Despite their status as privileged white American colonists, all three groups engaged in some form of justifying their presence in Mexico. The colonists were all aware that their presence in the nation was contentious. Through varying methods, all performed *Mexicanidad*, or Mexican identity, to prove their belonging in Mexico. Some waved the Mexican flag, sang the Mexican anthem, and hosted celebrations for patriotic Mexican holidays like Cinco de Mayo and Independence Day. Some learned Spanish so

that they could develop relationships with their Mexican neighbors. Others claimed to be “faithful Mexican citizens,” even when they weren’t *legally* Mexican citizens. Many were aware also of the influence of the Mexico City press and provided interviews with key newspapers to describe their patriotism and insist that they had no interest in helping the United States annex any of Mexico’s territory.

I chose these three colonies on the basis of the ready availability of sources, and that choice has radically shaped the narrative of this dissertation. These colonies all included extremely prolific writers—their letters, journals and newspaper articles make up the foundation of a significant portion of this dissertation. Their Mexican neighbors left far fewer sources. Accordingly, my efforts to consider the Mexican perspective rely mostly on the Mexico City press, and the virtues of all three colonies were debated at length in the newspapers of Mexico’s capital. The press provides a different lens than the personal writings and private correspondence that the colonists left behind. Nevertheless, the newspapers are a wonderful, and often highly entertaining source.<sup>22</sup> The Mexico City press was lively and tightly networked. Editors often reprinted articles from their colleagues, responding to them either with pleased agreement or sarcastic disdain. Mexico’s newspapers followed a clear split along conservative and liberal lines, each supplying the other side with snark and sarcasm.<sup>23</sup> Immigration, Americanization and the “peaceful conquest” consistently led to heated debates between papers.

---

<sup>22</sup> Many of Mexico’s 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers have been digitized in recent years, making them increasingly accessible but still underutilized resources.

<sup>23</sup> The Díaz regime censored the conservative press and provided funding for the liberal press. During this time period (1876-1911) there were upwards of a dozen prominent liberal papers and only two prominent conservative ones (although there were many small Conservative papers that would last only a few months

While I chose these three groups of colonists on the basis of sources, they are in some ways well suited as case studies. Together they reveal both similarities and differences in the experiences of white American colonists in Mexico. However, based on these three colonies, the story that emerges is one about whiteness, Americanness, national and race privilege, and the ways that these shaped networks across divides of class, race, language and nationality. The story would have looked very different with other colonies. In that respect, they serve as intriguing counterexamples to other groups of American colonists in Mexico. For example, groups of Native Americans sought opportunities for more reliable land rights and protection from the US government in Mexico. The Mexican government granted land in Coahuila to a group of Kickapoo in 1850.<sup>24</sup> However, even after the Kickapoo settled in Mexican territory, the US government attempted to “collect, subside and remove the Kickapoos and other roving tribes of Indians from Mexico back to their United States reservations.”<sup>25</sup> African Americans also sought opportunities in Mexico. Historians John Mckiernan-González and Karl Jacoby have shown that African American colonists in Tlahualilo, Durango never gained social acceptance among Mexicans as their white counterparts in Veracruz,

---

or years before they ceased publishing). Despite the risk of imprisonment and fines, the conservative press kept up a vociferous opposition to the policies of the Díaz government and remained engaged with the liberal press. María Ruiz Castañeda et al., *El Periodismo En México: 450 Años de Historia* (México: Editorial Tradición, 1974), 232.

<sup>24</sup> Felipe A. Latorre and Dolores L. Latorre, *The Mexican Kickapoo Indians* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991); Clarissa W. Confer, Andrae M. Marak, and Laura Tuennerman, eds., *Transnational Indians in the North American West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2015); For more on Native Americans in Mexico, see: James H. Cox, *The Red Land to the South: American Indian Writers and Indigenous Mexico*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Henry M. Atkinson, “Kickapoo and Other Roaming Bands of Indians in Mexico. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Transmitting an Estimate of Appropriation for Removing the Kickapoo and Other Roaming Bands of Indians from Mexico to the Indian Territory,” in *Congressional Serial Set*, vol. 1606 (Washington, DC, 1874).

Sinaloa and Chihuahua did.<sup>26</sup> There were clearly racial limits to the ability of national privilege to facilitate social relations between Mexicans and Americans.

This dissertation looks at the three colonies in turn. Chapter one examines the Confederate colony in Tuxpan; chapters two and three both focus on the socialist colony of Topolobampo; and chapter four turns to the various colonies of Mormons that settled in Chihuahua and Sonora. The conclusion considers the failures and successes of these colonies and the Mexican governments' effort to colonize Mexico.

#### **A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSCRIPTION**

I have done my best to convey the original meaning and tone of the people that I have quoted in this dissertation, both in my translations from Spanish and my transcriptions of English. Sometimes, however, I found it difficult to transcribe the emotion that was conveyed with heavy writing, underlining, scribbling, capitalization or unusual punctuation such as “(?!?!?!?)”. I have done my best to convey this meaning and kept changes to the source material as minimal as possible while improving legibility: turning underlines into italics and adding the occasional comma.

I also frequently refer to historical subjects by their first name. I made this decision because so many of these individuals traveled with their families, or left extensive letters between family members who shared a last name. First names allow both clarity and simplicity in these instances. People whose families don't appear in the narrative I generally refer to by their last name.

---

<sup>26</sup> Jacoby, “Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895”; John Raymond Mckiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

## **Chapter 1: Mexican, Indian, Spanish, White-- Confederates and the Navigation of Race in Tuxpan, Veracruz**

In the late spring of 1865, the Brown family of Texas packed up their belongings and headed South. While many Confederates were adjusting to the fact that the South had lost the Civil War, others decided that a Yankee-controlled United States was intolerable, and left the country.<sup>1</sup> John Henry Brown, a prominent Texan journalist, and his family left their central Texas home and headed to Austin, where they met up with the Confederate General Jo Shelby's regiment. More civilians continued to join the regiment as they crossed through Texas on their way south. After a tearful sinking of the Confederate flag in the Rio Grande, the caravan crossed into Mexico where they were met by the military forces of the Emperor Maximilian. They sold their weapons to the army and headed to Mexico City where Maximilian himself welcomed the Confederate elites. Maximilian placed the increase of immigration as a cornerstone of his government's policy. The Confederates were a convenient source of immigrants. Maximilian offered key Confederates positions in his own government to facilitate immigration and gave land grants at cheap prices for the immigrants.

John Henry Brown, however, refused the position the emperor offered him, as well as the cheap land, and continued traveling throughout Mexico. Two years later, with Maximilian's execution and the end of the French Intervention in Mexico, his refusal to

---

<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that the Confederacy had already fallen, I use the term Confederate for two reasons. First is simply precedent. John Henry Brown's own published writings refer to the colonists as "Confederates in Mexico," and historians have tended to follow suit. Second, as I will discuss later, the colonists continued to portray themselves as Confederates in clear opposition to Northerners/Yankees well after the Union was restored.

accept Maximilian's offer became a point of pride, having assumed all along that the Empire would never last. Instead, Brown went to the state of Veracruz, and with surveyor John A. King, decided that the Tuxpan Valley was the ideal place for Confederate settlement. In 1868, Brown published a book *Two Years in Mexico: or, The Emigrant's Friend*, designed to help Southerners migrate to Tuxpan. Along with other Southerners, John Henry Brown bought tracts of land from a hacienda, Tumbadero, just north of the city of Tuxpan. They divided the land into plots, which they then sold to immigrants. In 1872, some fifty families were living in a loose association they called the American colony—perhaps a seemingly odd label for people rejecting the United States, and a topic that I will discuss later. Their small plots of land sprinkled the area along the Tuxpan River from the Tumbadero hacienda down to just south of the city. Between 1868 and 1875, over one hundred families settled in the area, although few of them stayed for more than two years. The majority were from Texas, where Texan John Henry Brown had centered his publicity campaigns.

As a journalist, John was part of a very small middle class that had developed in the antebellum South. And despite the small size of the antebellum middle class, they were the primary inhabitants of the colony. This included the families of medical doctors, journalists, or the famous “frontier naturalist” Gideon Linneum. This was also true for the families that left the South for Brazil, British Honduras, or other parts of Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The antebellum planter class who were able to hold on to their capital were more likely to go to Cuba than to Mexico, Brazil or the British Honduras. Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008); See also: William Clark Griggs, *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*

While living in the antebellum South these families had been able to keep a comfortable life style, often with a small number of slaves to do the manual labor for their house and land. After the Civil War, they faced the task of doing the labor their slaves had once done, living along side their freed slaves and under the watchful eye of the “Yankees.” Many decided to leave instead.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the ideological foundations of the Tuxpan colony, both from the perspective of the colonists themselves and the elites in Mexico City. Much of the literature about Confederate immigration would suggest that they were largely economic refugees, fleeing a destroyed South, who uniformly returned to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Even though large numbers of Confederate immigrants ended up returning to the United States despite their anti-U.S. rhetoric, a few in Tuxpan created and maintained institutions that supported a Confederate community.

The chapter then discusses how the colonists described Mexicans and Mexico and the relationships that they developed with their Mexican neighbors. Accustomed to framing themselves as racially white in opposition to US blacks, the Southerners in Mexico had to reconstruct their whiteness in opposition their non-white Mexican neighbors. At the same time, they self-consciously cast their “Spanish” neighbors as exotic whites in order to prove to their friends and family in the United States that

---

(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Donald C. Simmons, *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico*; W. C. Nunn, *Escape from Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974); George D. Harmon, *Confederate Migrations to Mexico* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1938); Lawrence F. Hill, *The Confederate Exodus to Latin America* (Austin, TX, 1936); González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970*.

Mexico was a sufficiently civilized place. They contrasted the “docile,” non-white working class Mexicans against the “lazy” now-free blacks in the United States, while simultaneously arguing that there was a sophisticated “white” class of “Spanish” Mexicans. The Confederate colonists—just like the socialist and Mormon colonists—were able to access a society well above their economic power. In a country otherwise divided along fairly strict socioeconomic lines, they leveraged their social capital as white, cosmopolitan US Americans to transcend the restrictions of class.<sup>4</sup>

When Tuxpan colonist Gideon Lincecum finally felt that he had mastered enough Spanish for conversations beyond the basics, he tried to discern the feeling of his new neighbors about Confederate immigration. He wrote to his daughter Sarah Duran in the United States, “I spent 2 hours in town in conversation with such of the leading Mexicans as I could find on the subject of holding out inducements for American immigration.” He was very pleased with the results. Enough so that he promised to write letters to US newspapers informing them of how eager Mexicans were for migration from the United States. A few days later he added that he had spent another day doing the same, and told Sarah that he “found the general desire, frankly expressed, very much in favor of having the unoccupied lands filled up with industrious foreigners and they say they want them to come by the thousand.”<sup>5</sup> In Gideon’s view, these dynamics of immigration seem rather

---

<sup>4</sup> William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Duran, October 30, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



simple: he and the other Americans in the colony eagerly desired other US Americans to join them, and believed that Mexicans were equally eager for their arrival. Despite Gideon's insistent belief that Confederate migration was a welcome prospect for Mexicans, not all Mexicans viewed it that way.

The Confederates' search for new land came at a time when Mexico—along with many nations of the Americas—was seeking to encourage immigration. Immigration was a foundational aspect of government policy, and Mexico looked towards other nations' successful efforts to attract thousands of foreigners—largely European—to their shores with plans of their own.<sup>6</sup> The colonization of “vacant lands” became a cornerstone policy of the Mexican government, such that the president in exile, Benito Juárez and the Emperor Maximilian each issued competing enticements for potential colonists during the French Intervention. This, despite being in the middle of a war.<sup>7</sup> In 1871, a journalist in Mexico City described immigration as “the constant dream of our government.”<sup>8</sup> The Confederates also considered themselves ideal immigrants for Mexico, not just Gideon Lindecum. Other Confederates also mentioned the delight with which their new neighbors welcomed them to Mexico. Colonists such as Alexander family went so far as to point out that their whiteness was a critical factor of their desirability.

The Mexican state seems to have pursued differing goals in its immigration policy. Historian José Hernández has argued that historians' tendency to see Mexican

---

<sup>6</sup> González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970*; Salazar Anaya, *Xenofobia Y Xenofilia En La Historia de México Siglos XIX Y XX*; Dieter George Berninger, “Mexican Attitudes towards Immigration, 1821-1857” (University of Wisconsin, 1972); Carl E. Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism, Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970*.

<sup>8</sup> “Colonización,” *El Monitor Republicano*, June 9, 1871.

immigration policy as a failure is based on faulty assumptions about the ultimate goals of immigration. While many historians have argued that Mexican policy makers designed immigration laws to “whiten” and “improve” the Mexican race—as was the case in many other Latin American nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—Hernández argues that the primary goal was to promote the integration of indigenous populations into the Mexican state. Mexican policy makers in support of immigration argued that Indians and immigrants would integrate with each other, while simultaneously becoming Mexican and helping Mexico become a modern nation. Rather than trying to make Mexico more European, immigration was designed to Mexicanize both immigrants and Indians.<sup>9</sup> It is important to point out, however, that as far as the Mexican press was concerned, not all immigrants were created equal when it came to the debates. There may have been more to Mexico's immigration policy than whitening, but it undoubtedly included hopes and fears about race.<sup>10</sup>

While European immigration gained wide support in the Mexican press, many people were deeply concerned with the issue of immigration from the United States. Many in particular had a specific concern about Southern immigration, despite proximity of the potential immigrants. The United States was much more conveniently located, though many perceived US immigration as rife with many more dangers. The memory of losing Texas to rowdy Anglo-American settlers was still sharp in the minds of Mexicans even some forty years later. According to a writer in *El Ferro-carril*, the United States’

---

<sup>9</sup> José Angel Hernández, “From Conquest to Colonization: Indios and Colonization Policies after Mexican Independence,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 26, no. 2 (2010): 291–322.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Francisco Zarco's proposal for immigration in *El Siglo XIX*, March 4, 1869.

recent purchase of Alaska would not keep the country's appetite for land sated for long. He urged Mexico to populate its northern frontier as quickly as possible, before the United States turned its appetite towards Mexican territory once more. In fact, one of the most commonly articulated arguments in favor of immigration was that populating Mexico's northern territory would serve as protection in the event of an invasion from their "colossal neighbor to the North."<sup>11</sup> Populating the frontier with US Americans who would maintain their loyalties to the United States would directly counter this goal. The United States, then, simultaneously provided an example of successful immigration to imitate, a fear-driven impetus to populate empty territories, and a potential source of immigration.

The debates about the potential for US immigration were particularly heated when it came to Southerners. According to scholars Alfred J. Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna, "Confederate immigrants as a group probably aroused more apprehension in Mexicans than any other people." On the one hand, some argued that Confederates were a defeated people, no longer loyal to the United States, and would therefore side with Mexico in the event of a war. Others argued that the North/South animosity would not last long after the Civil War, and recognized that much of the US's appetite for land was driven by Southern elites.<sup>12</sup> *El Monitor Republicano*, a Mexico City newspaper, reprinted an article from *El Comercio* in Matamoros, which reported with great alarm the

---

<sup>11</sup> "Colonización E Inmigración," *El Farro-Carril*, December 4, 1867.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred J. Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna, "The Immigration Movement of the Intervention and Empire as Seen through the Mexican Press," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (1947): 232–233.

impending Texan settlement in Tuxpan. While *El Comercio* said they were in support of the colonization of families from just about anywhere, even the United States, they were firmly opposed to Texans.<sup>13</sup> They wanted immigrants who, “because of their education, see us as brothers, and do not bring the seed of loathing for us in their hearts.” “But instead,” they lamented, “we receive *señores tejanos*, who have eternally fought us, who have eternally detested us... who, instead of marching to the interior of the Republic [as a conquering force], situate themselves in one of our ports, in order to make us part of Texas.” Moreover, they add, “we already know that our neighbors ignore our language and easily confuse the term *immigration* for *intervention*.” The editors of *El Monitor Republicano* agreed, arguing against immigration for its own sake and that Texan immigration would do nothing to enrich Mexico. This article succinctly shows many of the Mexican concerns and desires around immigration in general and US immigration in particular. In part, they were concerned about a potential intervention from the US government, either to defend the rights of the immigrants or to annex the territory. More than that, they wanted immigrants who would become “brothers,” and bristled at the idea of immigrants who would “ignore our language.”<sup>14</sup>

This concern about immigrants from the United States refusing to learn Spanish was also evident in a brief comment from *El Siglo XIX* about their expectation of the impending failure of the Confederate colony in Tuxpan. According to the author, the colony’s poverty meant, “we will soon have a good harvest of discontentment,” bitterly

---

<sup>13</sup> Reprinted in “Inmigración,” *El Monitor Republicano*, December 14, 1867.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

adding, “Fortunately, they don’t speak our language.”<sup>15</sup> While *El Siglo XIX* may have been glad that the language barrier would prevent them from hearing the former Confederates’ whining, their failure to learn Spanish was certainly a point of contention. For all three papers—*El Comercio*, *El Monitor Republicano*, and *El Siglo XIX*—learning Spanish, and thus being able to integrate and interact with the Mexican population, was an important feature of desirable immigrants. All three assumed that Confederates would not fit the mold of ideal immigrants who would integrate into Mexican society.

When Confederate immigrant Theodocius Scurlock complained on his travels through the state of Veracruz that most Mexicans “have no use for a foreigner,” it is difficult to say what it was that shaped his reaction and why it was so distinct from Gideon Linsecum’s. After complaining that he and his traveling partner had made many enemies in the town in which they had recently tried to settle, he added, “They are a jealous people and most of them unprincipled. Hope to get a call [for work as a doctor] soon what will pay me. Truly dull times but I am not dispirited.”<sup>16</sup> Theodocius—or Dosh, as his brother called him—did seem to have a lot going against him. He was a Southerner through and through, and certainly carried his bitterness with him to Mexico. At the time that he wrote this particular journal entry, he spoke no Spanish, which was evidently an important aspect of a good immigrant. Furthermore, while the Mexico City elite, and even the “educated men” of Tuxpan may have been in support of immigration does not mean that the people of Veracruz or the larger population supported the plan. For

---

<sup>15</sup> “Veracruz, Tuxpan,” *El Siglo XIX*, March 9, 1868.

<sup>16</sup> Scurlock Diary, January 3, 1869, Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [hereafter cited as Scurlock Collection].

example, historian Dieter Berninger has argued that much of Mexico was marked by xenophobia as the elites promoted immigration.<sup>17</sup> Thus it is impossible to tell if the reaction Dosh met with was due to a personal distaste of his pomposity—and he was capable of nothing if not pomposity—or if it was a broader issue of opposition to foreigners in general. Whatever the case, Dosh was picking up on a real sentiment; not all Mexicans wanted Americans to settle among them.

### THE TUXPAN SETTLEMENT

In February of 1866, a group of indigenous Mexicans reportedly raided and destroyed the “American colony at Tuxpan.” This colony had supposedly been started by General Shelby in the fall of 1865 on land owned by Toluca Indians that had been given to Shelby by Emperor Maximillian. Historian Andrew F. Rolle described how the “fierce Toluca Indians” wanted their land returned to them, so they raided the settlement, “put the colonists to the torch and threw their corpses into the ocean.” According to Rolle, General Shelby fought tooth and nail against the “hostile natives,” but eventually gave up on Tuxpan and moved to a different region of Mexico.<sup>18</sup> Despite Rolle's version of events, several months after the supposed destruction of Tuxpan, Shelby published an article in the *Memphis Daily Avalanche*, trying to convince people to move to the peaceful, well-managed and fruitful American colony at Tuxpan. According to Shelby, it enjoyed easy access to Cuba, where one could access “Coolie” labor to work the fertile

---

<sup>17</sup> Dieter George Berninger, “Mexican Attitudes towards Immigration, 1821-1857” (University of Wisconsin, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico*, 112. Rolle cites Confederate John Edwards’s “unreliable” book as evidence for this scene.

country. He assured his “friends in the United States,” that he could ensure “a brave, prosperous, extensive colony,” impervious to destruction.<sup>19</sup>

It's not clear what actually happened in the Tuxpan region throughout 1866 as reports differ. The sources that Rolle used to support this story are—even he admits—unreliable at best. Nonetheless, the Tuxpan colony of Confederates wasn't permanently settled until 1867. John Henry Brown moved to Tuxpan from Orizaba in late 1866 and decided that it was ideal for Confederate immigration. The former Confederate governor of Missouri, Thomas C. Reynolds, thoroughly agreed. Reynolds wrote to Brown that the Tuxpan region “is the best base for American migration, spreading inwards and up and down the temperate region.”<sup>20</sup> Other Texans, such as Mordelo Munson and Ferrel Vincent also began purchasing large tracts of land in order to sell to potential settlers in 1867, and in the next few years, over a hundred Southern families arrived in Tuxpan. Most of the newcomers were Texan, as the founders of the colony focused on their home state in their efforts to increase immigration, relying, it seems, on personal connections. Gideon Linsecum heard of the Confederate settlement through his son-in-law W.P. Doran, who knew John Henry Brown.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the immigrants that settled in Tuxpan might reflect a specific regional variation in their understanding and interpretations of Mexico and Mexicans.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Memphis Daily Avalanche*, December 16, 1866; For more on Chinese workers see: Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from Thecoolie Era through World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> T.C. Reynolds to John Henry Brown, July 24, 1867, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>21</sup> Gideon Linsecum to John Henry Brown, September 12, 1867, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

In November of 1867, Dosh Scurlock and a traveling party of several other Texan men left Texas for Tuxpan. They spent two months on the road, traveling by horse. (Most colonists traveled by boat from Galveston.) With evident relief at finding a real bed for the first time in months, Dosh stayed at the inn in the city run by a widow of a Confederate soldier in Tuxpan. A doctor by trade, Dosh had no intention of purchasing land, but went along with his traveling companions to examine tracts of land they hoped to purchase. The majority of settlers in Tuxpan went with the intent of getting into agriculture, even those who had made their money in other occupations in the United States. As his traveling companions began to purchase land, Dosh packed up his belongings on a quest for paying patients that would be a constant struggle until his death ten years later. He had previously been a doctor near Austin, TX—although its not clear what kind of training he had received—and hoped that he could continue his medical practice in Mexico.<sup>22</sup> Dosh struggled to make ends meet during his first few years in Mexico, as did many doctors who had come from the United States.<sup>23</sup> Eventually he rented land, hoping to make money with a sugar crop. But he quickly realized that the slash-and-burn agriculture that was practiced in that region was far more work than he

---

<sup>22</sup> John F. Mayberry, “Historical Development of Pan-European Medical Training for English Speaking Students in the 16th to 19th Centuries,” *The Ulster Medical Journal* 84, no. 1 (January 2015): 42–44; John Harley Warner and Lawrence J. Rizzolo, “Anatomical Instruction and Training for Professionalism from the 19th to the 21st Centuries,” *Clinical Anatomy* 19, no. 5 (July 2006): 403–14, doi:10.1002/ca.20290.

<sup>23</sup> Confederate Dr. David McKnight settled with his family in Matamoros, Mexico after the war. While his family remained in Matamoros, McKnight traveled extensively across Mexico in search of patients, as Scurlock did. David McKnight, III, Family Papers, 1857-1935, 1976-1978-1992-1995, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.



had expected.<sup>24</sup> He repeatedly wrote in his journal that he was considering heading back to Texas. He had had a steady job at an asylum just outside of Austin. It didn't pay as well as he would have liked, but at least he had been better off there than in Mexico.

Why, then, had he gone? His poem in honor of his exile from home sums up his sentiments:

Farewell Sweet home  
I may never see you again,  
A Rover in a Strange land,  
Far away from friends and home,  
Exiled by my own will,  
Not liking Vandals and Negroes rule,  
But hope ere long to return to thee again.  
When ere you cry throw off the yoke  
Your Sons will once more return  
And strike once more for thee  
And avenge thy stripes and bruises<sup>25</sup>

Here, the home of which Dosh waxes so poetic is specifically the South, rather than the United States in general. When he refers to “your sons,” he saw himself as part of a dispersal of Southerners, who waited only for the end of “Vandal” (Northern Yankee) control of the South. His use of the term “Vandal government” may have been a reference to the 5<sup>th</sup> century invasion of Rome by the Vandals—a “civilized” society being sacked by “barbarians”—or simply an implication that the Radical Republicans, the US government and “carpet baggers” had vandalized the South. Either way, Dosh was

---

<sup>24</sup> For more on the agricultural practices of the region, see: Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Scurlock Diary, October 18, 1868, Scurlock Papers. It is unknown if Scurlock composed this poem or simply copied it into his journal, and he never made any other efforts at poetry in his journal.

certainly not alone in either his heartfelt poetry about the broken South,<sup>26</sup> or in his firm vision of himself as, primarily, a Southerner. In his letters to his brother Dan, he spared no amount of vitriol for the “Vandal government” and “the US So called.” In 1871, however, he grew suspicious that “some kind Yankee” was monitoring his mail and tempered his language. “I will now write U.S. in future instead of U.S. So called,” he told Dan, adding “I now expect every letter I receive from you in future will be opened, consequently be particular how you write. The Vandals may have detectives.”<sup>27</sup> He disdained the federal government so much that he believed they were hunting down those who refused to recognize its control.

Like many of the settlers at Tuxpan, Dosh Scurlock was not part of the initial flood of Confederates across the Mexican border that had refused to surrender to the Union. He had lived in a broken South for several years before he left. He also had not left for financial reasons, as some scholars have suggested about Confederates leaving the United States. Rather, his disgust with the “Vandals and negroes rule” was the decisive factor. For many Confederates, their self-identification as white Southerners, supposedly oppressed and overrun by blacks and white Northerners, was what pushed them to leave the United States.

For many of the Confederates, rejecting Yankees and blacks while embracing Southern identity did not necessarily mean rejecting an identity as Americans—most

---

<sup>26</sup> See for example Colonel Alonzo Slayback’s poem “The Burial of Shelby’s Flag.” The poem memorialized the ceremonious sinking of the Confederate flag in the Rio Grande as General Shelby’s troop crossed into Mexico.

<sup>27</sup> Theodocius Scurlock to Dan Scurlock, January 18, 1871, Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

notable in their use of the phrase “the American colony.” In fact, Drew Gilpin Faust argues that many Southerners considered themselves the true heirs to the US Revolutionary spirit.<sup>28</sup> The Alexander family, for example, explicitly self-identified as “American,” and referred to their colony at Tuxpan as the “American colony.” At the same time, Laura Alexander Vincent (the oldest daughter of the Alexander family, who married fellow Confederate exile Ferrel Vincent shortly after arriving) was still clearly mortified over “the idea of the Yankee rule.”<sup>29</sup> But this led her to view herself in opposition to Northerners, rather than the United States itself. Years later, Laura’s granddaughter, Georgie Burden, who was born in Tuxpan, recognized the settlement as both specifically Confederate and generally American.<sup>30</sup> Many of the settlers viewed “Confederate” and “American” as compatible terms, with the former in opposition to “Yankee” and “Northerner.”

At the same time, other colonists more explicitly rejected the nation as a whole. Gideon Lincecum was perhaps more adamant in his rejection of the United States than many of the other settlers, but his letters seem to suggest that he was not alone. In regards to US Independence Day he wrote, “But what care I for the fourth of July, when my very soul is disgusted with the whole nation that used to do worship on that day?”<sup>31</sup> He went

---

<sup>28</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Laura Vincent to Mollie Williams, March 15, 1871, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>30</sup> Georgie Burden, *Mexico: A Confederate Haven* (Boulder, CO: John E. Burden, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, June 22, 1869, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

on to mention that no one else in the settlement, including some neighbors that had visited him earlier in the day, seemed to mark the passing of July 4.

Not only did the settlers portray themselves as oppressed by Yankees, they also represented themselves as overrun by the newly freed blacks in the United States. John Henry Brown's role as chairman of the committee that wrote the declaration of secession for Texas is very telling. The document stated that the United States was "established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race."<sup>32</sup> Brown clearly viewed his and his compatriots' whiteness as central to their role within the nation and key to starting a new colony.

Gideon Lincecum was equally emphatic that the newly freed Blacks had no place in the United States. When his daughter Sarah asked him in a letter why it bothered him that blacks were to be educated in the United States, he responded, "I have no objection to their being educated, but I do object to being taxed to pay for it. I object to living under the influence of Yankee rule, supported by negro suffrage [and] the negro militia."<sup>33</sup> He believed that the financial struggles of so many whites in the postbellum South (including some of his family members) were due to "the influence of negro suffrage and oppressive taxation."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Laura Alexander (who would shortly become Laura Vincent) declared that she "would not go back there [the United States] now to live for any thing

---

<sup>32</sup> John Henry Brown, *History of Texas from 1685 to 1892* (Austin, Tex: Pemberton Press, 1970), 393–395.

<sup>33</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, August 26, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821–1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>34</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, October 12, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821–1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

you could offer,” and bristled at “the idea of the Yankee rule & free negro impudence.”<sup>35</sup> For the Confederate settlers, their disgust at Yankees and “free negroism” went hand in hand. It made up an important part of their identity as white Southerners and impelled many to leave the South and some to remain in Mexico even during hard times.

Since the colonists’ sense of being a community of white Southerners was so critical to the creation of the colony, they largely tried to recreate—or create an imagined version of—this community. Mollie Alexander wrote, “If only we had a few more good american citizens and church to go to once in a while we would be perfectly satisfied.”<sup>36</sup> These sentiments were common: the colony’s largest shortcoming was Southerners and Southern institutions. However, the settlers in Tuxpan were far more moderate in their desire for an exclusively Southern community than earlier Confederate immigrants. Another group established a colony they called Carlota (after the Empress) near Orizaba, Veracruz. They reportedly refused to socialize with any Spanish-speaking Mexicans, provoking outrage in the Mexico City press.<sup>37</sup> The Tuxpan colonists who remained in the colony for any length of time, however, seem to have realized that Spanish was unavoidable, and with few exceptions, picked it up within the first few years of arriving. According to Lincecum, the arrival of Southerners in Tuxpan set off a flurry of effort

---

<sup>35</sup> Laura Vincent to Mollie Williams, March 5, 1871, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>36</sup> Mollie Alexander to Mollie Williams, October 9, 1870, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Coke Rister, “Carlota: A Confederate Colony in Mexico,” *Journal of Southern History* XI, no. 1 (1945): 34–50.

among the locals to learn English, but it did not last long, “hence all intercommunication is had in the Spanish language.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite their efforts to fit in with the local population, the Confederates did show a clear desire for more US and Southern institutions. All three of the Alexander sisters mentioned how much they missed their religious life back in the States. In 1869, some of the settlers tried to organize a Baptist Church in Tuxpan. When Mollie wrote that she and the family had “been to Baptist preaching 3 times since we arrived here,” it was likely in reference to Texan Newell Crane’s preaching.<sup>39</sup> Gideon Lincecum mentioned Crane’s efforts at creating a Church community with regular prayer meetings, but Lincecum, who hated organized religion, was disgusted with the effort. He complained about how “the big old Crane whooped and squaked [sic] and prayed” and described preachers as a genus “which should be denominated *mucho mala humbre* [sic, a grammatically and orthographically incorrect effort to say *very bad men* in Spanish].”<sup>40</sup> Newell Crane’s efforts did not last long, as he returned to Texas later that year. In 1871, Roxie reported to Mollie that there were no preachers in the area “at present, but all religion is tolerated under this Government. The Catholic religion prevails among these people you know and there is a Catholic church and Priest established in town. I like very much to attend church and miss it very much.”<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Lincecum to Doran, October 12, 1870.

<sup>39</sup> Roxie Alexander to Mollie Williams, August 15, 1869, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>40</sup> Lincecum to Doran, June 22, 1869.

<sup>41</sup> Mollie Alexander to Mollie Williams, June 5, 1871, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas; See also: Anne M. Martinez, *Catholic Borderlands: Mapping Catholicism onto American Empire, 1905-1935* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014);

It seems as though the Alexanders never got their wish. In 1876, US Pastor J.B. Willis visited Mexico for several months as part of a missionary effort to bring Protestantism to the country. He noted Protestant churches that he passed throughout, but his stay in Tuxpan elicited nothing but yet another mention of his opinion on the failures of the Catholic Church.<sup>42</sup> The fact that the settlers were unable to create a protestant Church, yet unwilling to attend a Catholic Church is indicative of the position they held in Mexico. On the one hand, the fact that Roxie missed Church but would not attend a Catholic mass suggests that she resisted full integration into the Mexican community of Tuxpan. On the other hand, Protestantism was an important foundation of Confederate nationalism.<sup>43</sup> The fact that the community was not able to support a Protestant Church suggests that they were less able to maintain their Confederate identity than they had intended.

Similarly, education was another social space that suggests a partial resistance to integration and a desire to maintain a Confederate-identified community with limited results. Not many of the families who settled in Tuxpan brought young children, but one of the exceptions to this was the Brown family, who were particularly concerned with educating their three young girls. Clara Brown, the oldest of the daughters, told her Aunt that she was eagerly expecting a school to be opened soon not far from their home. Clara failed to go into detail, but the fact that the expected school was to be only a mile away

---

Edward N. Wright-Rios, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887-1934* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> J.B. Willis Papers, 1874-1877, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>43</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

suggests that it was to be a school for the Confederates' children. Several months later, however, no school had appeared. "Sister Lizzie, Baby [Marion] and I learn our lesson every day," Clara told her aunt, "there is no school here so we recite our lessons to Ma."<sup>44</sup> English-language schooling, however, was important to the settlers and as many of the next generation of children from the Tuxpan colony began to grow up, they were educated in the United States. For example, a generation later, Georgie Burden was taken to the United States for her education, as were some of the other children of her generation.<sup>45</sup> Even though the second and third generation of the settlers grew up speaking predominantly Spanish, it was important to many of their parents that the children get an English-language, American education.

Many of the Confederates at Tuxpan also tried to start an agricultural society, as they announced in *The Two Republics*. The society was an effort to combine the importance of Southernhood and Americanness with their ability to be financially profitable. As important as the Southern institutions such as the Protestant Church were to the Confederates, what often sent people back to the United States was their lack of capital. The intention of the society was to create a seed exchange between Southerners in different parts of Mexico, which would not only create social connections, but was also intended to help create an important financial safety net which many Southerners lacked in their new country.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Clara Brown to "Aunt Hannah," December 12, 1868, JHB Papers.

<sup>45</sup> Burden, *Mexico*.

<sup>46</sup> *The Two Republics*, September 15, 1868.



The lack of financial safety net caused problems for many Confederates in Mexico. In March of 1875, colonist Frederick H. Lutterloh was nearing desperation. His sugar cane crop produced far less than he had hoped, just as market prices for sugar and molasses were falling. In a letter to his brother, Washington, he produced a miserably brief catalogue of all his belongings as proof of his impoverished state. “Well Wash,” he wrote to his brother in North Carolina, “you can’t think & I can hardly realize how fallen I am. Six months ago I and all who knew my cane farm thought I was well to do. Today if my debt were paid, about 85 dollars, I would not be worth a dollar.”<sup>47</sup> When Frederick had planted his first sugar cane crop, he did so with high hopes of making a profit—expecting upwards of \$1300.

Frederick never gave Washington the details of his agricultural efforts, but his letters give the impression that he was working off rented land. His extensive debt suggests that his investment in growing sugar was at least partly a loan rather than his own capital. Without more information, it's hard to know whether or not making \$1300 on his cane crop was ever a possibility. Frederick, like a surprising number of colonists, had been a doctor in the United States and this was his first foray into cash crops. But it is clear that his complete failure to even break even was a complete surprise. The confident way that he requested that Washington send him money suggests he was accustomed to having more expendable income than he had in Mexico. His complaints about his one set of threadbare clothes imply that he had been used to owning multiple, high-quality

---

<sup>47</sup> Frederick Lutterloh to Washington Lutterloh, March 9, 1875, Lutterloh Family Papers, 1780-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

outfits. And now, down to his last set of clothes and last few coins, working on rented land, Frederick was clearly done with Mexico. His friend Johny was working as a day laborer for fifty cents a day, but according to Frederick, “work is scarce & hard to get.”<sup>48</sup> Both were desperate for either cash or a ticket back to Texas, preferably both. By the end of 1875, Frederick had returned to Texas and his work as a doctor.

Although Gideon Lincecum was already dead when Frederick returned to Texas, Gideon likely would have labeled Frederick lazy and shiftless, as he uniformly labeled all of the colonists who moved back to the United States. “It is the same with everyone who have gone back,” he claimed. “They could not nor did not work. No industrious man has shown any indication of going back. They have plenty and are working daily enlarging their sugar farms and improving their places.”<sup>49</sup> Gideon, however, was in a very different position than Frederick. The former was able to hire labor, while the latter was looking for work. The Lincecum family had certainly gone to Mexico with some amount of capital that he had been able to save from the effects of the war. He had been a small-scale land owner and slave holder. His slaves, with whom he claimed to have a strong paternalistic relationship, had done domestic labor as well as agricultural labor. After the war, Gideon’s bitterness about the end of slavery led him to refuse to hire black laborers;

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, September 27, 1869, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

not even his former slaves towards whom he had supposedly felt so paternalistically affectionate.<sup>50</sup>

Many of the Confederates were in a similar position to the Lincecum family, accustomed to a few slaves, but unable or unwilling to replace them with hired labor after emancipation. Gideon Lincecum told his daughter Sarah that the Confederate women accustomed to domestic slave labor in Tuxpan were having the hardest time adjusting to their new lives.<sup>51</sup> The procurement of labor was an important goal for many Southerners who had been accustomed to slave labor before and during the Civil War. However many of the settlers' letters are either hazy on the details of the labor system in Tuxpan, or are so focused on attracting other settlers to the region to make them difficult to believe—often both. Those who published material on the merits of Tuxpan focused on the availability of steady, cheap labor. Jo Shelby, for example, pointed to the proximity of Cuba for access to “coolie” labor and John Henry Brown to the Mexican peasantry. Brown claimed in his book that

Persons with means to hire can always get labor—in limited amount near at hand—in any quantity from the Indian villages fifteen, twenty to fifty miles from us...These people, when under a care of a manager of their people or one of our own, work well; and many are constant and faithful left to themselves.<sup>52</sup>

Brown's message may have conveyed the condescension with which the Confederates often viewed Mexican laborers—which I discuss later in this chapter—but the claim

---

<sup>50</sup> Gideon Lincecum, *Adventures of a Frontier Naturalist: The Life and Times of Dr. Gideon Lincecum*, ed. Jerry Bryan Lincecum and Edward Hake Phillips (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1994), xxiv.

<sup>51</sup> Lincecum to Doran, September 27, 1869.

<sup>52</sup> John Henry Brown, *Two Years in Mexico, Or, The Emigrant's Friend* (Galveston, Tex: Printed at the “News” Book and Job Office, 1867), 86.

wasn't as true as he had hoped. According to Gideon Lincecum, "A great many people who came here with the expectation of hiring labor are greatly disappointed, and are going back every chance."<sup>53</sup> It's not clear why some colonists struggled to hire labor. Gideon himself hired "indians" on the occasions that he needed timber brought in for building his sugarhouse or tar for sealing his boat.<sup>54</sup> Others however, may have overestimated how much cash they would be able to earn in Mexico. Or perhaps—being accustomed to unpaid labor—they had underestimated how much it would actually cost to hire workers. Based on his letters to Sarah, Gideon did most of the labor on his land himself, including processing the sugar that he grew, despite the fact that he had available capital. His widowed daughter Leonora did the housework and her young children did odd jobs as they were able.

The successes of those like the Alexander and Vincent families suggest that there was labor available even on a large scale, provided settlers had the money for it. Dr. Andrew Alexander, bringing his three daughters Laura, Mollie and Roxie, had clearly gone to Tuxpan with at least some capital. Andrew, his partner Ferrel Vincent (Laura's future husband) and several others from Brazoria County, Texas, had invested in land in Tuxpan. They maintained connections with businessmen and friends in Texas, who continued to invest capital and technology in the Vincent-Alexander agricultural efforts. The families' available capital made a huge difference in their success. By the early

---

<sup>53</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, August 7, 1868, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>54</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, August 17, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

1870s, as Frederick Lutterloh was going into debt to start a small sugar operation on rented land, the Alexanders bought a pair of mules for their sugar mill. They soon upgraded to a steam powered mill, sent by one of their connections in Galveston. Even before they had the newly upgraded equipment, Mollie claimed that the Alexanders were making “\$50 to \$100 per week,” on their 20 acres of cane, “and that is better than having our property stolen; or being shot by thieves,” as she perceived life in Texas.<sup>55</sup> In 1871, Mollie complained about the “crowd of hirelants” that she had to feed “ever since we commenced making sugar.”<sup>56</sup> During the 1873 harvest, Laura claimed that the Vincents had “over 100 hands at work during the [sugar] making season,” working “on the first steam mill ever erected in the Valley of Tuspan [sic], Mexico.”<sup>57</sup> Neither Mollie nor Laura was ever forthcoming about who the “hirelants” helping process the sugar were, and their eagerness to convince Annie and Mollie Williams that Tuxpan was the most fruitful place on earth means that their descriptions should be taken with a grain of salt. Mollie’s jab at stolen property and thieves is clearly a reference to the Williams’ experience, implying that they should be significantly better off in Tuxpan than Texas.

What is clear in these letters, though, is that moving to Mexico with capital opened up a wealth of possibilities that were not open to Frederick Lutterloh or Theodocius Scurlock. While Frederick and Dosh each floundered on their rented land, the Alexanders and Vincents owned their land and the technology to process their crops, had

---

<sup>55</sup> Alexander to Williams, October 9, 1870.

<sup>56</sup> Mollie Alexander to Mollie Williams, March 12, 1871, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>57</sup> Laura Vincent to Annie Williams Border, August 25, 1873, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

the ability to hire significant numbers of field workers, and had multiple house servants. In the meantime, Frederick's friend Johny was working for fifty cents a day while they tried to process the products of their rented land on someone else's mill, paying the fees with borrowed money. Dosh repeatedly expressed concern about their lack of food, while Gideon Lincecum described feasts of "fresh pork, 8 or 10 pounds of fat fish, onions, garlic, peas, beans, roasting ears, plenty of nice white oker [sic, okra], cayenne, Agua cata [sic, a misspelling of *aguacate*, the Spanish word for avocado], Guava, plantains, bananas in marmalade, chioties, nice cabbage, butterbeans, tomatoes—all this and several other nice little nic nacs, such as oranges, lemons, zapota &c." All this, he said, "can be gathered up and served on the table any day besides our good bread."<sup>58</sup> Even if Lincecum was not working on the same scale that the Alexanders and Vincents may have done, he had enough capital to invest in the land and technology to be successful. Many newspapers in the late 1860s and 1870s in the US South and Mexico warned people against moving to Mexico without money. *The Two Republics*, in particular, was insistent that people should not, by any means, move to Mexico without start-up capital. Such people were probably the ones that found themselves in the position in which Frederick Lutterloh found himself, with little option but to return to the United States.

Frederick Lutterloh's position was not necessarily that unusual. According to Dosh Scurlock and Gideon Lincecum, many people struggled to make a living in Tuxpan, which sent many of them back to Texas. The Brown family, one of the key promoters of the region, ended up returning to the United States in 1872 because John was offered a

---

<sup>58</sup> Lincecum to Doran, August 17, 1870.

job. In a time when cash was extremely difficult to come by, it was too tempting an offer to pass by. While they had successfully planted a wide variety and amount of food—“vanilla, coffee, oranges, bananas, mangoes, coconut” and more—they lacked the capital to expand into sugar. According to Mary, they were entirely “without capital, so of course our progress is gradual.” The plots of land that John and his partners had bought from the Tumbadero hacienda with hopes of selling them to colonists were not selling as quickly as they had hoped. They still owed huge sums of money on the land, and with a \$1000 per year mortgage payment, capital was too tight to invest in cash crops like sugar.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the Brown family’s return to the United States for lack of capital, they never went hungry. In fact, Frederick Lutterloh’s account is the only set of letters that I have found in which anyone wrote home describing their misery, which makes it worth pointing out a few things. First of all, paper was not cheap. The archivist who transcribed Theodocius Scurlock’s diary suggested that the reason he stopped was that paper probably grew too expensive for him.<sup>60</sup> Gideon Lincecum, on the other hand, did quite well for himself and wrote many lengthy letters to his daughter. Thus, the experiences that I have examined are skewed towards the comparatively successful, even though none of them were exactly wealthy elites.

---

<sup>59</sup> Mary Brown, n.d., John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>60</sup> “Theodocius Scurlock Diary,” Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Second, Frederick Lutterloh's experience in Mexico suggests that it was not all that different from many Southerners who stayed in the United States. Times were financially difficult for many Southerners across class and racial lines. A friend of Clara Brown's wrote to her from Texas, "I fear the grasshoppers will destroy all the gardens & everything else, if they do, I do not know what will be the state of the country [in] another year. Times are depressed enough as it is. Nothing but 'hard times' greets the ear on every side."<sup>61</sup> But in the United States, at least, people who many have otherwise become colonists could rely on their social and familial networks to get through "depressed" times.<sup>62</sup> Some of the colonists in Mexico had given up on these networks. For example, when Dan Scurlock tried to convince his brother Dosh to return to the United States, he did so because he was afraid of his brother being old and sick far away in a foreign country without his family to rely on. The same is true when Gideon Lincecum's daughters wrote to each other—Sarah Doran wrote to her sister Leonora Campbell, asking her to come home to her family where she would be supported. Gideon scoffed at the idea and told Sarah that Leonora's real family was in Mexico. Money was certainly tight for many migrants in Mexico, but then, money was tight for many people in the Southern United States as well. If Frederick Lutterloh's case is any indication, one

---

<sup>61</sup> Laura McAlister to Clara Brown, March 19, 1868, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>62</sup> In addition to the social networks, whites in the post-Reconstruction United States could increasingly rely on the benefit of whiteness as they engaged in a process of reasserting their economic, political and social dominance, including control over land and newly freed people. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).



of the main reasons that people returned to the United States was because their lack of family and community ties in Mexico meant having nothing to fall back on when times were hard.

Finally, Frederick Lutterloh's complaints of absolute destitution are probably relative. When the Confederates left the United States to find "freedom," they had not imagined tenant farming or competing with Mexican laborers for day jobs. Despite their rhetoric against the United States, some probably found being "oppressed" by Yankees on their own land preferable to laboring on someone else's land.

#### **RACIALIZING MEXICANS, RACIALIZING SOUTHERNERS**

Shortly after the Alexander family arrived in Tuxpan, Roxie wrote to her friend Mollie Williams back in the United States about her first experiences with Mexicans. "You would laugh," she told Mollie, "to see the natives." They "come in crowds to look at the white ladies."<sup>63</sup> This is telling for multiple reasons. For one, Roxie's statement clearly articulates the importance with which she viewed herself as a white woman. Note that, at the time, Roxie did not speak Spanish, and the assumption that they were eager to see "white ladies," might just be conjecture. White Americans were not a novelty to Mexicans in Tuxpan by the late 1860s, particularly since the city had been occupied during the Mexican-American War. However, white US American women were likely less common, even with the recent influx of Confederate families. Curiously, Roxie displayed evident amusement at being ogled by those with whom she contrasts her own

---

<sup>63</sup> Roxie Alexander to Mollie Williams, June 5, 1869, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

whiteness. It seems highly unlikely that she would have felt the same way about being stared at by blacks in the United States since “negro rule” is one of the reasons that the Alexander family moved Mexico in the first place. The international setting changed the way that she viewed her whiteness in opposition to non-whiteness and the acceptable relationship between the two.

Roxie’s method of contrasting her own whiteness with the apparently non-whiteness of Mexicans shows how the centrality of whiteness to Southerners did not end at the crossing of the Mexican border. While Roxie was eager to make this contrast, many Southerners were also careful not to portray all Mexicans as uncivilized non-whites. When Theodocius Scurlock’s brother Dan compared Mexicans to Africans, Dosh responded that “the White class here rank with the whites of any country.”<sup>64</sup> Dosh had filled his journal with stereotypical portraits of lazy, ignorant men and women too “cheap” to pay for a doctor—ignoring both the fact that they had their own medical practices, as well as the fact that many rural Mexicans not fully involved in the cash economy.<sup>65</sup> Yet in his letters to Dan he was eager to extend whiteness to a select portion of the Mexican population. This was a common tactic for Confederates who wanted to tempt their fellow compatriots to join them in Mexico. Rather than describe all Mexicans as brown, non-white and lacking civilization, Confederates were careful to describe two clear groups in their letters: the non-white laboring class—against whom they constructed

---

<sup>64</sup> Theodocius Scurlock to Dan Scurlock, n.d., Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

<sup>65</sup> For more on the suspicions that many rural Mexicans had towards medical professionals, see: Paul J. Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998).

their own whiteness—and the white “Spanish” Mexicans with financial means, who provided the settlers with refined company.

When Laura, Mollie and Roxie Alexander wrote to friends in Texas, they unceasingly tried to convince them to move to Mexico. When their father wrote to friends in Texas, they insisted that he add tantalizing information about the excellence of Mexico so that their friends’ families might come. The Alexanders were invested in convincing other Texans to move to Mexico so they could recreate their Southern community in Mexico. They were not the only ones, either, as many of the Confederate settlers wrote letters back to Texas in an effort to tempt others to Mexico. They recognized that they were fighting an uphill battle with popular opinion in the United States, where “tropical” countries had a reputation as cesspools of disease and revolution. Mexicans themselves were often seen as dangerous, uncultured brutes. The majority of the Tuxpan settlers came from Texas and were accordingly in dialogue with Texan racial ideas and perceptions of Mexicans.<sup>66</sup>

Theodocius and Dan Scurlock’s letters back and forth to each other while Dosh was traveling in Veracruz are an excellent example of this. When Dan heard that Dosh was in Mexico, his pleas for Dosh’s return were based not only on his desire for the brothers to live near each other and belief that good Southern men belong in the South, but also his perceptions of Mexico and Mexicans. He asked Theodocius, “If everything there was pleasant and congenial why did *Genl* [Sterling] *Price* and the other exiles with

---

<sup>66</sup> Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

him return to the U.S.?” While Dan had never been to Mexico, he was quite insistent that he knew all about the country, and described it in highly racialized terms. “In Mexico they mix with negro and Indian,” he told his brother, “a great portion of the Mexicans are as *black* as the negros of the U.S. and as treacherous as the *devil* himself; no man traveling knows when he is safe or what time he may be killed.” He added “You should be as easily satisfied in any province in *Africa*. Your social intercourse would be just about the same there as in Mexico; I have an utter contempt for Mexico and the South American states... No American or no man from here I do not think can be happy or even quiet or satisfied. And if you are one of these why do you not come back.”<sup>67</sup> In his response, Theodocius adamantly rejected the comparison between Africans and Mexicans and maintained that there was respectably refined society in Mexico. He never complained to Dan about lazy cheap Indians the way he did to his journal. This was likely because Dosh—like many of the colonists—was eager to present to friends and family in the United States that moving to Mexico was the right choice, a choice that others might want to make as well.

Many Anglo Texans during the nineteenth century would have likely agreed with Dan Scurlock’s assessment of Mexicans. According to historian Arnolfo de León, Mexicans in 1860s Texas occupied a definitively non-white position in the racial perspective of white Texans. Many derided Mexicans as lazy, ignorant, unclean and a plethora of other insults. They were, however, generally perceived as a step “above”

---

<sup>67</sup> Theodocius Scurlock to Dan Scurlock, October 19, 1869, Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

African Americans, a comparison that many of the Confederate settlers at Tuxpan also made.<sup>68</sup> For the rest of the country, where there were fewer interactions with Mexicans, the experiences of the US soldiers who fought in the Mexican-American War shaped popular opinions of Mexicans. John Henry Brown, in *The Emigrant's Friend*, pointed out that soldiers in the war hardly had access to refined society in Mexico, and therefore would not know anything about it insisted that “the truth is, the females of no country in modern times have been more unjustly misrepresented than those of Mexico...There is in Mexico as refined, as elegant, and as chaste a female society as in any country in the old world or the new.”<sup>69</sup>

Many Southerners also perceived Mexico itself through a highly racialized lens. Some perceived Mexico as part of a broadly defined region of “the tropics,” which they believed was inaccessible to whites.<sup>70</sup> According to Gideon Lincecum, “The opinion that prevails in Texas that a white man can’t work here, is a foolish lie, invented by, and is only popular with, the lazy and inefficient.”<sup>71</sup> Gideon repeatedly pointed to the work he did and the health he experienced—even well into his seventies—as evidence to disprove the lie that whites could not do well in Mexico. Theodocius Scurlock was also eager to disprove this notion saying that “If the right kind of people were to settle in this country

---

<sup>68</sup> Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

<sup>69</sup> Brown, *Two Years in Mexico*, 80.

<sup>70</sup> Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). I discuss perceptions of “the tropics” in more depth in Chapter 2.

<sup>71</sup> Lincecum to Doran, June 22, 1869.

they certainly would amass wealth. Nature has lavished her kindness on this country.”<sup>72</sup> He had also said that “Any industrious man can do well in this country.”<sup>73</sup> It is fairly safe to say that when Dosh said “industrious” and “the right kind of people,” he likely meant white people. The irony in this is that, as he wrote it, Dosh, though industrious, was completely broke. He clearly valued his racial ideologies more than the realities of his earning potential in Mexico.

The opinion in Texas about Mexico, however, was not unanimous. Quite a few of the settlers at Tuxpan received letters from friends and family back in the United States who mentioned how much they should like to be in Mexico, away from Yankee and Negro rule. In fact, in response to Mary Brown’s assumption that many people in the US had a negative idea of Mexico, a friend of hers replied “I think you are a little mistaken abot a greate many speaking against Mexico it is true there is some that dont like that cuntry very much.” He went on to say that many people used to object to the government of Mexico, but after a few years of Reconstruction they found Mexico decidedly preferable to the “Yankee” government. He claimed that many “would go there if they could possibly do so, but times are too hard and it is feared they will yet be harder as the government has no murcy on the south.”<sup>74</sup> Many letters to Tuxpan colonists, particularly to the Brown family, echo the sentiment that many people wanted to leave the South.

---

<sup>72</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, January 21, 1868, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>73</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, January 12, 1868, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>74</sup> S Jordan to Mary Brown, May 19, 1869, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

This was exactly what the settlers in Tuxpan wanted, and were accordingly invested in portraying Mexicans in a positive light.

In John Henry Brown's series of articles about the experiences of the Confederates in Mexico, he harshly criticized those who, "gangrened by the prejudice of race or caste," refused to recognize the positive qualities of the population of Mexico.<sup>75</sup> John clearly considered "prejudice of race" to be central to the misconceptions about Mexicans. Importantly, he didn't extend his progressive thoughts on race to blacks in the United States. In 1861, as Texas prepared to secede from the Union, John actually chaired the committee designated to draft the state's declaration of secession. They declared that the United States was "established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race."<sup>76</sup> Many of John's writings similarly convey deeply held racism against blacks. How did he go from being a clearly racist white supremacist to chiding anti-Mexican racists in the newspaper? On the one hand, Brown was invested in the US racial structure that kept blacks "inferior and dependent." At the same time, he recognized that promoting US investment in and migration to Mexico required a positive perspective of Mexicans that hinged on racial perception.

Since the US South was an intensely race-conscious society, the racialized terms they used to describe Mexicans were critical to their goals. The terms that they used,

---

<sup>75</sup> John Henry Brown, "Confederates in Mexico, 9 of 22," *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, April 25, 1879.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *History of Texas from 1685 to 1892*, 393–395.

however unfitting to the actual self-identification of the people they met in Mexico, carried significant weight in their private and public writings to the United States. “Mexican,” “Indian,” and “Spaniard,” often indicated the type (or lack) of labor that people did, their socio-economic position, their race, and whether or not they were appropriate for the “refined society” of Southerners. It was their way of making sense of a new racialized socio-economic structure.

### **MEXICANS AS LABORERS**

As the colonists worked to make sense of the race and class structure of Mexico, they often found “Indians” to be the neatest category to understand. John Henry Brown wrote that, while “whites and Mestezoes...live exclusively in towns, the Indians cultivate the farms and appear about as their class elsewhere excepting that they are a sober, quiet and peaceable people.”<sup>77</sup> Gideon Lincecum also defined Indians as those that live in the interior of Mexico, and described them as clean and hardworking. Yet he also commented that “they all speak Spanish,” which means that the Indians that he met at Sunday markets in Tuxpan were more adapted to mestizo society than many.<sup>78</sup> But no matter how many positive attributes people such as John and Gideon wanted to apply to the “Indians” of Mexico, they were not seen as neighbors with whom they wanted an intimate acquaintance, but rather an important source of potential labor.

While “Indian” often indicated a laborer, not all laborers were explicitly “Indian,” and hired workers were occasionally described as “Mexican” as well. For example, on a

---

<sup>77</sup> Brown, “Confederates in Mexico, 9 of 22.”

<sup>78</sup> Lincecum to Doran, June 22, 1869.



trip to get tar for his boat, Gideon Lincecum brought “2 Mexicans, one hired the other a volunteer.”<sup>79</sup> While Mexican does not immediately seem to indicate “non-white,” the consistency with which labor is racialized in the minds of Southerners suggests that Lincecum did not view the people he brought on his trip as sufficiently white. Lincecum was likely using “Mexican” here to roughly approximate “mestizo,” since he did occasionally hire “Indians” for different chores. However, not all the Southerners used the label “Mexican” in the same comparatively clear-cut manner.<sup>80</sup>

The non-white laborers that could be hired in Mexico drew frequent comparisons to blacks—enslaved and free—in the United States. The colonists often portrayed Mexican laborers as far favorable to US blacks. John Henry Brown wrote, “one average native here [is] worth about as much as two average Black men in the States,” in regards to their usefulness and effectiveness as hired labor.<sup>81</sup> The women of the colony often made similar comparisons for domestic workers, in which they too portrayed Mexicans as far preferable to Blacks. Laura Alexander Vincent, in her endless mission to convince her friends Mollie and Annie Williams to move to Mexico, wrote “servants are very cheap most any one can have a servant you don’t have to put up with any old sloven of a servant here you can have just the best quality of servants.” Even better, she added, “the common Mexican does not try to equalize themselves with white people like the hateful

---

<sup>79</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, June 16, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>80</sup> Trying to overlay racial ideologies with national identities was often a messy and unclear process on both sides of the border. Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Martinez, *Catholic Borderlands*; William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

<sup>81</sup> Brown, *Two Years in Mexico*, 86.

black negro, then they are not quite black they are the color of an Indian some a little darker.”<sup>82</sup>

The habit of drawing this comparison between Mexicans and blacks was not unique to the Southerners in Mexico. George L. Robertson, a Texan who remained in the United States after the war, wrote to his sister that Mexicans should universally “be peoned, rich and poor, they would make the best plantation hands in the world. They fear and respect authority and are a great deal more humble and less intelligent than our negroes.” Notably, unlike the Confederate settlers at Tuxpan, Robertson also considered Mexicans to be the lowest “of all the contemptable, despicable people on Earth.”<sup>83</sup> Being despicable clearly did not make for bad field hands as far as Robertson was concerned, but not many Southerners in the United States saw Mexicans as ideal laborers. They mostly thought them too lazy, thus explaining the immigrants’ ceaseless quest to convince potential colonists otherwise.<sup>84</sup>

Domestic labor was immensely important, particularly to women who were accustomed to having slave or hired black women to help in the house. Gideon Lindeum believed that his daughter Maggie would not do well in Mexico as “there are no negroes here, and all the women in the country have to wash and cook and do the house work themselves. It goes so hard with some of them that they howl to go back to the negroes. I am pretty certain that Maggie would not be satisfied or contented with the work women

---

<sup>82</sup> Laura Vincent to Mollie Williams, September 25, 1870, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>83</sup> George Lee Robertson, March 26, 1864, George Lee Robertson Papers, 1839-1869, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>84</sup> De León, *They Called Them Greasers*.

has to do to get along.”<sup>85</sup> The problem of finding domestic labor seems to have been as much of a concern for women as field labor was for men. Mary Brown told her sister,

We find it somewhat difficult to obtain servants that are willing to be trained to our customs of cooking & housekeeping. The Americans give higher wages than they are accustomed to so as soon as they have furnished themselves with a few changes of raiment and a little money they are rich enough and want to go visiting for a few weeks or months. I kept one for 5 months, then without ceremony, she left me to go to a neighboring town visiting promising to come back. A month has passed and no Maria has presented herself. I suppose I have the alternative of training another or doing without and at a bad time too, as two vessels have [arrived] at Tuxpan from Galveston and I shall have a good deal of company.<sup>86</sup>

Mary’s complaint about the Mexican women that she hired for domestic labor echoes common complaints in the United States by white southerners who desperately wanted their former slaves to be a stable work force. Like Mary, former slave owners in the United States often seemed personally affronted by the fact that their laborers had the audacity to leave their employ, and at the most inconvenient time.<sup>87</sup> Making the transition to “free” labor proved difficult for many of the former Confederates.

Yet, Mary’s complaint about her “Maria,” and Mexican domestic laborers in general, is sharply contrasted with her portrayal of Francisca in *From Orizava to Tuspan*, which Mary wrote with the intent of publishing it.<sup>88</sup> Francisca was the family’s servant during their stay in Orizaba, and when they briefly and incidentally met on the road to Tuxpan, Mary said Francisca’s “benedictions [were] kept up until her voice died away in the distance. *Faithful Francisca!* A true example of filial duty; a controlling sentiment in

---

<sup>85</sup> Lincecum to Doran, September 27, 1869.

<sup>86</sup> Mary M. Brown to “My dear sisters,” August 18, 1868, JHB Papers.

<sup>87</sup> Guterl, *American Mediterranean*.

<sup>88</sup> As far as I know, it was never published, though two drafts of the work are in the John Henry Brown Family Papers.

the breast of every Mexican.”<sup>89</sup> Both her complaint about Maria and her laudation of Francisca has to be taken within the context in which she was writing: one a frustrated letter to a sister and the other a public (and accordingly, more explicitly politicized) description of Mexicans in general. Likewise, Laura Alexander Vincent’s insistence that Mexican servants were undeniably wonderful should be questioned. Labor was a critical issue at this time and for those interested in hiring, the availability of labor held the motivation of getting people to move to where the labor was. Laura’s statements have to be taken within the context of her goals: to convince Annie and Mollie to move to Mexico. She even asked Mollie what Annie paid the nurse for her child before bragging how cheap, efficient, dependable and clean her two servant girls were.<sup>90</sup> “If you only knew,” she wrote to them, “how peaceful and quiet we can all live out here I do think that you would not stay back there any longer.”<sup>91</sup>

Theodocius Scurlock’s diary, a personal document with no one to impress, belittles the Mexican population at length—which likely reflects his bitterness at his struggles. He may have been failing to find paying patients and failing at his agricultural attempts, but at least he could assure himself that he was better than the Indians. Dosh’s diary is also from an earlier period than most of his letters to his brother Dan, which make it difficult to say if the more positive perspective in his letters is based on a change of perspective or just a front for his brother. During the period in which Dosh wrote in his

---

<sup>89</sup> Mary Brown, “From Orizava to Tuspan” n.d., 17, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>90</sup> Vincent to Williams, March 15, 1871.

<sup>91</sup> Vincent to Williams, September 25, 1870.

diary, he was in no position to hire any laborers, besides the occasional cook—which he seemed to think that a single man could not live without. “We are in a bad condition,” he wrote during an argument with a fellow US American at whose house he had previously eaten, “No person to cook for us.”<sup>92</sup>

Much of his frustrations with his impoverished situation in Mexico seem to be directed at its indigenous population. As the doctor traveled from town to town in near desperation for paying patients, he wrote, “These damned Indians will die before they will send for a Dr.”<sup>93</sup> When he was trying to build his house and could not find nails he complained that the Indians were “too stingy to buy nails.” Thus, it is likely with no little amount of bitterness that he wrote, “They are truly a lazy people. They farm with the machete which is no farming at all... They are too lazy to farm with the plough... These people are about 150 years behind the times. They all look indolent.”<sup>94</sup> This despite the fact that slash-and-burn agriculture is suited to farming in Veracruz, and that Theodocius himself knew far too well that it was not for the lazy.<sup>95</sup> A few weeks later, in increasingly worse financial troubles, he added “This is a great country, Ironically speaking...A man that will undertake to farm here on their system will soon find himself afoot and naked...Nothing but R[ail] Roads will bring them to a knowledge of the truth.”<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Scurlock Diary, May 25, 1868, Scurlock Collection.

<sup>93</sup> Again, Scurlock shows a complete lack of understanding of rural Mexican understanding of doctors, medical practice and the cash economy. Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government*.

<sup>94</sup> Scurlock Diary, October 2, 1868, Scurlock Collection.

<sup>95</sup> Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> Scurlock Diary, November 26, 1868, Scurlock Collection.

Occasionally, Scurlock and his traveling partner managed to scrape together enough money to hire a cook, which was evidently not always as beneficial as he would have liked. “Our cook keeps dead drunk when she can get aguardiente,” he wrote in his journal, “We will discharge the old sot.”<sup>97</sup> He did occasionally complain to his brother about Mexican laborers, one time informing him that “if a man has a family his wife can watch the cook but they will take the advantage of a single man.” He added in typical US immigrant fashion, “you can hire cheap: two and a half and three dollars per month for a good cook.”<sup>98</sup>

While the majority of the farming settlers in Tuxpan were concerned primarily with hiring male laborers and female domestic workers, they therefore primarily described working Mexicans along these gender lines. Theodocius, on the other hand, was less interested in labor and hiring. In fact, the gendered way that he described the laboring majority of Mexicans has more in common with the stereotypes used by Mexican-American War soldiers than with his fellow immigrants. Similarly to many of the soldiers, Dosh viewed the “lazy” men in opposition to hard-working women.<sup>99</sup> “The men of this town are passionately fond of ball playing,” wrote Scurlock with disgust. This he contrasted with the women, who “are more intelligent than the men & also more accommodating. They are all of a dark color, mixed I suppose with Indian - in fact they

---

<sup>97</sup> Scurlock Diary, June 15, 1868, Scurlock Collection.

<sup>98</sup> Scurlock to Scurlock, January 18, 1871.

<sup>99</sup> This was also a centuries-old trope, long used to describe the gendered division of labor among Native Americans in New England. These understandings continued to shape perceptions of gender and labor in Mexico. Camilla Townsend, *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma: An American Portrait* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); De León, *They Called Them Greasers*.

are Indians.”<sup>100</sup> Scurlock, writing in a private forum, uninterested in hiring labor, and frustrated with his inability to make money off Mexico’s Indian population is also the Southerner most likely to rely on negative stereotypes about Indians. His letters to his brother, in contrast, are as equally eager to portray Mexicans in a generous light as other settlers tended to do. The contrast shows how the settlement project shaped the way that the settlers racialized Mexicans.

### **MEXICANS AS NEIGHBORS**

Since they were settling long term in a region with few US American neighbors, the Southern settlers were also concerned about the local society. Not only did they emphasize that there was a ready source of docile, respectful labor in Mexico, but also that Mexicans are kind and welcoming neighbors. “We remain still quite popular with the natives,” Gideon Lincecum wrote to his daughter, “Who are ready to oblige us with anything they have. They frequently send us little messes of their superior cooking.”<sup>101</sup> This is a very consistent theme: the abundant hospitality of Mexicans, who were overjoyed to have US Americans as neighbors. Of course, very few of them ever questioned whether people in Mexico really were overjoyed to have US neighbors, if they were simply polite, or if they simply saw a benefit to having the settlers there. One rare indication that any of the settlers questioned the motives of Mexican behavior comes from Mary Brown. While on the road between Orizaba and Tuxpan, the party of colonists stopped at a small house on the side of the road for the night.

---

<sup>100</sup> Scurlock Diary, January 27, 1869, Scurlock Collection.

<sup>101</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, May 12, 1870, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

The only occupant was a Mexican man, and the only visible objects save the bare walls were a species of palm nuts, which were spread over the floors of the two rooms evidently in different stages of preparation for market. With true Mexican hospitality he swept these into corners and, *placing all he possessed at our disposal*, disappeared, perhaps to invoke in some rural relicario, the protection of his patron saint from his mysterious visitors.<sup>102</sup>

Mary didn't seem to question the tension between the declaration of Mexican hospitality and her possibly unfounded belief in the man's fear of his "mysterious visitors." It is not even clear that she sees it as a tension, but she does at least understand that there is more at work to the hospitality of Mexicans than just unabated joy that there are white people in Mexico. Mary's husband, John Henry Brown, also suggests that some Mexicans, at least, had a financial stake in being welcoming to US Southerners. After having returned to the United States, John told of a Mexican organ-grinder in San Luis Potosí who often came to the part of town where the confederates were staying, and played Southern songs such as *Dixie* and *Bonnie Blue Flag*. According to John, the man made up to twenty dollars just by playing a few songs for the Southerners, before leaving, "showering blessings upon los confederados."<sup>103</sup>

Yet a proper neighbor—one with whom the settlers had reciprocal, intimate relationships—was often described as a "Spaniard." If "Indian" was loaded with the assumptions of laborer, Spaniard came with the assumption of wealth, education and a European heritage that helped define their whiteness. But, like the line between Mexican and Indian, the line between Spaniard and Mexican appears very blurry, and implies

---

<sup>102</sup> Brown, "From Orizava to Tuspan," 19.

<sup>103</sup> John Henry Brown, "Confederates in Mexico, 3 of 22," *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, March 14, 1879.



much more than an origin. According to Historian Adrian Burgos, using the term “Spaniard” to carry racial significance was not unique to the Confederate settlers. He argues that throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many non-white baseball players and teams in the United States were able to use the label “Spaniard” to manipulate the race line in baseball. Similarly, many of the Confederates pointedly described their neighbors along clear lines of Spaniard and Mexican. While these may or may not have conformed to racial and socio-economic divisions in Mexico, the importance that many of the Confederates placed on describing these differences is striking. Since the settlers were so eager to emphasize that they were living amongst civilized society, “Spaniard” often carried the weight and significance of “white enough.”<sup>104</sup>

The Alexander sisters in particular seem very much invested in the line between Mexican and Spaniard. When talking about society in Mexico, Roxie seems to draw a line between what the Mexicans do—an implicit “they”—and what “we” do with the Spaniards. For example, during the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Roxie wrote,

Today the grand feast begins it will last two or three weeks yesterday we saw hundreds of Mexicans going to town to attend the feasts, they came from the interior in every direction they have pack mules with good provisions of fruit and poultry of every description to sell on the plaza and every male that they get they spend at the gambling saloon after their money is spent they go to mass and then

---

<sup>104</sup> Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Colorline* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); See also: John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

to a dancing yard and dance all night then they lie around either asleep or drunk until noon they then march around in crowds men wimen and children.<sup>105</sup>

This is very clearly something that “they” do, and it does not even seem within the bounds of possibility that she would join in. The fact that they were coming from the interior to sell wares during the fiesta suggests that John Henry Brown and Gideon Lincecum would categorize the people that Roxie describes here as Indian. Roxie’s description of the Feast of St. Nicholas is similarly indicative of a critically important line between something that “they” do and things that are accessible to her. She wrote to Mollie and Annie that, “The Mexicans have commenced their feasts and fandangoes [sic] already. The Spaniards have very nice parties in Town though I have not attended nor do I intend dancing in Mexico.”<sup>106</sup> Unlike Roxie, her sister Mollie often did go to the parties of “Spaniards” in Tuxpan. The contrast between the exoticized “feasts and fandangoes” of the Mexicans and the Spaniards’ “very nice parties,” is striking. The difference emphasizes the fact that the “very nice parties” were accessible to the Alexander sisters and at least one of them—Mollie—chose to use that access.

Furthermore, Roxie’s refusal to dance in Mexico was not uncommon and seemed to have little to do with her sentiments towards Spaniards. Gideon Lincecum enjoyed mocking those who went to parties and danced in Mexico, once telling Sarah “Many of the Americans we have here, were professors of religion before they came. They all dance and gamble now.”<sup>107</sup> Even though Roxie opted out of dancing at the “Spanish”

---

<sup>105</sup> Alexander to Williams, August 15, 1869.

<sup>106</sup> Roxie Alexander to Mollie Williams, December 3, 1869, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>107</sup> Lincecum to Doran, June 22, 1869.

parties, they clearly found Spaniards to be an accessible and acceptable society. If anything, her hesitancy contrasted with others' willingness to dance in Mexico shows how the whiteness that the settlers constructed for the "Spanish" Mexicans was still something of an exoticized one. The foreign context relaxed the strict bounds of propriety that the settlers were used to in the United States. Dancing in Texas may not have been entirely appropriate, but in Mexico, in a new and exotic setting with new and exotic—yet sufficiently white—people, the settlers were able to change their notions of acceptable interactions.

Theodocius Scurlock and his traveling companions also attended parties while they were in Mexico. While Dosh was less likely to explicitly categorize the people with whom he associated as Spanish in his diary, he certainly portrayed them very differently from the Indians whom he described. While he emphasized the laziness and poverty of Indians, he emphasized the respectability, wealth and intelligence of those he met at parties. One night he wrote in his diary, "Had a party tonight. The hall was crowded with the fashionable of the town. Enjoyed ourselves very well by looking on. The dances were fashionable, the ladies neatly dressed and beautiful. The men were very courteous."<sup>108</sup> Another night he described, "The Mexican ladies and gentlemen are very clever and agreeable," and a few days later when these ladies and gentlemen, invited Dosh's traveling party to a *fandango*, nearly all of them gladly accepted.<sup>109</sup> It's likely that when Dosh described the fashionable Mexican ladies and gentlemen, they were those that he

---

<sup>108</sup> Scurlock Diary, October 20, 1867, Scurlock Collection.

<sup>109</sup> Scurlock Diary, January 8, 1868, Scurlock Collection.

meant when he told Dan that “the White class here rank with the whites of any country.”<sup>110</sup> And given his description of the parties and those who attended, they might even be the same fashionable ladies and gentlemen that so many of the other migrants describe as “Spanish.”

Clara Brown, John Henry Brown’s oldest daughter, certainly found Spanish parties accessible and enjoyable. She described in a letter to her Aunt Hannah a party they attended during the Feast of San Isidro at the hacienda of a “Spaniard,” Don Pedro.

“Don Pedro” claimed me a[s] his partner [for] the set, his brother who is quite a handsome young caballero claimed sister Lizzie. When they were all [paired] to their fancy the dance began. The Spanish gentlemen took American “Señoritas” as partners and the American gentlemen Spanish “Señoritas.” I think it was really the prettiest and most graceful dance I ever saw...It was very pleasant to dance and chat with those handsome blackeyed “Caballeros,” so graceful and polite.<sup>111</sup>

To both Clara Brown and Roxie Alexander, this division between the parties of Mexicans and the parties of Spaniards were both clear-cut and seemingly natural. Both also considered Spanish parties a good place to find Spanish beaux. Mollie Alexander wrote that at a recent fiesta she had “caught a fancy spanish beau who treated me to cake and everything nice and talked so much to me told me he liked American company and wanted to learn the language.”<sup>112</sup> According to Roxie, a good amount of their time was “spent very pleasantly entertaining our Spanish Beaus and occasionally returning their *Sisters visits* and sometimes we all go sailing.”<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Scurlock to Scurlock, n.d.

<sup>111</sup> Clara Brown to Hannah, May 16, 1868, John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>112</sup> Alexander to Williams, June 5, 1871, June 5, 1871.

<sup>113</sup> Roxie Alexander to Mollie Williams, June 5, 1871, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

Importantly, none of the women ever wrote to friends or family in the United States about Mexican beaus. While none explicitly articulated that “Spaniard” equated “white” and “Mexican” equated “non-white,” they also didn’t need to. They were able to rely on long-standing narratives about race to convey the difference between acceptable relationships with Spaniards and with Mexicans. And yet, there is still a sense of the exotic when Clara describes the “handsome blackeyed caballeros” or when Mollie discusses her “fancy spanish beau.” Even Roxie, who had rejected the idea of dancing in Mexico, evidently entertained spanish beaus. If Clara, Mollie and Roxie’s relationships with “Spaniards” were made more permissible by the perceived exoticness of Mexico, they certainly would not have been alone. Latin American has a history of facilitating white US Americans getting in touch with their sexuality. Their emphasis on the Spanishness, and thus the whiteness, of their beaus helped to establish a perimeter of acceptability to their relationships.

Spaniards were also considered eligible for Southerners to marry in a way that Mexicans were evidently not. After years of silence between the families, Mollie Alexander (now Mollie Collins) sent Annie Williams Border an update of how all the members of the family were doing. Tellingly, she told Annie “Brother Julius was married to a Spanish girl, Miss Lucina Pancardo he has 4 children 2 girls and 2 boys. Bud is living with a Mexican woman he has 3 children all girls.”<sup>114</sup> That one brother was married to a Spanish girl, whom she names, and another brother was living with a

---

<sup>114</sup> Mollie Alexander Collins to Annie Williams Border, December 22, 1884, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

Mexican woman, whom Mollie does not name, is a common practice in the letters from Tuxpan—Spaniards are named, Mexicans are just “Mexicans.” Furthermore, Mollie’s comment suggests how, in the minds of these Southerners at least, these terms were highly classed. John Henry Brown also seemed to be quite preoccupied with the marriage practices of Mexicans, and suggested that other Southerners would be concerned as well.

He wrote in his book

There is, truly, a lamentable feature in the status of the poor common people of Mexico, and it would be uncandid not to refer to it. It is the absence, in numberless cases, of the marriage vow. But on the other hand, parties unite voluntarily as man and wife, and so live through life, with as much apparent affection and fidelity as when lawfully married. The reason assigned for this is, that the marriage fee is too high for very poor people to pay it, and has long been so.<sup>115</sup>

He even thought that people in the US South would be so concerned about the lack of marriage among Mexicans that he repeatedly emphasized that unmarried couples behaved as faithfully and lovingly as if they were married, and that the Mexican government was trying to fix the problem. Within this context, then, we can see how Mollie’s statement about her brothers carried as much indication of class as it did race. Bud’s “Mexican woman” likely lacked an elite, wealthy family dedicated to ensuring she was properly married before living with a man and bearing children by him. Mollie not only names Julius’ wife, but also refers to her as “Miss” when calling her by her maiden name. It seems likely that Lucina, a “Spaniard,” was not only white enough for Mollie to approve of her, but wealthy enough to ensure that she was properly married.

---

<sup>115</sup> Brown, *Two Years in Mexico*, 79.

Roxie Alexander was intent on getting Mollie and Annie Williams's brother married to a Spanish girl. "Tell your brother," Roxie wrote, "If he wants to *mary* [sic] for money regardless of the *color* or the *habits* of his *lady love* that all he will have to do is to come down to Tuxpan say he is an American and wants to marry."<sup>116</sup> Evidently she even had a particular woman in mind, adding a few months later, "Tell your Brother that his Spanish girl is all right she likes his picture very much she says that he is a *Boneeto ombrie* [sic, *bonito hombre*]."<sup>117</sup> These two statements show the problematic and inconsistent way that "Spaniard" was equated with white. While Roxie seems to think that Spanish women were marriageable, she still stigmatized them as being not quite white, and not quite of proper habits.

The Lincecum family seemed to have fewer qualms about the marriageability and appropriate whiteness of "Spaniards." Attie, one of Gideon's granddaughters became engaged to a man she met in Mexico less than a year after arriving.<sup>118</sup> According to Leonora—Attie's mother and Gideon's daughter—Attie's fiancé Miguel was dedicated to educating himself, diligently learning English and ordering books from Galveston. "When you read his letters Attie has sent to her Aunt Sallie" Leonora wrote to her brother-in-law, "tell me what you think of him," and mentioned that Gideon was "highly pleased with him." Furthermore, she wrote, "there are a great many fine looking

---

<sup>116</sup> Alexander to Williams, December 3, 1869.

<sup>117</sup> Roxie Alexander to Mollie Williams, April 20, 1870, Annie Williams Border Family Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas.

<sup>118</sup> It is uncertain whether the marriage actually took place. It is never mentioned in any of the extant family papers. Mollie Alexander said that Attie [Atilla Campbell] married George Bradford in April of 1871, having become engaged after knowing each other for a mere three days. The marriage itself, however, is not the important thing here, but rather the acceptance of a "Spaniard" as a potential marriage partner. Alexander to Williams, June 5, 1871, June 5, 1871.

Spaniards that come here every Sunday evening. Boat loads come over Miguel says he is jealous, if Attie was not so pretty he would not be jealous.”<sup>119</sup> Leonora seems to suggest that she classified Miguel as one of the boatloads of “Spaniards.” Not only was Miguel welcomed into the family, but it seems that both Leonora and Miguel considered any of the “Spaniards” competition in the marriage department.

Gideon’s own description of Miguel points out in more striking terms what he considers to be the key aspects of Miguel’s acceptability as a marriage partner for Attie. After explaining to Sarah how “Miguel” is pronounced, he told her that “He is a sober, industrious well educated good looking and very polite gentleman, belonging to a very influential wealthy family of long standing...Still more, they are white folks.”<sup>120</sup> While Gideon never describes Miguel as a “Spaniard,” as Leonora suggests, nor does he call him a “Mexican.” What he does emphasize, however, is his whiteness, wealth, respectability, and education. These are often key aspects that US writers emphasized when they are trying to portray the population of Mexico in a positive light. Theodocius Scurlock emphasized similar attributes when describing Mexicans whom he finds respectable. For example, when staying with a US American he said, “he has a Mexican wife. She is a very intelligent woman.” For Scurlock, intelligent and respectable were terms that he reserved for people whom he considered belonging to an acceptable society.

---

<sup>119</sup> Leonora Lincecum Campbell to W.P. Doran, February 5, 1869, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>120</sup> Gideon Lincecum to Sarah Doran, April 29, 1869, Gideon Lincecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



What is particularly striking about all of these stories, is the fact that the colonists were almost universally accepted among the Mexican elite in Tuxpan. They were welcomed to haciendas, invited to attend dances with the “fashionable” crowd, and enjoyed courtship rituals with wealthy Mexicans. Mexican society was sharply divided, and manual labor was strongly looked down on by the Mexican elite. And yet, many of the colonists engaged in manual labor. Gideon Lincecum did almost all the work on his farm. The Alexander sisters spent days in the kitchen to keep the hired workers fed during the harvest season. The lack of Mexican sources makes it difficult to know why, for sure, Don Pedro would to invite the Brown family to a dance his hacienda and open the dancing with Clara Brown. But this same pattern would be repeated among all of the colonies discussed in this dissertation. This pattern strongly suggests that the Mexican elite was willing to overlook the economic limitations of the colonists in favor of their social status as white cosmopolitan expatriates. At the same time, the colonists also needed to establish to a wider audience that their own behavior and relationships were acceptable, so they too relied on the language of shared whiteness and refinement. Accordingly, they clarified the whiteness of their neighbors, beaux and fiancés by establishing them as intelligent, refined and “Spanish.”

#### **LOSS OF A CONFEDERATE COMMUNITY**

In 1887, the US Consul at Tuxpan, John Drayton, wrote to his superior in Washington DC to warn that the US citizens in Tuxpan were not well enough protected. He brought this to the attention of his superiors after the recent murder of a US citizen by his Mexican neighbor. The accused murderer was never brought to justice, supposedly

because he had too many ties to the local political system; even the police were afraid of him. The US citizen in this case, oddly enough, was Theodocius Scurlock. The same Dosh who insisted on adding the phrase “so called” whenever referring to the United States, until he grew worried that the “Vandals” were spying on him. According to the consul, Dosh had gotten into a fight with his neighbor over the neighbor’s flock of geese relieving themselves in Dosh's front yard. During the fight, the neighbor pulled a gun and fatally shot Theodocius.

What's particularly interesting about this is that, despite the fact that Theodocius completely rejected the US government, and was rooting for yet another rebel uprising from the South, the consular report mentioned him as nothing other than a US citizen. He was simply one of many US citizens in Tuxpan by the late 1880s, and in the eyes of the Consul, no different from the rest of them.<sup>121</sup> This illustrates how difficult it is, by the end of the 1880s, to pick out Southerners from the rest of US citizens. In fact, a map from the US colony at Tuxpan, clearly back-dated to 1865, but created much later, has a family on it that fought for the Union. Robert Woollett moved with his family from Minnesota to Tuxpan around 1894, after having fought for the North in the Civil War. Not only did this Northerner manage to settle in the middle of the Southern settlement in Tuxpan, but one of his daughters eventually married Laura Vincent's son—the first child born in the

---

<sup>121</sup> John Drayton, *Despatches from United States Consuls in Tuxpan, 1879-1906*, ed. United States National Archives, National Archives Microfilm Publications 306 (Washington: National Archives, 1964). It's worth pointing out that Drayton himself was from a wealthy, prominent South Carolina family and also fled to Mexico after the war.

Confederate colony.<sup>122</sup> Once, living beside Yankees was almost as bad as living beside Blacks, yet the second generation of settlers married into Yankee families in Mexico.

Even John Henry Brown's history of the US settlement in Tuxpan, which he wrote in the 1880s, has a more inclusive vision of US identity. While his 1867 book emphasized his continuing loyalty to the South and the Confederacy, and his hatred of the Yankee imperialists, the 1880s articles display a sense of brotherhood with Northerners. He told a story about when he was in Yucatan and discovered a Northerner who was wanted by the governor of Yucatan. He supposedly gave the man and his family a stirring speech about national brotherhood, and helped smuggle the man out of Merida.<sup>123</sup> Whether or not the story is true—and the speech at the very least has a trumped-up tone to it—it is important that by the 1880s, Brown had shifted his Southern identity to one no longer based on hating Northerners. Instead, it was based on the common cause of American colonists in Mexico.

While the Confederates in Brazil kept a coherent Confederate identity alive much longer, those in Mexico found that the closeness to the United States and the porousness of the border made the community harder to maintain. As families such as the Woolletts moved to Tuxpan during the oil boom, many Confederate families went back to the United States, either for visits or to provide their children with English-language education. Dr. David McKnight had moved his family to Matamoros, where his wife stayed even after his death. But their daughters often traveled to Texas for visits. And

---

<sup>122</sup> Personal communication with Margaret Wasserman, February 26, 2011

<sup>123</sup> John Henry Brown, "Confederates in Mexico, 9 of 22," *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, April 25, 1879.

Gideon Lincecum died in Texas, rather than his beloved home in Mexico because, during a trip to visit his family in Texas, he became too sick to travel and died before he could make it home. His daughter Leonora and her children seemed determined to continue living in Tuxpan, but any letters they may have sent back to Texas after Gideon's death are missing from the family papers. And while Dosh Scurlock's constant efforts with the ladies of Mexico never succeeded in getting him a family, the son of his good friend and Tuxpan colonist Dr. Boyd, worked with the consulate to bring his killer to justice. His few of belongings were sent to his brother Dan in the United States. All of these families had extensive links on both sides of the border in life as well as death.

The Confederate presence in the Tuxpan region continued long after they had lost any semblance of a cohesive Confederate community. The memoirs of Georgie Burden include a detailed family history, beginning with her grandfather, Ferrell Vincent, an early Confederate settler at Tuxpan. Georgie's son Jack Burden was the third generation of children born to the colonists at Tuxpan. But then, there was nothing particularly Southern about the family anymore. In fact, even Roxie Alexander's letters, once filled with the occasional bit of vitriol against Yankees and blacks, lacked any such venom by the 1880s. The end of Reconstruction ended the threat of "negro rule," probably taking away some of Mexico's appeal for Southerners. This even further facilitated a fluid sense of nationality for later generations, who moved back and forth across the border readily. In a fascinating and unexpected situation, Georgie Burden attended school in Louisiana, where, after growing up in Mexico, she learned English for the first time. Her schoolmates taunted her with terms like "spic" and "greaser," even though she considered

herself an American. The national identifications of the succeeding generations were complicated, and Southern, Confederate and American identities did not disappear quite as quickly or entirely as many scholars have suggested.

## **Chapter 2: Utopia and Empire— The Contradictions of a Socialist Colony in Topolobampo, Sinaloa**

Albert Kimsey Owen was just 25 years old when he chose the site for a city he dreamed would one-day rival San Francisco. In 1872, he believed he had found the prime location in Topolobampo Bay on the coast of Sinaloa, Mexico. According to Owen, the only people who used the bay were a few groups of Indigenous peoples who occasionally fished and caught sea turtles there. One of these Indian men gave Owen a tour of the bay and he was taken with its beauty, location, and ease of access at once. He wrote excitedly in his journal, “Why, too! should there not one day be sited here...a cosmopolitan city! Why too! Should not these waters float the ships of every mercantile people with the valuable and the assorted cargoes of the whole Earth! There are a thousand and one reasons that such will be the case—there is not one to contradict.”<sup>1</sup> Owen would spend the next thirty years discovering that there were actually plenty of reasons to contradict his hope of transforming the area from an isolated bay to a cosmopolitan city.

At the time, however, he envisioned a railroad between the bay and the United States would stimulate a vibrant utopian port city that would increase accessibility to markets in both Mexico and Asia. In his mind, the city would be truly an egalitarian utopia. Everyone would be paid fair wages because they would work for the community. There would be community kitchens where families could share the labor of housework. There would be no crime because there would be no poverty. Owen envisioned free

---

<sup>1</sup> Ray Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia* (El Cajon, CA: Published by the author, 1972).

cultural centers and a public school system that would serve the communities' children, and most radically, everyone would be treated as equal members of the society regardless of their job, sex, or race. Thus, Owen's dream was part egalitarian utopia and part economic exploitation of Mexico's resources.

Owen spent more than a decade working to gain support for his plan and build his city. He was able to use the networks that he established working as an engineer in Mexico to gain support from the Mexican government. He also teamed up with the well-known socialist couple Marie and Edward Howland, whose connections in publishing gave him the ability to reach wide audiences with his utopian message. Owen's ability to sweep people into his vision worked in his favor. While the implementation process moved slowly, the first colonists arrived at Topolobampo Bay in December of 1886.

Between 1886 and 1896, more than two thousand colonists joined them. Yet few stayed. The high rate of people returning to the United States meant that there were never more than a few hundred people in the colony at any given time. Many of them had great optimism for the colony. One hopeful colonist wrote to Owen, "Our entire hopes are centered on the colony. *It must be a success*. It must not lag...Our colony is founded on truth so therefore it cannot fail."<sup>2</sup> The colony at Topolobampo Bay, they thought, was society's last hope before it was irreparably crushed by the grip of capitalism.

This chapter is the first of two about the colony that settled at Topolobampo Bay. This chapter, however, examines the founders and foundations of the colony—

---

<sup>2</sup> Etta Simple to Albert Kimsey Owen, July 9, 1889, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

particularly the economic conditions and dominant social trends from both sides of the Mexican/American border that led to the colony's foundation. Owen's insistence that he had found the perfect site for a socialist colony on the banks of a little-known bay in Sinaloa reveals how his ideas were the product of two key movements that were taking place in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The first trend was the push for the economic development of Mexico's resources, including its geographic location, proximity to America, shoreline, and mineral wealth. Both international investors and Mexican officials saw untapped potential in Mexico and argued that, with labor and capital, it could become one of the worlds' most productive nations. This chapter begins by considering how, in the mid-1870s and 1880s, the Mexican government, led by President Porfirio Díaz sought to rapidly unify, modernize and industrialize Mexico, often by encouraging immigration and foreign investment. International investors were often happy to oblige, and soon American investors were the primary shareholders in Mexican railroads, mining, oil, and textile mills. While the Mexican government did much to encourage this, many people, both then and now, considered this investment the "peaceful conquest of Mexico," which subverted Mexico's economic goals to those of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Owen was able to use the network that he developed with Mexican officials and, by appealing to their own goals, received some of the most generous concessions the Mexican government doled out to spur colonization. More importantly, Owen benefited

---

<sup>3</sup> Gonzalez, *Culture of Empire*; Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido*; "La Conquista Pacifica Y La Colonia de Topolobampo: III Y Ultimo," *El Tiempo*, February 26, 1887.



from the underlying Mexican assumption that white Americans would be able to bring their “Anglo-Saxon energy” and capital to Mexico and create wealth for the country. Accordingly the Mexican government was willing to back a socialist enterprise that supported collective ownership among white Americans, even as they worked to dismantle similar systems of collective ownership among Mexico’s Indian population. Decades later, when it became apparent that the colony was failing to make headway, the Mexican government would withdraw their support for Owen’s socialist mission.

The second of the two key trends was the reform movements that were sweeping the United States in response to the economic and social turmoil at the end of the century. These reform movements, along with Owen’s involvement in them, is the focus of the second part of this chapter. Owen’s ideas drew heavily on the ideological foundations of the Knights of Labor, the labor organization where he first began his activism. The idea for a utopian society also shared many ideas with Edward Bellamy’s utopian novel, *Looking Backward*, which spawned a popular movement to spread Bellamy's utopian ideals. Bellamy called the movement “Nationalism,” and more than 150 Nationalist clubs across the country supported state ownership of industry in order to relieve the nation of “ruinous competition.” Most of these groups eventually joined forces with the People’s Party.<sup>4</sup> These and similar movements shared an underlying desire to heal the “evils” of

---

<sup>4</sup> Sylvia E. Bowman, *The Year 2000; a Critical Biography of Edward Bellamy* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958).

American industrial capitalism by replacing it with a more just system that was based around community support and cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

In many ways, these two trends seem inherently at odds with each other. The first was about bringing American-style industrial capitalism to Mexico development while the other was about running away from the tragedies caused by American-style industrial capitalism. Many historians have even suggested that either one motive or the other was Owen's "true" intention, while the other was simply a means to an end. For example, historian Daniel Ortega Noriega argues that the colonists were ultimately agents of US empire in Mexico, despite their rejection of the United States, since Owen's goals were far more in line with the goals of the United States than those of Mexico.<sup>6</sup> Other authors have considered Owen to be first and foremost a dreamer whose dreams were more grandiose than his abilities to make them happen.<sup>7</sup>

Neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. Owen and most of the colonists worked hard to immerse themselves in Mexican culture, to portray themselves as "good sons of Mexico," and expressed an intention to accept Mexican citizenship. On the other hand, Ortega Noriega's contention that the colonists' goals reflected those of the United States was verifiable. Owen fantasized about the potential markets that could be reached with a railroad linking the bay to the United States. Despite founding a socialist colony, they still wanted access to America's capitalist markets and to be a part of the

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido*.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia* (Los Angeles: W. Ritchie Press, 1964).

exploitation of Mexico's resources. Their egalitarian ideals did not go so far as to prevent them from seeing an opportunity for wealth in Mexico.

The core argument that emerges in this chapter is that in order to justify these two disparate movements, Owen and the colonists relied on the idea that Mexico was a blank slate: a virgin territory with a vast wealth of natural resources waiting to be tapped and a lazy population waiting to be saved from themselves. They were not alone in harboring such ideas. In fact, such ideas were common among investors in Mexico, and the trope of the "lazy Mexican" population is one that many historians have pointed to as a critical tool of empire building.<sup>8</sup> In the supposed emptiness of Sinaloa the colony could, in the tradition of many other utopian inspired projects, get away from what Owen saw as the crushing capitalist grip. Moreover, he insisted that the valley was brimming with untapped economic potential and, with the right investors, they could exploit the region's wealth for themselves and the good of Mexico. They would remake capitalism in the process, infusing it with a utopian spirit of egalitarianism, building up Mexico and Mexicans in the process.

This chapter concludes with a brief history of the colony. I try not to get too deeply involved with each crisis that the colony faced—there were many of them throughout its history. Rather, to the extent that it's possible I focus on the problems that plagued the colony regardless of its crises. This means skimming over the many court cases, accusations of conspiracy, crop failures, poorly constructed buildings and the like.

---

<sup>8</sup> Gonzalez, *Culture of Empire*.

There are several books written on these problems, and I address them only as necessary to tell the colony's overarching story.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MEXICO**

In 1872, as Owen stood on the banks of Topolobampo Bay, Mexico had an international reputation for instability. There had been more than fifty presidents in the country's half-century of independence, plus constant uprisings and wars. In that time, Mexico had been invaded by Spain, France, the United States, and France again.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the decade, however, Porfirio Díaz had gained the presidency and began thirty-five years of relative stability during his rule (1876-1910). Díaz was dedicated to the unification, modernization and industrialization of Mexico, policies that largely hinged on the rapid construction of railroads, the development of the nation's mining and oil industries, "modernizing" agriculture, and a favorable immigration policy.

This created a perfect opportunity for Owen who, like many American investors, wanted to take advantage of the Mexican government's interest in foreign capital. In 1879, after a meeting with Manuel Zamacona, Mexico's foreign minister, Owen accepted a contract to help drain the valley in which Mexico City sits. The job didn't get past the planning stages, but it still gave Owen exactly what he needed: the opportunity to pitch his scheme for a utopian community to President Díaz. Díaz was immediately taken with the idea.<sup>10</sup> It took a few more years for the bureaucracy of government to move, but in 1882, Owen finally received a generous concession for the construction of a colony on

---

<sup>9</sup> William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 33.

<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia*.

Topolobampo Bay and a railroad across Northern Mexico into the United State, with Topolobampo as its terminal. The concessions included land and water rights on the bay and along the rail line, as well as subsidies for construction and the settlement of families.

In many ways, the goals of these two men seem inherently at odds with each other. Owen's mission was explicitly anti-capitalist as Díaz worked to bring modern industrial capitalism to Mexico. Owen supported a form of collective ownership while Díaz was working to bring a complete end to communal ownership and force the Indian population into the global economy. And yet, Owen was able to offer the Mexican government exactly what it wanted: railroads and colonists.

The development of railroads was a central piece of Díaz's policies, not only as a method of connecting the nation and increasing access to foreign markets, but also to unify the nation. For the Díaz government, unification goals were largely directed at the nation's Indigenous population, which still made up a significant majority of the country. According to historian Michael Matthews, those who supported the development of railroads "emphasized the ability of the government's railway project to bring civilization, to promote national unity, to increase crease commerce, and even to change the racial composition of the population."<sup>11</sup> During Díaz's thirty-five years in office, the amount of railroad track in Mexico increased thirtyfold, to nearly 20,000 kilometers of

---

<sup>11</sup> Michael Matthews, *The Civilizing Machine: A Cultural History of Mexican Railroads, 1876-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

track. Seven different lines were completed during the Porfiriato, not only connecting the country's diverse regions, but connecting it to the United States as well.<sup>12</sup>

And yet, like so many of Díaz's policies, the construction of railroads was highly contentious. One of the primary points of concern that opponents of Díaz's plans brought up was the huge sums of foreign investment required to build the network. Many were particularly concerned by an infusion of US capital in Mexico. By 1911, US capital made up 61.7% of money invested in Mexico's rail system. Moreover, the fact that US investors wanted lines that connected Mexico and the United States meant that nearly all of Mexico's trade went to the US, making up more than the combined sum of Mexico's trade with all of Europe.<sup>13</sup> Many people, mostly members from Díaz's opposition party, the conservatives, found this to be alarming. The conservative newspaper *El Tiempo* insisted that while Americans came "with the appearance of legitimacy to construct railroads," it could only lead "to the depreciation of our money, the ruin of our national industry, and...the occupation of our land by North Americans." This, they argued, was the "peaceful conquest of Mexico."<sup>14</sup>

A similar debate took place about Díaz's encouragement of settlers to Mexico. Very few policy makers would have argued with *El Universal* when they claimed that colonization was "one of the most powerful agents of progress of nations, and one of the most urgent necessities of the Mexican Republic." Like so many before and after, the

---

<sup>12</sup> David M. Pletcher, *Rails, Mines, and Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico, 1867-1911* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958).

<sup>13</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> "La Conquista Pacifica Y La Colonia de Topolobampo: III Y Ultimo."

author of the article argued that Mexico had “immense riches that, well exploited, would make this nation one of the most prosperous and powerful in the world.”<sup>15</sup> All that was needed was the capital and labor to “exploit” it, turning Mexico’s untapped potential into capitalist power. But, even as more and more Mexicans were arguing that the government should begin investing any amount of money necessary to bring large numbers of immigrants to Mexico, others insisted that this, too, put Mexico in danger. However, while Díaz's efforts to cover the nation with a checkerboard of railroads lines was extremely effective, the government's efforts to fill the nation with colonists from the US and elsewhere were less effective.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout Díaz's rule, immigration was not just a point of concern for administrators and policy makers, but for journalists as well. A strong push for immigration came from the press, and when it was clear that the desired waves of immigrants weren't coming, journalists engaged in lengthy and frequent debates between different papers in the Mexico City press about how the matter should be handled. Most agreed that immigration was necessary to integrate the Indian population into the national economy. Journalists and politicians alike complained that Indians “remain in an almost complete state of isolation...They consume what they produce themselves, and produce little to sell, and accordingly don’t represent a factor in the public wealth.”<sup>17</sup> Historian José Angel Hernández has argued that one of the primary motivations of nineteenth

---

<sup>15</sup> “Colonización,” *El Universal*, October 27, 1888.

<sup>16</sup> González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970*; Rodríguez Chávez, *Extranjeros En México*.

<sup>17</sup> “Inmigración,” *El Universal*, September 28, 1892.

century Mexican immigration policy was actually based on the desire to “transform the Indians who were the majority of the nation’s population into Mexicans...The immigration of Europeans—as individuals outside the ‘colonial constitutions’ of Mexican Indians—would assist in modernizing and rationalizing the republic.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, Hernández argues that Mexico’s immigration policy during the Porfiriato wasn’t really about “whitening”—as many historians have argued—but rather *Mexicanizing*.

Moreover, Indians who didn’t conform to Mexican standards of behavior “produced high anxiety” for Mexican officials.<sup>19</sup> The Yaqui and Apache in northern Mexico in particular were considered suspect even during times of peace; their very presence was perceived as an impediment to progress. Since Mexico was eager to shed its international impression as an uncivilized nation, Indians who wouldn’t conform to Mexican norms through integration were marked for extermination.<sup>20</sup> The Yaqui Wars, for example, were justified by the idea that Mexico had a legitimate right to incorporate the Yaqui into the body politic and the national economy. Some Mexican officials thought that if Indians could learn to emulate “civilized” immigrants, then the violence of extermination wouldn’t be “necessary.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 47.

<sup>19</sup> Nicole Marie Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 179.

<sup>20</sup> Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*; Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World’s Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, American Encounters/global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*.



As Mexico City's journalists debated immigration they constantly questioned how it could best bring Indians into the Mexican economy and which types of immigrants would best integrate into Mexican society. A contributor to *El Economista Mexicano* insisted that the government should encourage "a current of immigration of intelligent, hard working colonists of good morality, to mix with our population, civilizing it, teaching it the love of work, and bringing the example of the material necessities, which they don't know."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the construction of colonies by immigrants who would integrate into Mexican society would help bring the Indian population into the modern economy by teaching them to desire material goods. Mexico's indigenous peoples could then emulate the immigrants.

On the other hand, the newspapers in Mexico City made it very clear that they needed to bring the *right kind of colonists* to bring Mexico into the modern economy. And for many of the journalists in Mexico City, the right kind of colonist was explicitly one that would "improve the race." They saw behavior as an expression of race, but with exposure to the right kind of people indigenous peoples could overcome their circumstances. A contributor to *El Universal* argued that "The elements of immigration that are in Mexico's best interest for the improvement and progress of the race are the Anglo Saxon and the Scandinavian."<sup>23</sup> In an article in *La Patria*, a contributor argued that Mexico should actually encourage the immigration of Americans because "We can be assured that the *race* of the foreign should have a strong influence on the intelligence,

---

<sup>22</sup> "Estudio Sobre Inmigración Y Colonización," *El Economista Mexicano*, March 20, 1897.

<sup>23</sup> Adolfo Duolos Salinas, "Elementos de Producción Humana: México a Caza de Inmigrantes," *El Universal*, November 24, 1891.

commerce and industry of the *pueblo*.” They continued by arguing that American immigrants would “be like a beacon of light bouncing around them.”<sup>24</sup> Articles such as these suggest that some believed—some of the more liberal journalists, at least—that modernization and progress would come to Mexico faster by adding the “racial” strengths of white, Protestant Northern Europeans and Americans.

To be fair, many other journalists strongly preferred immigration from the “Latin races” of Europe. In one article, *El Economista Mexicano* recommended “Latin” colonization—French, Italian and Portuguese. Immigrants from those countries “would harmonize better with our population and assimilating with it, creating accordingly a homogenous nationality, more easily governed, as our peoples are of the same race, civilization and customs.” Unlike supporters of “Anglo Saxon and Scandanavian” immigration, supporters of “Latin” immigration focused on the immigrants' abilities to integrate with the Mexican population rather than the groups' perceived “racial strengths.” In fact, in one article, *El Economista Mexicano* complained that only Italians from Tuscany, Lombardy, Piedmont, and Veneto were those “given to work,” while the Southern Italians “leave their country voluntarily, and at the slightest annoyance emigrate, moving to the United States where they become a burden.”<sup>25</sup>

The presumed strength of certain races was, in large part, what made the debates around immigration so contentious. Many feared that the progress brought by Anglo Saxon or white American immigrants would only serve to benefit foreigners. One

---

<sup>24</sup> Santiago Ainsio, “México Y La Inmigración Americana,” *La Patria*, October 4, 1881.

<sup>25</sup> “Estudio Sobre Inmigración Y Colonización.”

contributor to *La Patria*, for example, wrote that the United States' "peaceful invasion" of Mexico was allowing it "to monopolize that which our population makes," through investment in "railroad and mining companies...and then all type of industry." This investment and immigration, they argued, would continue to exclusively benefit US citizens, while doing little for the Mexicans who needed economic development the most. The increased immigration from the north also meant increased risk of annexation. With so many Americans in Mexico, the US could come up with any pretext and, "under the name of protecting their nationals, the colossus could absorb us."<sup>26</sup> They weren't arguing that Americans *couldn't* develop Mexico—like the supposedly lazy Italians—but rather that the strength of such development would put Mexico at risk. These journalists were drawing on international ideas about innate differences between "Latin" races and "Anglo." Many people argued that the strength of the "Anglo race" justified the expansion of the United States as much as it did the expansion of Britain's empire.<sup>27</sup> "Latin races" on the other hand, were seen as naturally weaker, lazier and yet more prone to behavior based on their "passions" rather than reason. Even the most conservative of journalists never argued that the Latin races were superior to the Anglo, only that the former would integrate with the Mexican population while the latter would overwhelm it.

These arguments also took place more specifically about the Topolobampo Colony. Even opposition to the Topolobampo colony was often based on the assumption that American immigrants would be successful. Even as reports during the early years of

---

<sup>26</sup> Ramon L. Alva, "La Inmigración Americana," *La Patria*, July 6, 1881.

<sup>27</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981).

the colony suggested that the colonists were on the brink of destitution—which they often were—many journalists assumed that, because of the colonists’ dedication and industriousness, they would soon become successful. Dozens of articles in the city’s prominent newspapers considered the potential success of the colony between 1886 and 1893. At one point, *El Monitor Republicano* reported that “the Topolobampo colony is progressing...and will soon be rich. The irrigation canal, according to the opinion of intelligent people, is magnificent.”<sup>28</sup> The canal drastically increased the region’s irrigable land, but it was by no means “magnificent.” Shortly after the water began flowing through its gates, the colonists realized that the grade wasn’t steep enough and the slow moving water caused the ditch to fill with silt. To keep the water flowing the ditch had to be dredged consistently, labor that the colonists could barely afford.

The conservative newspaper *El Tiempo* led the opposition against Topolobampo, arguing that the colony would become “another Texas.” In those few words they summed up the fear that many Mexicans felt about the possibility of losing more land to the United States and their conviction that many people in the United States were eager to take more. For *El Tiempo*, no Americans could be good settlers. Its editorial staff saw all Americans as the “sons of the invaders of 1848” and argued that there was an inherent antipathy between Americans and Mexicans. Americans “refused to learn our language, accept our...fine customs and mix with our race.”<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> “Noticias de Topolobampo,” *El Monitor Republicano*, January 14, 1893.

<sup>29</sup> “Los Americanos Como Colonos,” *El Tiempo*, March 22, 1889.

Even more moderate or liberal members of the press expressed some consternation that the colony was quite so close to the national border. *El Nacional* argued that colonists from the United States should be welcomed in Mexico, as long as they settled in regions that would make them not a risk to national security. Topolobampo, they argued, was a bit too close to the border for comfort. When *El Tiempo* persisted with their argument that all Americans and Mexicans hate each other, *El Nacional* disputed it. They argued that Mexicans should not, in 1889, blame all Americans for the invasion of 1848. While *El Nacional* admitted that a refusal to learn Spanish, to accept Mexican customs, and to look down on Mexicans would be dangerous, that was simply not the case. And some colonists did, in fact, learn Spanish. The government, they argued, should still take certain precautions, such as not allowing Americans to settle along the border, but proposed “that everything be done by the principles established by civilization and international law, and not by passion.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, *El Nacional* seemed to imply that *El Tiempo*’s opposition to American immigrants was based more on unreasoned feeling rather than careful consideration.

English language newspapers in Mexico such as *The Mexican Financier* often jumped into this mix about the peaceful conquest, and the possibility of Topolobampo serving as a launch point for another invasion and annexation. *The Mexican Financier* frequently dismissed any concerns about the annexation of Mexico.

The annexation of Canada is a hundred times more probable, because the two countries are of the same anglosaxon race; but it is an entirely different thing to combine two countries of completely different races, and between which there are

---

<sup>30</sup> “Los Americanos Como Colonos,” *El Nacional*, March 21, 1889.

the barriers of traditions and language. The only peaceful conquest that we always support is the conquest of the wealth of the country for its inhabitants, the most complete subjugation of its lands, mines and forests to Mexican control, for the benefit of Mexico.

This probably would not have actually soothed any fears among Conservatives, and not only because the annexation of both Mexico and Canada had been proposed in the US Congress. Conservatives also felt that the barriers of race, language and custom made Americans incapable of being integrated into the Mexican body politic. In other words, they failed to see how Americans who imported their customs, language, and capitalism to Mexico would become Mexican. According to a conservative contributor to *La Patria*, “Race, language, religion, and customs separate us from our neighbors. They despise us and they abhor us, they don’t know how to love anything but money.”<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, most liberal supporters of the Díaz government argued that the country had more to gain from foreign immigration than it had to lose. One such contributor to *La Patria* argued that if Mexico was in danger of being overrun by energetic white American and European immigrants,

There is no remedy than to change our theories of life and adopt those of foreigners for work; we live for feasts, foreigners to work, we live to enjoy, foreigners to accumulate. We adopt, then, these practices, and we can laugh at American or European immigrants, without this, there is nothing more than assured ruin.<sup>32</sup>

This argument would have looked very different if the journalists were not, on some level, working under the assumption that the colony would succeed. The way that the press discussed the settlement of African Americans in Durango, for example, looked

---

<sup>31</sup> Alva, “La Inmigración Americana.”

<sup>32</sup> Ainso, “México Y La Inmigración Americana.”

radically different than the way that they discussed the Topolobampo Colony. When *El Tiempo* expressed concern about African American colonists, they weren't worried about it being an entry point for a US invasion. Rather they expected the colony to collapse, and warned that black colonists would violently rampage across the country and destroy "the racial integrity" of the very Indians the Mexican government was trying to save via acculturation.<sup>33</sup>

The assumption about the potential success of the Topolobampo Colony and white American immigrants does a lot to explain why the Diaz government did so much to support the colony. No one seemed to think that a socialist colony and capitalist development were at odds with each other, as Owen certainly made no effort to hide it. Mexican views of racial identity seemingly overrode economic. *El Tiempo*, for example, concluded its three part series about how the Topolobampo Colony would open Mexico up to a US invasion with a rant about its socialist goals. According to the article, not only was the colony an instrument of US imperialism, but brought "The abominable seed of the Commune...It is the work of the masonic lodges, vile instruments of infernal politics."<sup>34</sup> In the same way that other newspapers and the Mexican government didn't think that a socialist colony and capitalist development were at odds with each other, *El Tiempo* didn't think US imperialism and a socialist colony were at odds with each other. So the Mexican government was willing to look the other way while Owen worked to build a socialist utopia on its shoreline.

---

<sup>33</sup> "Colonización Negra," *La Voz de México*, January 29, 1891.

<sup>34</sup> "La Conquista Pacifica Y La Colonia de Topolobampo: III Y Ultimo," *El Tiempo*, February 26, 1887.

## SUPPORT FOR A SOCIALIST COLONY

Owen's plan still needed colonists and money. To begin, he established the Credit Foncier Company. In brief, potential colonists would buy shares of the company to assure their rights in the colony and the future cosmopolitan city of Owen's dreams: Pacific City. The colonists would not only be the funding, but also the labor force needed to construct the city and the railroad. To make that happen, Owen looked to tap into the growing frustration in the United States about the perceived failures of capitalism. The 1870s and 1880s were marked by economic recessions, significant labor upheaval, and a growing sense among many Americans that industrial capitalism was creating an inherently unjust system. According to historian Joseph Gerteis, "For both farmers and industrial "mechanics," America's Gilded Age seemed to present a stark choice: organize or perish."<sup>35</sup> Owen's vision, most clearly presented in his 1886 book *Integral Cooperation*, gave workers looking to organize an opportunity.

*Integral Co-operation* and the Topolobampo Colony actually shared deep ideological roots with many social and labor movements that took place the Gilded Age. The clearest similarities were with two of the most important movements of the late nineteenth century: the Knights of Labor and Edward Bellamy's Nationalism.<sup>36</sup> Owen's history of activism actually began in the Knights of Labor, supporting not just joint

---

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*; Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Bowman, *The Year 2000; a Critical Biography of Edward Bellamy*; Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).



bargaining for workers, but cooperative economics.<sup>37</sup> The Knights of Labor was a broad-based labor organization which, at its height, was the largest of the 1880s. While many Knights focused on labor legislation or joint bargaining, more radical Knights sought a more ethical alternative to industrial capitalism, including various forms of cooperatives based around community organization.<sup>38</sup> One of the key concepts that the Knights used was a “‘producerist’ definition of class.”<sup>39</sup> Rather than focusing on workers in certain industries, supporters of the movement welcomed anyone that was actively involved in producing goods. In this arrangement, everyone else—the captains of industry, lawyers, politicians and the like—were simply leaches, living off the wealth that the producers made.

The idea of organizing “producers” was a concept that Owen, as well as other similar movements of the late nineteenth century, relied on heavily. In *Integral Co-operation*, Owen argued that everyone in the colony—even the colony leaders—should be, first and foremost, producers. The colony should never need lawyers, full-time officials, employers, or even policemen. “Such careers will have passed from our midst, and usefulness in productive callings will give its advocates the wealth, the social rank and the marked individuality in the settlement.”<sup>40</sup> The colony would have no use to anyone who was not directly involved in the production of goods or services.

---

<sup>37</sup> Reynolds, *Cat’s Paw Utopia*.

<sup>38</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*.

<sup>39</sup> Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, *Integral Co-Operation: Its Practical Application* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975).

Owen also drew on the same interest that made Edward Bellamy's 1887 utopian novel *Looking Backward* an instant success. *Looking Backward* was published the year after Owen's *Integral Co-operation* and spawned a movement known as Nationalism. Nationalist clubs sprouted up across the country among people interested in the "purified, unified and democratized utopia." Historian Robert Wiebe asserted that, "Bellamy had provided anxious Americans with a hope brilliantly suited to their temperaments."<sup>41</sup> Like the Topolobampo Colony, Bellamy's utopia was based on the idea of a cooperative community. They were both premised on a complete restructuring of labor. For Owen and Bellamy, labor should be organized "scientifically," limiting the hours for workers who do the most unpleasant tasks and minimizing labor using new technology. This way nobility of work would never be degraded into "drudgery."

Like Bellamy's fictional utopia, *Integral Co-operation* included extensive plans for the design and construction of homes, communal kitchens and living spaces, retail shops and parks. It was truly to be an ideal city. There would be wide avenues where "locomotion should be by means of bicycles and tricycles and electric passenger cars." There would be electric lights, street-cars and pneumatic tubes to send packages throughout the colony.<sup>42</sup> Not only would the colony be a pleasant place to live, without the noise and pollution of most nineteenth century urban areas, it was also designed to provide colonists with plenty of leisure time. Historian Dolores Hayden has pointed out that these plans were based on the assumption that settlement would consist of urban

---

<sup>41</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*.

<sup>42</sup> Owen, *Integral Co-Operation*, 44.

middle-class type workers who left home to work during the day and returned to their comfortable house in the evenings.<sup>43</sup> Even though it was a classless society, the life style of workers would mimic a capitalist middle class.

However, the urban organization that Owen planned didn't fit with his idea that the city would be self-sufficient. Many of the "productive" jobs that Owen idolized in his writings simply couldn't conform to this kind of urban life style. He imagined that the colony's economy and labor would be based around building a railroad, establishing the bay as key shipping port, producing cash crops like sugar, and potentially tapping into the region's mineral wealth. The organization of the city, then, did not seem to match the organization of labor. Would farmers bicycle between fields and their urban homes? Would they connect the city to nearby mines with street cars so that miners could have dinner in the communal dining halls? And how would a community with strict rules about behavior and the distribution of wealth handle international shipping?

*Integral Co-operation* never answered these types of questions, nor did it explain how the colony would get to the point where pneumatic tubes and bicycle paths would connect buildings with beautiful gardens. The many pamphlets and letters that Owen wrote didn't do much to clarify the details either. This is characteristic of much utopian literature. Owen's writing, like Bellamy's, provided a description of society and daily life without burdening the vision with too many details.<sup>44</sup> The lack of clear planning would become a huge problem when 200 colonists showed up on the banks of Topolobampo in

---

<sup>43</sup> Dolores Hayden, "Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses," *Signs* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 1978): 274-90.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur Lipow, *Authoritarian Socialism in America: Edward Bellamy & the Nationalist Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

December of 1886 and no one knew exactly what the colony should look like. But until the people arrived in significant numbers, Owen was able to gloss over the difficulties and focus on a beautiful futuristic city that drew the attention of thousands.

Owen could be a visionary until his vision actually attracted people who wanted to experience such a society. Sometimes it's hard to believe that Owen could have really been as optimistic as his writings suggest. It's worth considering the possibility that the beautiful utopian images that he described were designed to elicit support. However, the fact that he shared a very similar optimism and faith in the possibilities of technology with Bellamy's Nationalist movement suggests that he genuinely believed in his vision. And, it seems unlikely that others would have followed him or funded him had he not. If reporters believed that the colony would be successful, it was as much a part of their belief in the superiority of the white race as it was due to the fact that Owen charismatically assured them it would be. Historian Robert Wiebe has argued that supporters of the Nationalist movement "saw no conflict between popular community control and modern technology, and they fully anticipated all the advantages of Bellamy's utopia in the cooperative commonwealth of tomorrow."<sup>45</sup> While in retrospect Owen's claims sometimes seem dramatically overstated, many people at the time felt optimistic about the technological and social possibilities of utopian communities. Afterall, how can you build a new kind of society without a visionary who has a blueprint of one?

---

<sup>45</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 75.

At their core, all three social movements—Integral Cooperation, Bellamy’s Nationalism, the Knights of Labor, as well as many others that took place at the end of the nineteenth century—shared the idea that corporations, politics, and the current practices of American industrial capitalism were corrupt institutions that destroyed American life, liberty, and economic opportunity. Many labor organizers compared wage labor and tenant farming to slavery. Owen, for one, did so frequently, arguing that former slaves had been better off enslaved than working as “wage slaves.” As Gerteis explains, for supporters of these movements “the banks, speculators, political ‘rings,’ and monopolists were a problem for the reform movements not simply because they were “capitalists” but because they used their power to control the liberty and popular will of the people.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, fighting to protect the rights of workers went hand in hand with protecting democratic organizations and giving more power to communities.

Many of the letters that Owen received suggest that the colony’s supporters saw an inherent compatibility between these various movements. Packer Johnson, for example, wrote to Owen to explain “I am an old Greenbacker...was president of the first Greenback club organized in Clear Creek Colorado, formed a K[nights] of L[abor] assembly...Two years ago after reading the works of Marx, Joynes, Starkweather, George and others I became a Socialist.”<sup>47</sup> The Johnson family ended up joining the colony in Topolobampo, although Packer and his family quickly “tired of this pioneer life living in tents and cooking over a campfire” and returned to the United States. Many, like

---

<sup>46</sup> Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Packer F. Johnson to Albert Kimsey Owen, April 28, 1886, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

Packer Johnson, were committed to a socialist enterprise in theory but found the practice of building one more taxing than they had imagined. Nevertheless, it was Packer's experience with the Greenbacker movement and the Knights of Labor that led him to socialism and Owen's utopian ideals.

Owen's first major step towards harnessing this frustration came when he met Marie and Edward Howland in 1878. Marie's utopian novel *Papa's Own Girl*, published in 1874, was a success. It earned both widespread acclaim and disdain for its treatment of female sexuality. Marie and Edward Howland turned out to be perfect allies for Owen. With Edward's connections in publishing and Marie's credentials and ideas as a socialist intellectual, Owen began to reach wider audiences. In 1884 he happily welcomed Marie into her self-appointed role as editor of the future colony's official newspaper, *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*.<sup>48</sup> With the couple's help, Owen began developing and publishing and marketing plans for his dream colony.

Owen and Marie's efforts to publicize the colony were wildly successful. The two of them received thousands upon thousands of letters from interested investors, hopeful colonists, and people just wanting to send support. They spoke of forming Topolobampo Clubs in their communities, and at least several dozen sprang up across the country as a way for people to receive more information about the colony. In 1887, shortly after the first colonists arrived in Topolobampo, over five thousand people had subscribed to the Credit Foncier Company from all over the country and various professions. Much of the

---

<sup>48</sup> The paper was named after the colony's organizing company—The Credit Foncier Company—the name of which derived from a French system of credit based on real estate.

interest came from western states, where many farmers were struggling and argued that railroads and large corporations were siphoning off farmers' profits.<sup>49</sup> Fifty two percent of subscriptions came from Colorado, Texas and California alone. But hundreds more came from eastern states, where disheartened factory workers and other laborers were taken with Owen's idea of an ideal city.<sup>50</sup>

The general makeup of their supporters caused two problems that were extremely minor during the planning stages of the colony, but, as I will discuss in the next chapter, became immense problems in the coming years. First, very few of their supporters were as radical as Owen and Marie were. The two rejected any kind of “race prejudice” and argued that women should be central parts of the community's economic and political life. Neither of them completely lived up to these ideals, but even the premise of gender and racial equality led to more than a few displeased members of the Credit Foncier. Some people who were interested the idea of a utopian society even refused to move to Mexico because they distrusted Mexicans.<sup>51</sup> Second, very few of the members with technical and farming skills were actually able to make it to the colony, since the move required much more cash than most of them were able to scrape together. Those that did become colonists were mostly from the hundreds of artisans, artists, and intellectuals who

---

<sup>49</sup> Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists*; David R. Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West, 1890-1920: Socialists, Populists, Miners, and Wobblies* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007); Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Peter H. Argersinger, *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido*, 102–103.

<sup>51</sup> Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia*.

supported the colony—people whose skills were much better suited to a society that wasn't as desperately in need of farmers and physical laborers as the colony was.

Nevertheless, people often wrote to Owen with great passion, almost begging to join the colony. Etta Simple's letter to Owen was one of hundreds of similar letters. She wrote that her husband was a cooper, that she could make soap, laundry detergent, and brooms. She asked, "How would a woman broom maker appear in Topo—oh, I will do any kind of work there and I long to go."<sup>52</sup> The Simple family, like so many of Owen's correspondents, never joined the colony. But Etta Simple's conviction and almost desperation that the colony must succeed, as well as her professed willingness to do anything in its support was a common one.

Simple's note was also remarkably similar to others that Owen received in the personal nature that it included. She wrote to Owen that

I have often thought of writing to you but feared to trouble you. I know you do not have time to answer all the letters that come to you but the heart sometimes gets full and has to find vent...I wish just a word of cheer from you if you can find time. Hope is a great medicine you know. Let ~~us~~ me hear from you personally.

The "us" was scratched out in exchange for "me," making it all the more emphatic that she wanted a personal note from him in response. Simple's letter is a prime example of how Owen's correspondents tended to combine their hopes for economic justice with the idea of Owen as a person.

Mary E. Hoyt's letter to Owen is another poignant example of the ways that, even through his writings, Owen resonated with people in personal ways. She wrote to him:

---

<sup>52</sup> Simple to Owen, July 9, 1889.



I wish it were possible, Mr. Owen, for this pen, ink, and paper, to convey or express to you a little, even, of the great amount of sympathy my heart feels for you. When I read of the trials, disappointments and delays surrounding and harassing you constantly. I wish it were in my power to assist you in some way...When I am needed, call for me, and I will step to the front, prepared to do my part in the great work before us, with a cheerful heart and a willing mind.<sup>53</sup>

Her letter had actually started out as Hoyt with her simply fulfilling her responsibility as the Correspondence Secretary for her local Topolobampo Club. According to the wishes and directions of the club, she wrote the letter to Owen with a question about the colony. Once that was done, she flipped the page, wrote “personal” in bold letters at the top, and proceeded to apologize to Owen for the impertinence of the preceding letter and to share her sympathy for his plight and struggles.

As the colony developed, Owen became an incredibly divisive, almost cultish figure. Those who supported him were referred to as the “Saints” of the colony, and retained complete faith in him. Clara Hogeland signed her letters to him “with abiding faith.” Many of Clara’s letters from the colony to Owen began by telling him how much she missed him, even though she understood that his labors were more important than her desires: “For wishing to have me with you, I appear like an ungrateful witch, but I remember and cherish all your kindness to me, everything, everything.”<sup>54</sup> In another letter she wrote “I have your good humored portrait to solace my lonely hours. I have it placed upon my table where I can each moment in the day look into that kind benevolent face and receive new inspirations. It is not often we see such a happy combination of

---

<sup>53</sup> Mary Hoyt to Albert Kimsey Owen, n.d., Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>54</sup> Clara Hogeland to Albert Kimsey Owen, n.d., Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

power and tenderness in a man.”<sup>55</sup> Once, the colonists received a packet of letters from Owen, and as they were being handed out to their respective recipients, Clara was disappointed that she didn’t receive one: “It was not until everybody else had received letters and letters from his hand and I not a word that I felt *abused and betook myself*.”<sup>56</sup>

When women wrote such passionate letters to Owen, they rarely spoke about his ideas of gender equality. Instead, they seem to have been moved by what they saw as his passionate devotion to the improvement of society. They sympathized with his unending labors and wished that they could help him. His appearance of self-sacrifice seemed to appeal to them in a way that may have even pushed some of them passed the bounds of what may have been considered appropriate behavior. Anna Norris reported that “the girls are all in love with him of course,” and implied that jealousy might lead to “war in the camp.”<sup>57</sup>

Men also wrote heartfelt letters to Owen, although lacking the passion that many women’s letters had. William Green, for example, wrote to Owen that he regretted not getting to know him better, but “as you were so besieged when here by everybody that I know with the people you saw the hands you shook and the business you had that your hands head and heart must have ached. I sympathized with you so that I hardly spoke to

---

<sup>55</sup> Clara Hogeland to Albert Kimsey Owen, 1892, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>56</sup> Clara Hogeland to Albert Kimsey Owen, March 9, 1894, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Norris, “Pleased with Our Future Fellow Citizens,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 21, 1886.

you.”<sup>58</sup> Others, such as Aime Heliot, often closed their letters with requests for a response, not necessarily because they needed an answer, but because “a few words will do me some good.” It was Owen’s words of encouragement that maintained the faith of so many of his followers. Some people even asked for his photograph. Marie kept a photograph that she would send to people who requested it, on the condition that they return the picture. J.R. Haggard wrote that, even though he had seen and returned Owen’s photograph to Marie, “my family ask me to request you to send them your photograph. They saw it, and they want it.”<sup>59</sup> Many men poured out their entire life story to Owen in their letters. For example, M.J. Hogarty, who wrote about immigrating from Ireland when he was young, joining the US military, purchasing a farm and settling down with a wife and kids. Letters like these didn’t seem to serve any practical purpose. Hogarty’s life story doesn’t seem to be an effort to prove his socialist credential. Instead, it just seems that saw a person to whom he could talk about his life and tell his troubles in Owen.

Together this suggests how much of the colony’s initial success was based on the cult of personality that developed around Owen. His ideas appealed to many, but his charisma—even as it came out in his writings and public speeches—was what gave so many of his followers their undying faith in his vision.

---

<sup>58</sup> William Green to Albert Kimsey Owen, August 19, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>59</sup> J.R. Haggard to Albert Kimsey Owen, March 1888, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

## **WEAVING THE TWO TOGETHER: MEXICO AS A BLANK SLATE**

Owen still needed to bring these two trends—the movement to “exploit” Mexico’s resources and the movement to create a more just society—together. Even though thousands of Americans were passionately hopeful about his plan for economic justice, many were concerned about it taking place in Mexico. Marie Howland noted in *The Credit Foncier* that “numbers of our correspondents from the first have regretted that we were going out of this country to colonize. Some have declared that ‘the United States is good enough’ for them, etc.”<sup>60</sup> Others worried that Mexicans were untrustworthy and the Mexican government was unstable. In order to convince potential colonists that the ideal site for the colony was in Mexico, Owen relied on the language, networks and “cultures of empire” that had been directing US investment towards Mexico for years.

Owen and his supporters often portrayed Mexico as a blank slate: a place not yet ruined by industrial capitalism and brimming with untapped potential. This was a common trope among US Americans in this era to describe Mexico first and foremost by its opportunities and resources. The dominance of such tropes justified American imperialism by underscoring the fact that Mexicans didn’t deserve control over their own resources because they had allowed such potential to lie dormant for so long.<sup>61</sup>

In *Integral Co-Operation*, Owen declared “Topolobampo, thank God! has not yet been stained by ‘Man’s inhumanity to man,’ and it offers an exceptional basis owing to

---

<sup>60</sup> Marie Howland, “Cooperative Colonization,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 2, 1886.

<sup>61</sup> Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014).

its geographical position, for the basis of a new civilization.”<sup>62</sup> This summed up much of the blank slate thinking that justified the colony’s presence on Mexican territory. According to Owen, Sinaloa’s supposed emptiness and lack of economic development meant that it had a higher potential for liberty, away from the big businesses that dominated the US economy.

The argument also emphasized the untapped potential of Mexico. Many of the colonists themselves certainly believed that the region—indeed all of ‘the tropics’—was so obviously rich in natural resources that their work would undoubtedly make the region economically profitable. Anna Norris, for example, wrote to Marie Howland from Topolobampo that “With this climate and soil there is no reason why, with enterprise and water it should not be made an Eden spot. Their fruit and flower gardens, a few miles out, show us what may be done with proper cultivation and what we hope to do.”<sup>63</sup>

Over and over the colonists insisted that the region only needed some “intelligent” work—the implication being that there was no one “intelligent” in the region. In 1888, William Slocum landed in Topolobampo and was instantly taken with the region. He grandly claimed that whether or not the colony should succeed, “this country will not be a failure. It is rich in natural resources, requiring only intelligent industry and development.”<sup>64</sup> Such statements are reminiscent of the Confederates’ insistence that all it would take to make Tuxpan bloom was a little work, and the strong, frequent

---

<sup>62</sup> Owen, *Integral Co-Operation*, 131.

<sup>63</sup> Anna Norris, “Pleased with Our Future Fellow Citizens,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 21, 1886.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*, 75.

implication that it was the locals' laziness that has so far prevented this from happening. One of Marie's correspondents, after first arriving in the Mexican port city of Guaymas, wrote "There is no progress in their civilization—everything is at a stand-still. No system of water and very little is cultivated. There are street cars but no other modern improvements and no enterprise."<sup>65</sup> The Mexican failure to develop their resources gave Americans all the more justification to come and benefit from them.

At the same time, colonists such as Schellhous complained that Mexicans refused to sell their land at a "fair price," because they expected that the presence of Americans would shortly increase land value. He reported that the Mexicans "think we will make a better offer if they wait; and they are proverbial for waiting. They have waited for 200 years for somebody to come in and improve the country, develop its resources and thus enhance the value of their lands."<sup>66</sup> Schellhous's complaint was a double-edged sword: he simultaneously blamed them for 200 years of bad business sense and criticized them for trying to make the most of US investment. Colonists often argued that their presence would bring prosperity to Mexico and Mexicans, but then expressed disgust if they thought that Mexicans tried to benefit too much or were insufficiently grateful for American investment. This was a reflection of the general sense that many Americans had that Mexico should be for the benefit of Americans. The Mexicans, they argued, had done nothing to "intelligently" improve their lands and had made no "progress" for hundreds of years.

---

<sup>65</sup> Norris, "Pleased with Our Future Fellow Citizens."

<sup>66</sup> E.J. Shellhous, "Letter from E.J. Schellhous," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 22, 1887.

This is an old trope. The idea that the land wasn't being productively used is one that resonated deeply in the United States and had long been used to justify the dispossession of American Indian peoples. The colonists took part in a long history of the language of American Empire to justify their presence in Mexico. The fact that Mexicans failed to use their resources to the standard that Americans expected gave the Americans, they believed, the right to exploit those resources to their own benefit.

The assumption that Americans were better at taking advantage of Mexico's wealth than Mexicans also raised the question of whether "The Tropics" were truly safe for whites. One of Owen's correspondents, Samuel Alexander, wavered on whether moving to Mexico was a good idea. He feared that since Mexico was part of the "dreamy and beautiful tropics, the lands of the Lotus Eater" the colonists would be in danger of succumbing to its influences.<sup>67</sup> Despite the region's (sometimes imagined) richness and natural resources, "one is forever sliding downhill in the tropics; the gravitating influences are towards barbarism & though the affects may not be so apparent in the first generation, they are sure to be seen in the second & third." Alexander actually knew nothing of the Topolobampo region, but painted all of "the tropics" as a place rich in raw materials where one could easily live off naturally growing "lotus" fruits. In reality, the lands surrounding Topolobampo Bay had fertile soil, but rain was too unpredictable to farm on a large scale without extensive, laborious and expensive irrigation—hence the three years the colonists spent digging their irrigation canal. Nevertheless, Alexander

---

<sup>67</sup> Samuel T. Alexander to Lucy, August 30, 1888, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

claimed that equatorial countries “are *utterly dead*,” not because of a lack of resources, but because of the failures of the people there to work the region’s resources effectively. Any success that Americans might have in the “tropics,” then, would be temporary. In a few short generations, he feared, the strong, industrious Americans would become like the lazy, sleepy “lotus eaters” themselves.

These fears were common, but also undergoing a shift at the end of the nineteenth century. As historian Catherine Cocks argues, Americans’ understanding of the relationship between race, civilization, climate, and geography was changing towards the idea that the tropics were, in fact, a safe place for white Americans and Europeans to live.<sup>68</sup> Importantly, this concept was a key part of what allowed romantic notions of American capitalism to take such a firm grip among Mexican journalists, among Mexican politicians, and throughout the Caribbean region. For the “tropics”—which was often so broadly defined that it included any place south of the United States—to be capable of economic development, there couldn’t be any risk to the supposed racial superiority of white investors. Thus, the increasingly common idea that white Americans could both visit and live in the tropics without worry of becoming “lotus eaters” themselves allowed the US economic expansion over Mexico and the Caribbean region.

The colonists not only benefitted from this ideological shift, they also took part in it. *The Credit Foncier* spent significant time fighting the idea that the tropics would weaken whites. Dr. E.D. Babbit, a strong supporter of the Topolobampo enterprise, wrote

---

<sup>68</sup> Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).



several articles for *The Credit Foncier*, including at least one written at the invitation of Owen. These articles insisted on the importance of the invigorating and strengthening effects of “sun power,” something that the “southern climes” could offer in large quantities. Europeans, he argued, often “become weak” in the tropics because they wore too much clothing to benefit from sun power. All they needed to do was keep their skin exposed. Babbit pointed to the supposedly immense strength of the Mexican natives, who, he claimed wore little to nothing and “must be, at least, twice as strong as ourselves.”<sup>69</sup> Rather than seeing this supposed immense strength as an intrinsic racial characteristic as some “scientists” of the time did, or recognizing strength as an indication of the amount of labor that they did, Babbit shifted the argument to support the idea that whites, too, could grow strong in the tropical sun.

Babbit wasn’t the only medical doctor in Topolobampo who thought that the tropical climate was ideal for health. Dr. Scally wrote to the Howlands that his wife, “is stouter than she has been in ten years, being twelve lbs heavier.” While many people today might not be thrilled at the prospect of an international newspaper with thousands of readers announcing that they had gained twelve pounds, by nineteenth-century standards, this was a good thing. Many people in the late nineteenth century considered gaining weight in the tropics an indicator of improving health due to the salubrious climate.<sup>70</sup> Dr. Scally added that “I am more delighted with our surroundings all the time, as I see and learn the real condition, the climate for health and resources could not be

---

<sup>69</sup> E.D. Babbit, M.D., “To the Brave Colonists of Sinaloa (Written at the Invitation of Owen),” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 3, 1887.

<sup>70</sup> Cocks, *Tropical Whites*.

better.”<sup>71</sup> While there was still some debate over whether or not a supposedly tropical environment was truly compatible with white American industry, or if it would lower whites to the lazy, unproductive condition of the natives, more and more people, especially those invested in Mexico, supported the idea that white American ingenuity would overcome the tropics.

Some potential colonists still expressed concerns about the possibility of living in Mexico, often in an explicitly racialized way. One correspondent wrote to Marie requesting she address the “often heard” objection “that we are to have Mexicans in our colony.” Often these comments and questions implied a belief that the colony should be a little oasis of Americans—a piece of the United States that shifted to Mexico. The Howlands rejected this completely. Marie responded by arguing that “a percentage of Mexicans in our colony would be desirable. They would teach us Spanish—and politeness...Any person who is afraid of Mexicans and is afflicted with ridiculous race prejudice cannot be very deeply imbued with the principles we advocate.”<sup>72</sup> Just as the Confederates in Tuxpan insisted that the Mexicans that they lived beside were excellent neighbors, the editors and contributors to *The Credit Foncier*, repeated such statements over and over, trying to soothe the concerns that so many Americans had at the prospect of living beside Mexicans.

The colony quickly developed a reputation for being against “race prejudice”—not only against Mexicans, but also blacks and Chinese in the United States—which

---

<sup>71</sup> J.W. Scally, M.D., “Letter to Marie and Edward Howland,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 3, 1887.

<sup>72</sup> Marie Howland, “Short Replies to Correspondents,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 26, 1886.

became extremely contentious. The letters Owen and Marie received about race varied from mild questions to fierce invectives. Marie and Owen stood their ground against this type of “race prejudice” on paper at least. The extent to which the colony was *actually* against racism will be addressed in the next chapter, but Marie’s responses always insisted on at least some level of racial equality: “I think most of our friends are above race prejudice...It is not race nor color that makes the good cooperator, but the serious study of economic principles. We hope you will organize a Topolobampo club. Admit no one of any color who is not educated beyond the notion that because one’s skin is of a different color, or because of sex, he or she should not enjoy equal civil and political rights.”<sup>73</sup>

Despite the concern about the transnational and transracial aspects of the colony, the question raised most frequently was about the Mexican government. For example, the members of one Topolobampo Club wrote to Owen expressing considerable concern that “the Mexican government was never known to keep faith with any one, or stand to any agreement they make with Americans.”<sup>74</sup> This concern was one that frequently frustrated Owen. Instead of simply writing back to Hoyt’s Topolobampo Club, he published his response in *The Credit Foncier*. The idea that Mexico didn’t “keep faith” on its contracts and agreements, he declared “so grossly unjust to Mexico that we are ashamed to think that such statements could be made in a gathering of our friends.”<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Marie Howland, “The Color Question,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, August 15, 1892.

<sup>74</sup> Hoyt to Owen, n.d.

<sup>75</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, “The Stability and Good Faith of Mexico,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, February 15, 1887.

Owen frequently made two points to contradict concerns about the Mexican government. First, that the Mexican government could not possibly be worse than the American government, which, he believed, had completely failed her people. He argued that the concern over Mexico's government was actually based in Americans' ignorance on the failings of the US government. He pointed to the US Civil War, the huge number of strikes that the government responded to with violence, the fact that it had sold out to business interests, attempted assassinations on presidents, and other problems that he saw as inherent in the American political system. Americans, in other words, had no room to talk about poor governments.

Second, and more importantly, Owen insisted that the Mexican government was truly a "progressive" body that had welcomed the development that the colonists would bring. He pointed to the contracts that he had already signed with the Mexican government: Mexico always upheld its end of the deal, and "each time has given more encouragements than in the first."<sup>76</sup> Even though the Mexican population had failed to develop its resources, Mexican officials were eager to welcome Americans to do it for them. One colonist insisted that "The progressive minds, not only in the State [of Sinaloa] but throughout the entire Republic [of Mexico], are friendly to our movement, recognizing it in a peaceable, industrial development of the resource of Mexico, by the

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

best classes of the United States.”<sup>77</sup> With this argument, Mexico was just waiting for Americans to come and develop its resources.

#### **FROM HOPEFUL VISION TO PAINFUL REALITY**

The first colonists arrived in Mexico in November of 1886, much to Owen’s horror. The site that he had described in rich detail didn’t exist in reality as clearly as it did in his writings. The site was rife with problems: it had poor access to potable water, and none for irrigation; it could only be accessed after going through customs at Guaymas, which was in the midst of a smallpox outbreak; the survey of the land to lay out the site wasn’t finished; and Sinaloa’s crops had been poor the past year, meaning the cost of food was high. But Owen and the Howlands had sold the idea of the colony too well. Eager colonists, unaware of these problems, decided to head down to the beautiful bay themselves without delay. They were eager and willing pioneers, expecting to lay ground of a great city. Many, in fact, had sold all their belongings and had almost no other option but to go to Sinaloa if they were going to have a place to live for the winter.<sup>78</sup>

Compounding the problem was the fact that these eager colonists were not the groups of single, young, hardy men that Owen had intended. By the end of November roughly 200 people, including young children, were living in tents on the bay. Owen immediately tried to put the brakes on the flow of immigrants, but this only caused more problems by forcing him to admit problems that he had hoped to keep quiet. He finally

---

<sup>77</sup> C.B. Hoffman, “General Instructions and Suggestions of the Trustee of the Improvement Fund,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 1, 1891.

<sup>78</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, “Notes by Albert Owen,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, January 18, 1887.

admitted in *The Credit Foncier* that between the poor crops and the violence between Mexican troops and Yaqui Indians, the Yaqui had been forced “to provide themselves with the necessities of life [by] making forced contributions upon travelers—taking arms, ammunition, money, clothes, horses, and in cases, life.” But he was quick to point out that these were not common events. The water was usually more consistent, the Yaqui more peaceful towards travelers, and even claimed that smallpox was less likely to be transmitted to “persons of foreign birth” in “warm countries like Sonora and Sinaloa.”<sup>79</sup> Finally, he said that anyone who insisted on going to Topolobampo without permission would not be welcomed into the colony: “those who act in violation of this instruction will forfeit every right of a colonist and will not find employment, food, shelter, assistance or protection at our settlements.”<sup>80</sup>

But at the same time that people were rushing to join the colony, many of those who had already arrived were fighting to leave. As Owen had feared, the colonists immediately had problems. They had brought smallpox from Guaymas, killing several, and causing widespread resentment against Owen for not informing them of the risk. Many of the young, single men resented that their labor was supporting others’ families. The only fresh water supply required several individuals to spend most of the day rowing a small boat to a nearby island where there was a natural water source. Perhaps the most contentious issue of all, however, was organizing the colony. Who was in charge? How

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, “Letter from Albert Owen,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, February 8, 1887.

would wages actually work? Who was to do what labor? Owen's plans hadn't specified any of these things.

The colonists hacked together a plan to organize labor that, while intended to be a temporary measure, ended up shaping the colony's policies for the next few years. Every one would be paid \$3 in "credits" on the colony's ledger for a day's worth of labor, defined as 8 hours. The credits could then be used to withdraw goods from the colony's store.<sup>81</sup> The colonists had almost no help from Owen in laying out these plans. After a brief trip to the colony of 1886, he quickly returned to the United States to stop more people from coming and prevent the bad news from getting to the press. He failed on both accounts, but his absence was perhaps an even bigger problem.

From the beginning, the colony struggled unclear leadership, too many ideas, and not many people who would do what clearly needed to be done. In the first few months, the colonists drank water "little short of poisonous" because they failed to make sinking wells a priority. Sick colonists were not given the care they needed, in part because the colony doctor was serving Mexicans in order to make cash to buy food. Enormous sums of money had been wasted on materials to build a dock on the bay, when what they really needed were basic supplies. The colonists began cultivating land, but shortly thereafter lost the rights to the land and their crops because Owen had failed to get the contract notarized.

The first handful of people to leave the colony went back to the United States to write of horrible experiences in the colony. As the Arizona newspaper the *Daily*

---

<sup>81</sup> Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia*.

*Tombstone Epitaph* described it, “The horizon of Topolobampo begins to wear a lurid tinge.”<sup>82</sup> This was the beginning of what the colonists would come to mockingly call the “Terrible Tales of Topolobampo.” The early stories in the US newspapers likely reflected reality. The location needed extensive irrigation, the site chosen for the city remained nothing but a collection of shoddy tents, and the food consisted almost entirely of corn mush that they purchased from local towns. Anyone who had consistently read *The Credit Foncier* could have expected “pioneer conditions.” But many people had been so swept up in Owen’s vision of the future, that the reality of the present was a harsh one. In a few short months, the stories in the newspapers got even worse. *The Evening News* in San Jose reported that a returned colonist said “the people at Topolobampo Bay are on a dry desert with no fresh water within forty miles. Many of them have nothing to eat and it is no uncommon sight to see women, with their children, sitting on the rocks and crying and imploring the Almighty to save them from starvation.”<sup>83</sup> This story was undoubtedly over dramatized. Conditions may have been brutal, but there was at least enough corn mush to prevent starvation.

When one of the colony’s directors, Alvan Brock, quit and returned to the United States, he wrote a scathing open letter to Owen that was published in *The Los Angeles Times*. The letter, which was republished in papers across the United States, was a major blow to the colony’s image. Brock accused Owen of defrauding investors, embezzling

---

<sup>82</sup> “The Horizon of Topolobampo Begins to Wear a Lurid Tinge.,” *Daily Tombstone Epitaph*, April 6, 1887.

<sup>83</sup> “Coast Condensations: News of the Pacific Coast Sifted and Boiled Down,” *The Evening News*, March 5, 1887.



from the company, not paying for his shares in the company, bribing Mexican officials, and encouraging immigration while knowing that they would be exposed to small pox, and leaving people stranded in Guaymas. Many of these claims were not entirely untrue. In his desperation to make both the colony and the railroad a success, Owen had, in fact, done a great deal of shifting money back and forth between the schemes. This often involved withholding information from colonists and investors about how he used their money. Furthermore, he had intentionally not told people about the small pox risk in Guaymas, thinking that he could keep the colonists from arriving until after the outbreak had ended. His miscalculation led to the death several colonists—including Brocks's young son.

These stories halted the immigration in a way that Owen's frantic efforts had failed to accomplish. Subscriptions to the company dropped off dramatically, and many wrote very bluntly stating the reason. One person wrote demanded that Owen and John Lovell—the colony's treasurer—stop writing to him or sending him propaganda materials, "for I want nothing to do with the plot." He referred to the colonists as "Captives," quoted at length from Brock's letter and concluded, "count me out."<sup>84</sup> Others were not discouraged completely, but looked to Owen for reassurance. Harrold Arnold, for example, wrote to Owen about one of the letters that had been circulating about the colony. He quoted from the letter, which was allegedly from a colonist at Topolobampo who had written:

---

<sup>84</sup> J.A. Dietz to J.W. Lovell, March 1, 1887, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

The most intelligent here are ridiculing the past enthusiasm about this grand enterprise and prospecting a change. The last sparks of lingering enthusiasm are being quenched and people are relapsing into chronic fault finding. The fact is beginning to dawn on the minds of the most intelligent and is dropped in whispers that the importance of this scheme is very little compared with the labor movement in the U.S. With Henry George, perhaps as the leader.<sup>85</sup>

Arnold then wrote that many of the people who had already bought stock in the colony were feeling discouraged at the prospect of actually joining it. He added, “*If all he says is true*, it does not discourage me as to the final success of the enterprise. Irregularities, imperfections and mistakes are to be expected, especially in the early history of such an undertaking. All these things will right themselves in time. So I still say, ‘Hurrah for Sinaloa.’”<sup>86</sup>

Throughout 1887, the colonists gradually whittled themselves down to a core few. By the end of the year, only about one hundred colonists remained, although well over two hundred had, at some point in the last year, arrived at the bay. Those who had been unhappy with the colony’s organization, location or condition had heavy-handed encouragement to leave from Alvin Wilber, who had been voted they colony’s resident director. Many of those who left in those early months accused Alvin of denying food to “quitters” and “fault-finders” until they left the colony. So by the end of 1887, the only colonists who remained were the “Saints”—those that were staunch supporters of Owen and faithful adherents to the ideals of integral co-operation. For this short period of time, the remaining colonists, while desperately poor, had come to a peaceful agreement to suffer together.

---

<sup>85</sup> Harrold M. Arnold to Albert Kimsey Owen, May 30, 1887, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

The colony's settling was well-timed. As the second year of the colony's founding began, they had a visit from Commander Leavy of the U.S.S. Iroquois. Military and political officials in Washington D.C. weren't eager to allow the media circus about US citizens supposedly starving to death in a foreign land become an international crisis. According to Lucy Doyle, "Ever since last July the government at Washington has been receiving telegrams from colonists...that we were in a starving condition, to send a vessel to our relief. (Isn't it a wonder any of us are left—starving since last July!) Well, 'governments move slowly.'"<sup>87</sup> For many colonists, the fact that the US government had responded to these pleas at all was a greater shock than how long it took them. Schellhous, for one, had rejected the idea out of hand that the US government would come "rescue" the unsatisfied colonists: "as if a government that has disinherited them of all that is dear to free men and women, would run after them and bring them back to its protecting(?) folds. Could either of the political parties make capital out of them, no pains would be spared to get them back, but as long as their places can be supplied from the shores of western Europe or China, what care they?"<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, nearly all of the colonists were extremely pleased with the Commander's visit, probably influenced by the fact that he, too, was quite pleased. Leavy toured each of the camps, met with all of the colonists and interviewed them about their well-being and access to necessities of life. In the report that he submitted, he wrote that all of the colonists were healthy and happy. There was only one family that wanted to

---

<sup>87</sup> Lucy T. Doyle, "Letter from Lucy Doyle," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 27, 1887.

<sup>88</sup> Schellhous, "Letter from E.J. Schellhous."

return to the United States on the U.S.S. Iroquois, and Leavy refused to take them. He informed the family that they had more food and work than many in the United States and that they should be grateful for what they had. Furthermore, his orders had been to take away any people who were on the brink of starvation, but as he didn't find any such people, the family of "fault-finders" would stay. The visit did much to turn the negative tide of press in the United States, in fact the *Daily Tombstone Epigraph* even apologized for having printed such miserable stories about the colony now that they had such public evidence to the contrary.

In many ways, the colony was indeed improving. The colonists purchased more land that they could use for agriculture. They spread out among various camps to facilitate agricultural work while keeping a strong presence on the bay. Most of the agricultural land was at La Logia, which quickly "became the heart of the colony."<sup>89</sup> In the coming years, the colonists at La Logia were the ones with consistent medical access, with the most diverse food options, and the most stable population. It was where the colonists had the most concerted efforts to create a refined society, with the main school where the children of nearby *hacendados* attended school. By 1889, they had even begun growing cash crops—mostly sugar. They had purchased more land for more extensive agriculture, and by the beginning of 1889, their first sugar cane crop was headed towards the mill. Thomas Doyle wrote to Owen that "I have been busy all last month and part of this preparing machinery for sugar making. It is done now and is working well. We can

---

<sup>89</sup> Mario Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte* (México: Universidad de Occidente, 2003).

turn out about sixty gallons of molasses per day. This is not very fast but our plant is small and cane field ditto.”<sup>90</sup>

But the colonists were increasingly concerned about the fact that extensive agriculture in the region required consistent irrigation, which would require more labor and capital than they had. In 1889, Christian B. Hoffman, a businessman from Kansas, joined the colony, determined to make it work. Hoffman and Owen organized the Kansas-Sinaloa Investment Company. Through the company, which Hoffman funded with investment that he raised in Kansas, they set about irrigating hundreds of acres of land that had been included in Owen’s railroad and colonization concessions. Between Hoffman’s funding and the engineering expertise of one of the colonists, they planned a 7-mile long irrigation canal that would bring water from the Rio Fuerte to their lands. Hoffman brought another 200 colonists from Kansas in December of 1890 to help construct “The Ditch.” By this point, however, the “credits” that colonists were paid were nearly worthless. After a few years of working in the colony, most colonists had far more credits on the company books than they would ever be able to use, considering that the colony commissary was usually empty. Instead, they created the Improvement Fund Script, generally known as Ditch Script among the colonists, which also included rights to water from the canal, a decision that, as I will discuss later, would come back to haunt the colonists.

---

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Doyle to Albert Kimsey Owen, January 9, 1889, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

Regardless, in 1892, the colonists' completion of the Ditch was a huge success that was recognized in the Press in both Mexico and the United States. *El Siglo XIX* noted the new extent of the colony's agriculture and had high expectations that things would go well for the colony, considering the "the fertility of the land and the intelligence of the horticulturalists."<sup>91</sup> The positive press that they received did much to boost the popularity of the colony (which may have been encouraged by the fact that the United States had entered yet another depression in 1893). In 1893, the colony had close to 1000 residents, it's all time peak. Over the next few years, the colonists were able to greatly expand the land that they were able to cultivate, and in 1895 reported that "We have cleared and got under cultivation seventy more acres than we had last year...We have got our nursery stock almost all planted out into primary orchard. We have increased our vineyard by five acres and these are looking well." From an outside perspective, things were finally going well for the colony. But from the perspective of the colonists, things were consistently getting worse.

As soon as the Ditch was completed, fighting started. Many of the colonists who had come with Hoffman from Kansas were distrustful of the colony. They hadn't met Owen, many weren't as familiar with his writings as the earlier colonists, and many wanted privately owned land. As they looked to begin irrigating and cultivating wider swaths of land, many wanted to work the land individually rather than communally. And they wanted the rights to the land and a change in the Colony's laws that would say so. Owen was completely opposed to this idea, but to some extent, he was unable to stop

---

<sup>91</sup> "Legumbres En Topolobampo," *El Siglo XIX*, May 5, 1890.

them. The “kickers” as they were called, spread out on the Los Mochis land, claiming about 1700 acres and creating individual “plats” of land for families and individuals—an area to this day called *Los Plats*.<sup>92</sup> Those that held fast to Owen’s ideas congregated around the Bay Camp, although as Charles Moore recalled, “we people at the Bay were supposed to be Owen’s people but most, like ourselves, were really in sympathy with the Plat. While we worked at the Bay, however...we found that ‘discretion is the better part of valor’ and policy demanded that we keep our opinions to ourselves.”<sup>93</sup> The two factions soon fought over how the limited water from the canal should be allotted. The Platters felt that they had done most of the work on the Ditch, making it morally theirs. Owen’s supporters claimed that it had been build under Owen’s contract, which meant that the Platters had no right to stake a claim to it.

In 1893, Owen and Hoffman met to discuss the standoff and the colonists desperately hoped that they would come to an agreement that would end the fighting. Owen refused to back down in any way. He was the concessionaire, he should have complete control of the colony, the ditch and the water. In disgust, Hoffman left the colony. The failure of Owen and Hoffman to come to an agreement in 1893 solidified the split between the colonists. Both sides appealed to the Mexican court system and the suit dragged on for the next twelve years. The Mexican federal government steadfastly refused to intervene, and insisted that the colonists needed to let the local courts handle it, but the colonists who remained loyal to Owen insisted the Platters were engaged in a

---

<sup>92</sup> Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*, 63.

<sup>93</sup> Charles W Moore, “Paradise at Topolobampo,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 17–18.

“conspiracy” to entice local judges to their side. As the case dragged on through the local court system, tensions between the colonists increased. More and more people were disgusted with the entire affair. The colony population dropped rapidly after 1893. The split and the legal battles also brought more negative attention to the colony, even as the colonists had been carefully trying to manage their public appearance. The *Monitor Republicano* reported “The most recent news from Topolobampo announces that the existing dissensions among the members of the colony have led to a lamentable outcome,” and reminded readers that the colony was established, “as is known, under the cooperative system.”<sup>94</sup>

The colony was not all failure, however. The colonists developed relationships with the local Mexican elite that exceeded even their own expectations. And the struggles that the colony did face were much deeper than irrigation rights. To fully understand the successes and failures of the colony, it’s necessary to look at the relationships that the colonists developed in Sinaloa, which is the topic of the next chapter.

---

<sup>94</sup> “La Colonia de Topolobampo,” *El Monitor Republicano*, March 29, 1894.



### **Chapter 3: Dancing at Haciendas in Rags— Networks across Class and Race in Topolobampo, Sinaloa**

Early in 1888, Francisco Cañedo, Governor of Sinaloa received a request from President Díaz that he visit the colony at Topolobampo.<sup>1</sup> Some 200 colonists were living there at the time and reports had been circulating in the United States for over a year that the colonists were on the verge of starvation. The Mexican press continued to be more sanguine about the colony, but Díaz still wanted Cañedo to offer any support to the colony that he could. When Cañedo completed his task, he was extremely concerned about the colonists' conditions. "From what I could see," he told Díaz, "the colonists suffer the worst shortages." He noted that they lived in small, deteriorated tents that were insufficient to protect them from "the rigors of this blazing climate." They could not grow much food, and despite receiving regular rations from the United States, their diet was barely sufficient. They lacked even the most basic furniture, their clothing were rags, the children were "barefoot and little more than naked." He wrapped up the report by telling Díaz that "their sad and precarious situation impressed upon me such that I could do no less than to give them some small donations of money and distribute primary school books among them so that they can begin learning our language. On my return to Culiacán, I will send them the material necessary to make some clothing."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Porfirio Díaz to Francisco Cañedo, February 1888, Colección Porfirio Díaz, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco Cañedo to Porfirio Díaz, March 25, 1888, Colección Porfirio Díaz, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City.

However, the news was not all bad. Cañedo reported that the colonists seemed to be in good spirits. They worked together well, living “in perfect and cordial community.” The school, though lacking in supplies, was going well. A local *hacendado* was even paying to have his children attend. They were expecting a printing press to arrive soon, and they had complete faith in their founder Albert Kimsey Owen, whom they expected to return from France soon. Perhaps most importantly, the local authorities spoke well of the colonists, and the colonists themselves made it clear that they were dedicated to staying in the country “because of the warm kindness they had received.”<sup>3</sup> Cañedo had actually only seen a carefully curated version of the colony. In reality, the colonists were involved in constant struggles over behavior, organization and power in the colony.

There was at least one aspect of Cañedo’s report that the colonists would happily agree with: the good opinion of the local authorities and the warm welcome the colonists had received from the local elite. A few months after Cañedo’s visit, Marie Howland, editor of the colony’s newspaper, finally settled in Topolobampo, after nearly two years of preparing for the trip. Once settled, one of Marie’s earliest tasks was getting to know her new neighbors—specifically, the Mexican neighbors. She and some fellow colonists went to visit the hacienda of the Castro family, where “Señora Castro kindly took us all over her beautiful gardens and gave us fine cut flowers...The lady was most kind, most gracious to a stranger, and we shall not forget her, nor the pretty daughter who accompanied us around the garden.”<sup>4</sup> The ladies of the Castro family` did not speak any

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Marie Howland, “La Logia,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 1, 1888.

English, and Marie hadn't yet learned enough Spanish to be any use, but they could still share the customs of Mexico's famed hospitality.

Shortly after the visit to the Castro's hacienda, the colonists hosted a celebration in honor of Mexican Independence Day together with the government-appointed official at the recently finished customs house. The colonists still didn't have much food and could only serve their guests "a modest collation of corn cake, coffee and a very small quantity of dried fruit." Word of the celebration must have traveled more than the colonists had intended, because "our Mexican friends in adjacent towns, as Asinagua, for example, understood that they were invited, and they were coming in force. There was some misunderstanding, for no one here knew anything about it." About twenty of their Mexican neighbors attended, and Marie noted that "the Mexican ladies confirm the common report that they are excellent dancers."<sup>5</sup>

There is so much that seems paradoxical in these stories. The colonists wore little more than rags and had barely enough food for themselves, yet they hosted parties attended by their "Mexican friends." Despite their grinding poverty, they were warmly welcomed into the haciendas of some of the wealthiest people in the region. Why were the local elite willing to entertain these impoverished foreigners? The historiography doesn't provide a satisfactory answer. Much of the literature on the colony is fairly disconnected, with decades and linguistic gulfs between books. Most works about the colony were written by people without historical training who wrote on the basis of their

---

<sup>5</sup> Marie Howland, "Our Evening Dance," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 1, 1888.

personal interest.<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly, most of the scholarly work on the colony is in Spanish since the Topolobampo colonists, like most US emigrants, have largely faded from US history.<sup>7</sup> In general, the historiography tends to focus on colony leaders, such as Owen and Marie, and their relationships with Mexican officials, while paying less attention to the daily interactions that took place within the colony.<sup>8</sup> However, these relationships—those between colonists and Mexicans as well as among colonists themselves—are important to understanding the colony's successes and failures.

The colonists were dependent on local Mexicans at least as much, if not more so, than they were on the good will of federal and state officials. The colonists depended on local *hacendados* to rent and sell them land. They also needed local businesses to accept their forms of money, since at various times the colonists relied either on “Credits” or “Ditch Script,” and rarely had the cash to purchase the goods they needed. The colonists also used their good relationships with Mexicans to justify their presence in Mexico before an international audience in *The Credit Foncier*. This chapter begins with a

---

<sup>6</sup> For example: José C. Valadés, *Topolobampo, La Metrópoli Socialista de Occidente* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1939); Thomas A. Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia* (Los Angeles: W. Ritchie Press, 1964); Ray Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia* (El Cajon, CA: Published by the author, 1972); Charles W Moore, “Paradise at Topolobampo,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 1–28.

<sup>7</sup> Two of the most thorough works are Mario Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte* (México: Universidad de Occidente, 2003); Sergio Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido: La Colonización de Topolobampo, 1886-1896* (México, D.F.: Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1978); The English-language academic literature that does exist often discusses the colony as one part of a larger story. The wider breadth, while valuable, comes at the expense of depth. See: David M. Pletcher, *Rails, Mines, and Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico, 1867-1911* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958); Dolores Hayden, “Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses,” *Signs* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 1978): 274–90; John M. Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> The most significant exception to this is Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*. Robertson grew up in the colony. In his recollections, he spoke at length about relationships between colonists and the friendships that they developed with Mexicans. Robertson himself had life-long friends that he met in the colony.

discussion of the way that the colonists explained their own sense of belonging in Mexico and their sense of *Mexicanidad*, which was closely tied to how they believed that Mexicans viewed them.

The chapter then turns to the relationships between the colonists and local Mexicans, primarily members of the socio-economic elite. The local elite were willing partners for the colonists, not only economically but socially. The attention that they gave the colonists far outweighed what might be expected on the basis of their socio-economic status. However, I argue that the Mexican elite saw the colonists as part of a shared culture that William Beezley calls the “Porfirian persuasion.”<sup>9</sup> The colonists’ status as white, foreign and (usually) educated, and their role in bringing “progress” to Mexico allowed them to transcend the ideas of class that divided Mexican society.

The next section of this chapter turns to the relationships that the colonists developed with each other. The historiography often portrays the fight over water rights as the cause of the colony’s demise. But arguments over what the colony’s irrigation canal—“the Ditch”—were simply one incident in a long history of festering resentment between different segments of the colony. The conclusion ties these themes back together by looking at the end of the colony. Ultimately, networks—between the colonists and Mexicans and among the colonists themselves—were instrumental in the colony’s downfall. The constant bickering and bitterness that the colonists held toward each other sent many of its strongest supporters back to the United States. In addition, the support of

---

<sup>9</sup> William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

local Mexicans—which was so fundamental to the colony’s successes—would be leveraged against them to undermine the entire enterprise. Benjamin Francis Johnston was an American who showed up in Topolobampo with hardly a penny to his name, attracted by the possibilities of the Bay that had been so well publicized by the colonists. Johnston, despite having no capital of his own, quickly received the support and investment of the local Mexicans, just as the colonists had. By 1905, Johnston had succeeded in purchasing the water rights from disillusioned colonists, proving that the paperwork for the colonists’ land rights had never been properly completed, and evicting the last of them from the land that they had been living on and working for the last twenty years.

#### **PERFORMING *MEXICANIDAD***

In the spring of 1890, several young women in the colony decided to start riding their horses astride. From a practical perspective this is not entirely surprising. The region included difficult riding terrain and good quality side saddles were outside of most colonists’ price range. Many years earlier, back in the US, young Ella Stanley had fallen off her horse while riding side saddle and been wheelchair-bound ever since. Nevertheless, some of the colonists found the “straddle riding” shockingly improper. Dr. Joseph Scally, the notoriously conservative “prude,” as another colonist called him, led the opposition to straddle riding. Joseph sent a petition to colony leader Albert Kimsey Owen with the signatures of a few dozen colonists requesting that Owen make the young women return to riding side saddle. The editor of the colony’s newspaper, Marie Howland, horrified and disgusted at the violation of the young women’s rights, made a

petition to Owen to the opposite effect, also with the signatures of several dozen supporters. For months, letters traveled back and forth between the colony and Mexico City, where Owen was trying to convince the Mexican Government to renew the railroad contract yet again. Owen's answer varied as the months went on. He was initially indifferent to how the young women rode their horses. Joseph Scally's petition convinced him to oppose "straddle riding," while the flurry of letters that followed, including Marie's petition, made him just want the whole argument to stop. In the end, the young women went back to riding side saddle without Owen's interference, but there was still bitterness on both sides.<sup>10</sup>

In some ways the "straddle riding" incident was part of a lengthy debate that the colonists had about social control and liberty that continued for years. Was this an indecency that polluted the colony's environment? Or was it young women practicing their rights? And more importantly, who had the right to dictate the behavior of others? The incident reveals a great deal of how a seemingly simple disagreement could devolve into a bitter fight between colonists who were supposedly working together towards a grand cause, a topic that I'll return to later in this chapter. However, one of the most striking features of the debate was the fact that many of the letters that Owen received on the subject said very little about decency or women's rights. They were far more concerned about how the colony would be perceived, particularly among their Mexican neighbors and Mexican officials in the capital.

---

<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, *Cat's Paw Utopia*.

The letters that flew back and forth between the colony and Mexico City weighed all possible interpretations of how the Mexicans might view the scandal. William Green wrote to Owen that, having been to several towns in the nearby area, he had “yet to hear the first word for or against riding astride.” He had “heard hard things said against those who take moonlight strolls. When I first heard of [the straddle riding argument] I was afraid that it might cause hard things to be said by the Mexicans in our neighborhood as they are uneducated.”<sup>11</sup> To Green, the straddle riding incident, just like the case of “moonlight strolls,” only mattered to the extent that it might make their Mexican neighbors associate the colony with indecency. His comment about the Mexicans lack of education was probably in reference to the fact that they didn’t share some of the colony’s more progressive ideals. Women riding side saddle was the expectation throughout much of the western world, and his statement likely reflects his opposition to that expectation rather than his opinion on Mexican education. Another colonist, C.J. Lamb argued that while he believed that women should have the right to ride a horse however they wanted, it was far more important that everyone act in a way that would prevent scandalous reports in Mexican newspapers. Accordingly, he thought the young women should be discouraged from riding astride, and the colonists could worry about individual liberties after they were better established.<sup>12</sup>

The incident shows how important it was for the colonists that they be viewed well by their Mexican neighbors and officials in the capital. The colonists understood that

---

<sup>11</sup> William Green to Albert Kimsey Owen, May 1, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>12</sup> C.J. Lamb to A.K. Owen, cited in Reynolds



many Mexicans viewed them as a threat to the nation. They didn't always seem to understand the deep ideological divisions that underlay the debates that Mexican officials had about their presence in Mexico, but they certainly hoped that they could soothe some of these concerns. Accordingly, they were extremely attentive to how Mexicans locally and nationally perceived them. In public forums, they consistently tried to portray themselves as good Mexicans, who deserved to be welcomed by their fellow Mexican citizens. The consistency of these reports in public forums, the way that they varied from private correspondences, the speed with which disillusioned colonists returned to the United States, and even their reliance on US courts for legal redress all suggest that the colonists' performance of *Mexicanidad* was, to some extent at least, an intentional process of proving that they deserved the consideration they received from Mexican officials and elites.<sup>13</sup>

*The Credit Foncier* reported frequently on the colonists' sense of Mexican patriotism. They flew the Mexican flag and hosted parties in honor of Mexican Independence day. Colonist Anna Norris, in a contribution to the *Credit Foncier* wrote "We take quite readily to our Mexican citizenship and talk of Americans as foreigners and we feel quite loyal with the Mexican flag waving from our vessels."<sup>14</sup> Anna Norris had not actually claimed Mexican citizenship in a legal sense. In fact, she returned to the United States within a year of writing that contribution to the *Credit Foncier*. While the

---

<sup>13</sup> American colonists were not the only ones to engage in these displays of Mexicanidad: Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So far from Allah, so close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); María Elena Ota Mishima, *Destino México: Un Estudio de Las Migraciones Asiáticas a México, Siglos XIX Y XX*, 1. ed (México, D.F: El Colegio de México, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Anna Norris, "Pleased with Our Future Fellow Citizens," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 21, 1886.

colonists had agreed to be treated as Mexicans in any legal or international dispute, they would need to actually apply for Mexican citizenship if they wanted it. But Anna's claim to Mexican citizenship was a display. Many of the colonists publicly claimed how very Mexican they were, without becoming actual Mexican citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Joseph Scally—the “prude” who had opposed straddle riding—had worked hard at learning Spanish, as did many of the colonists. While Joseph's Spanish skills were not always fluid, he could manage a gracious speech to express to their neighbors how pleased they were to be in Mexico, which Marie often published in *The Credit Foncier* in order to expand the speech's audience to an international level. Joseph's speeches and letters carried the strong emphasis that the colonists wanted to be a part of Mexico and considered themselves Mexican. In one such letter, Scally opined that “much has been said to excite the prejudices of our people against us.” He quickly clarified what he meant by “our people”:

We mean the natives of Mexico whom we claim to be our people, for Mexico is our country and our home. Time will show that we have come to Sinaloa for a noble purpose; to build homes and to live useful and industrious lives; to work for the general good of Mexico and ourselves. In a word, we have come here to stay, to build homes for ourselves and our children and to live the remainder of our natural lives.<sup>16</sup>

In a speech to the colony's Mexican neighbors during the celebration of the colony's third anniversary, Joseph thanked them for their kindness and wanted to “assure that you

---

<sup>15</sup> For more on Mexican citizenship, see: Grace Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012); for more on the developing cultural expectations of citizenship: Patrick J. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, 1855-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Joseph P. Scally, “Letter to Don Ignacio Pombo,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 11, 1887.

will always find friends in us and that you will never have any reason to distrust us.” He went on to add that “our object in Mexico is the advancement of the country and the ability to establish ourselves in happy homes in the Fuerte Valley beside Mexicans.” He grandly claimed that history taught that progress and advancement could only happen when “people of all nations and races join together.” Therefore, the colonists hoped that Mexicans would join the colony as “members, partners and neighbors.”<sup>17</sup> The speech suggests that Joseph Scally, like other leaders of the colony, recognized that Mexicans had legitimate concerns about the presence of so many Americans in Mexico. Letters and speeches such as these insisted that the colonists did not pose a threat to the nation, and were themselves loyal Mexicans.

*The Credit Foncier* was the most important outlet for the colonists to convey their *Mexicanidad* to Mexico City, and Marie Howland consistently made efforts to engage with the Mexico City press. The Mexico City newspapers did in fact give a surprising amount of attention to the newspaper of this small, impoverished colony, but perhaps not as much as the colonists would have liked. *El Siglo XIX* occasionally reprinted translated articles from *The Credit Foncier* and *La Patria* cited it a few times to report on the colony’s developing agricultural and irrigation system.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, most information about Topolobampo that circulated in Mexico City actually came from official government reports and newspapers in the United States.

---

<sup>17</sup> Joseph P. Scally, “Address to Mexican Visitors,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 15, 1889.

<sup>18</sup> “Legumbres En Topolobampo,” *El Siglo XIX*, May 5, 1890; *El Siglo XIX*, January 13, 1891; “Topolobampo,” *La Patria*, December 11, 1891; “La Colonia de Topolobampo,” *La Patria*, August 6, 1892.

Whenever a newspaper did mention *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, the colony's representative in Mexico City, Eduardo Herrera, would often translate the article into English and send it on to Marie. Marie would then publish her replies in the next issue of the *Credit Foncier*. Once, she wrote, "the oldest paper of Mexico City, *El Siglo* [XIX], now in its 48<sup>th</sup> year, gives about three columns to translations from the *Credit Foncier*, and reviews us most favorably. We cannot express our gratitude to the *Siglo* for this gracious kindness."<sup>19</sup> When the colony received negative press, it too was noted in *The Credit Foncier*. Marie once commented that, "I have noticed with regret that the leading daily of Sinaloa and many other Spanish papers are bitterly opposed to the Yankee immigrant."<sup>20</sup> She expressed a hope that, if the colonists learned better Spanish they could develop better relationships with Mexicans, and turn the tide of negative press.

Another time Marie noted that *La Opinion* in Mexico City was not pleased that with the fact that the subscription for *The Credit Foncier*, published in Mexico, could be paid for in US dollars. This practice, they argued, would devalue the peso. Marie responded with an article written in Spanish, assuring them that paying in US dollars was only an option for people still living in the United States, and not for "the sons of this country." She went on to add that "We would not, by any means, wish to offend our dear friends, the Mexicans, nor devalue their money. We are faithful Mexican citizens, we love the sons of this country like brothers, and we hope that they too love us."<sup>21</sup> In a way, the article seems like nothing short of pandering. Marie, just like Anna Norris whose

---

<sup>19</sup> Marie Howland, "Editorial Notes," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 1, 1888.

<sup>20</sup> Marie Howland, "Spanish Department," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, January 15, 1892.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Howland, *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 15, 1888.

claim to Mexican citizenship was mentioned earlier, was not technically a Mexican citizen. But the article, just like Joseph Scally's speeches and letters, shows how leaders of Topolobampo recognized Mexicans' fears about their presence and wanted to assure them that they were not a new generation of rowdy Texans, liable to declare their independence.

Marie strongly encouraged colonists to learn Spanish, which she claimed would "cure" the colonists of "this dreadful infirmity which might be termed a fish-out-of-water disease." She once even offered five days' worth of wages for the best translation of the poem *El Filosofo y El Buho*. She promised to publish any article that readers would like to contribute in Spanish.<sup>22</sup> She wanted colonists to converse with their Mexican neighbors rather than having to smile awkwardly at each other at dances and visits. Very shortly after arriving at Topolobampo, Marie wrote, "We believe if we learn Spanish and allow no third person to come between us in our communication with our Mexican neighbors, we shall find our ideal of them realized."<sup>23</sup> The very next issue of the *Credit Foncier* announced "A class for the study mutually of Spanish and English has been organized. Señor Cadena of the aduana [customs house] teaches the Spanish."<sup>24</sup> While English remained the only language used between colonists, many of them were able to learn enough Spanish to develop friendly relations with their neighbors.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Howland, "Spanish Department."

<sup>23</sup> Howland, "La Logia," October 1, 1888.

<sup>24</sup> Marie Howland, *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 15, 1888.

<sup>25</sup> Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*.

## **BUILDING NETWORKS WITH LOCALS**

One of the most striking aspects of the relationship between the Mexican elite and the colonists, was how friendly it often was. *The Credit Foncier* was filled with reports of visits to nearby haciendas and the gracious hospitality of the families. In the spring of 1891, Marie reported that “A large number of young folks accepted an invitation from Mexican friends to spend Sunday afternoon in the orange groves of Constantia. They report having had a good time.”<sup>26</sup> By 1891, such visits and Marie’s reports about them were commonplace and needed no other explanation. Her regular readers, even those in the United States, likely knew that “Constantia” (it was actually Constancia) was the home of Don Martin Vega, who had warmly welcomed the colonists and often invited them to visit. In 1888, Marie’s descriptions of visits to their wealthy Mexican friends tended to be more detailed, when they were a novelty to both herself and her readers. She wrote with great detail about their visits to Zaragoza, a town about seven miles from the bay where the wealthy Castro family kept had a house, in addition to their hacienda some miles away. Few colonists spoke much Spanish yet in 1888, and sometimes the group of visitors would include someone able to translate. Other times, the colonists and their Mexican neighbors would just smile at each other incomprehensibly, while the women of the Castro family showed them around their home. Once, when going to the Castro family hacienda, Marie described how “Señora Castro kindly took us all over her beautiful gardens and gave us fine cut flowers amounting in value to many times more than the limes...The lady was most kind, most gracious to a stranger, and we shall not

---

<sup>26</sup> Marie Howland, “Ditch Gossip,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, March 15, 1891.

forget her, nor the pretty daughter who accompanied us around the garden.”<sup>27</sup> On another trip to the Castro home, they brought “Comrade” Cotter, who, Marie reported, “speaks Spanish fluently, and is very popular with these and many other Mexican friends.” During that visit,

The ladies of the [Castro] family gave every moment to us. They sang for us, played the guitar, led us into their irrigated gardens, and loaded us with flowers and oranges, invited us to dinner and danced with us afterwards to the music of an auto phone... Madame Castro is a lady of real beauty, dignity and grace of bearing. The other ladies were gracious and charming.<sup>28</sup>

Other times the colonists, especially the “young people,” would meet their Mexican friends in nearby towns such as Ahome or Zaragoza. Etta Stanley, for example, wrote an article for *The Credit Foncier* about a Cinco de Mayo celebration in Zaragoza. They met with the Castro family who hosted them for a dance and brought them on a picnic lunch, before the entire group attended a bullfight.<sup>29</sup> Such stories were common in *The Credit Foncier*. Another time, a group of the colony’s “young people” attended a show “held in the inner court of one of the substantial brick houses” in Ahome. They watched men who performed “gymnastic feats,” a dancing bear and “two little black dogs falling over dead when shot with a stick.”<sup>30</sup>

Visiting between the colonists and the local elite wasn’t limited to the colonists visiting Mexican homes. The *Credit Foncier* frequently reported when the colony’s Mexican neighbors came to visit them, and pointedly noting that it was the “prominent Mexicans,” that came to visit them, and attended their events. For example, early in the

---

<sup>27</sup> Howland, “La Logia,” October 1, 1888.

<sup>28</sup> Howland, “Editorial Notes.”

<sup>29</sup> Etta Stanley, “A Bull Fight Near La Logia,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, July 15, 1889.

<sup>30</sup> Marie Howland, “Colony Chit Chat,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, March 15, 1891.

colony's existence, one colonist wrote to Marie that the local elite attended the colony's weekly "camp fire concerts," at which "we are edified and amused with speeches, recitations and songs. Don Martin Vega and other prominent Mexicans often attend these concerts which seem to give them great pleasure, specially the vocal and instrumental music of the Americans."<sup>31</sup> Lucy Doyle made a similar report about the attendance of the local elite at the colony's events. She reported to Marie that Mexicans would often join them to listen to their music, and "then in response to invitations they sing in turn. Don Martin Vega sometimes looks in approvingly, and once made a speech, which was interpreted [probably by Joseph Scally]." Vega's speech conveyed how pleased he was "to see us enjoying ourselves, and he hoped that we should make these social entertainments a frequent occurrence."<sup>32</sup>

The colonists also developed relationships with Mexicans who were a step below the hacendados of the leisure class. These were families who were educated and could claim respectability, but still required work for an income: for example, officers at the customs house, lawyers in Zaragoza or engineers who worked on the nearby haciendas. Once there was a customs house established on the bay, the government-appointed official was a common feature of the colony's social life. Once, she described a group of eight of "our young people" who, for entertainment one day, "set up a restaurant in a big corner room, borrowed all ye editor's plates (six forks!) and china and napery, and made such a grand show that they actually had the 'cheek' to invite three distinguished

---

<sup>31</sup> J.G. Dawkins, "Letter to Marie Howland," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 31, 1887.

<sup>32</sup> Lucy T. Doyle, "Letter from Lucy Doyle," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 27, 1887.



Mexican guests to dinner, one being our custom-house chief, Señor Peimbert, and the other Señor Pascual Nafarrate, chief engineer at the great Hacienda at Constantia.”<sup>33</sup> The Peimbert family kept a house in Zaragoza for the length of the husband’s tenure as customs house official while the wife and children moved back and forth between the two homes. When the family first moved to the bay to settle at the customs house, Marie wrote in *The Credit Foncier* (in Spanish) that Sra. Peimbert had stayed behind in Zaragoza because the children were too sick to move. Marie took the opportunity to go visit her in Zaragoza and reported that she looked forward to having the entire family as their new neighbors. She was sure Sra. Peimbert would be a “good friend with excellent behavior and fine education.”<sup>34</sup>

It’s understandable that the colonists were eager to have Mexican allies. However, it’s less clear why Mexicans in Sinaloa, were so welcoming and friendly to the colonists, particularly considering how sharply divided the country was between the “elite and the under class, los de arriba and los de abajo.” But, as historian William Beezley has shown, during the Porfirian era, this divide went beyond class and represented “two different, often contradictory cultures.” The culture of the elite was formed around a “belief in progress and efficiency regarded as modern,” which Beezley calls the “Porfirian persuasion.” This persuasion was defined by an international modernism, and Mexicans “rushed to adopt the styles, attitudes and amusements of other modernized Western

---

<sup>33</sup> Marie Howland, “Colony Chit Chat,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 15, 1889.

<sup>34</sup> Marie Howland, “Bay Items,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 15, 1888.

nations.”<sup>35</sup> The colonists may have been poor, but their cultural outlook was part of the “Porfirian persuasion.” The virtue of being white Americans who shared this persuasion allowed the colonists to transcend class barriers. This was likely heightened by the fact that both the Mexican elite and the colonists were dismayed by the “backwardness” of the Indian population. The colonists may have praised the communal system of the Indian population in theory, but were dismissive of Indians in practice.

The local elite were likely influenced, to some extent, by the support that the colonists received from President Díaz. Díaz asked the Sinaloan governor to send instructions to local officials to help the colonists any way possible.<sup>36</sup> When the colonists read copies of the letters, they “caused us to feel as though we were in the land of God and Liberty,” and they were pleased that they had “such a great friend as the whole Republic of Mexico.”<sup>37</sup> By helping the colonists, Mexicans could prove their credentials as modern, progressive supporters of the Díaz regime’s agenda.

The local elite may have also hoped that the colony would offer economic opportunities and “invigorate the economic culture.” For wealthy Mexicans, any kind of work—even investment—could put their social standing in jeopardy, as labor should be beneath any true elite. Moreover, Mexico hadn’t established a large-scale, reliable investment banking system as the US was working to develop at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historian William Schell has argued that many Mexicans hoped that the

---

<sup>35</sup> Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*.

<sup>36</sup> Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*, 58.

<sup>37</sup> J.W. Scally, M.D., “Letter to Marie and Edward Howland,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 8, 1887.

presence of Americans would begin to change this. Schell argues that engaging in trade with foreigners gave a veneer of respectability to the exchange that it wouldn't have otherwise had.<sup>38</sup> In 1891, Marie used their investment as a sign that the company was gaining strength and that people should be sufficiently encouraged to invest as well. She wrote,

Señor Don Jesus Cruz, of Victoria, expresses his confidence in our work by liberal subscriptions to K.S.I. Stock and the improvement Fund. When such solid business men as Dons Manuel Barboa, Patricio Robles, Jesus Cruz, Juan Acosta and Judge Victor Padilla, who are on the ground, do not hesitate to invest in our enterprise, friends in the States should be assured—and they should not be backward about coming forward.<sup>39</sup>

Judge Padilla's investment in the company, however, ended up being not quite what they had expected. In 1893, he was cultivating land in the Plats, worked by the *peones* of his hacienda. Considering the severe disapproval that the colony leaders had in regards to the peonage system, they must have been dismayed by this development. However, as the colony succumbed to legal and internal struggles, Judge Padilla's use of peon labor was possibly the least of their worries. Either way, there doesn't seem to have been any strong outcry against it.

The colony also gave the local elite the opportunity to teach their children English as well as modern progressive ideals, in the colony schools. The colonists welcomed Mexican students into their schools—provided they were willing and able to pay for the privilege to attend. Wealthy parents of the region valued an English-language education, evidenced not only by the number of Mexican students in colony schools, but also by

---

<sup>38</sup> William Schell, *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Books, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Howland, "Colony Chit Chat," March 15, 1891.

how many colonists found work as educators outside of the colony. Dr. Schellhaus often taught at a school in Zaragoza. In El Fuerte, Joseph Scally taught English classes as well as algebra, geometry and trigonometry in Spanish.<sup>40</sup> Another colonist, Grace Moore, worked as a tutor for a Mexican family at their hacienda some forty miles north of the colony.<sup>41</sup> The customs officer at Topolobampo, Ignacio Peña, was so eager for his children to learn English and “contract habits of industry” from the colonists that he had his two oldest sons work for *The Credit Foncier* and for the colony’s bookkeeper “without other compensation” than the training.<sup>42</sup>

To the leaders of the colony, attracting Mexican students was a priority. In 1890, Marie wrote, “within the present year, we trust we may have better accommodation for the many pupils we might have from the outside if we could only provide for them.”<sup>43</sup> It was not only a point of pride that they could attract students from the elite, but also a matter of money. The Mexican students who attended colony schools had to be able to pay tuition. Accordingly, the Mexican children who attended, were often the children of local judges and hacienda owners. These families must have shared a progressive sensibility about gender with the colonists, since a surprising number of them sent their daughters as well as their sons to the colony, which was uncommon in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mexico.<sup>44</sup> Many of the Mexican students in the school at Los Mochis attended

---

<sup>40</sup> Howland, “Editorial Notes.”

<sup>41</sup> Moore, “Paradise at Topolobampo.”

<sup>42</sup> Marie Howland, “Editorial Chit Chat,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, March 1, 1894.

<sup>43</sup> Marie Howland, “Editorial,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, February 15, 1890.

<sup>44</sup> Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 80.

irregularly, which likely reflected the distance between the students' homes and the school in La Logia. Zaragoza, where many families, including the Padillas lived, was seven miles away. The Padilla family often had their children lodge with colonists in La Logia so that they could attend school more consistently. By 1894, at least 10 students with Spanish surnames attended the upper-level school—about half the class. Marie's school reports didn't include the younger students, so it's possible that there were other Mexican students in the lower school.<sup>45</sup>

The progress of upper-level students were frequently published in the *Credit Foncier*. The Mexican students had a clear economic advantage over the American students. But in a classroom where English dominated, and where the English-speaking students had already been trained in the expectations of the American education system, the American students had advantages of their own. All students tended to do well, but the Mexican students often trailed behind their American counterparts in arithmetic. Estevan Zakany, the son of a nearby *hacendado*, usually squeaked by in arithmetic with barely passing grades. The Mexican students consistently excelled at deportment, while their grades in Spanish sometimes lagged behind the grades of their English-speaking counterparts. For example, all of the Scally children scored 97 or 98 in Spanish, while Davies Fierro—the son of a local judge—scored 90. This probably reflects the tedium of taking an introductory class in one's own native language, since a judge's son likely understood the basics of Spanish grammar.

---

<sup>45</sup> Marie Howland, "La Logia Items," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, April 15, 1889; Marie Howland, "La Logia," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, February 15, 1890; Marie Howland, "Classification of La Logia School," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, October 1, 1888; Howland, "Editorial Chit Chat."

Unfortunately, Marie's articles about the students usually only included their classes and grades. There is no way of knowing if the Mexican students valued an English-language education as much as their parents or if they cared that their scores were printed in an international newspaper read by thousands of people. However, there are some indications that the Mexican and American students got along well. At least one Mexican student, Anita Padilla, who was known for her wild behavior, became close friends with several of the colonists. She and Ida Hogeland maintained their friendship even after Ida had returned to the United States and Anita went on to become an important figure in the region.<sup>46</sup> Claudio Castro was often absent from the schools, but considering how much time the "young people" of the colony spent at the Castro home, it seems likely that students were good friends.

The colony school was not only important for developing relationships on a local level, but also a state and national level. When the *jefe político* of El Fuerte described Topolobampo's schools as the best in the district, the report attracted the attention of many members of the Mexico City press. *El Economista Mexicano*, after reading this report, wanted to a closer look at the students' curriculum to make sure that it followed Mexican educational standards. The paper explained "the sons of those colonists should be educated as Mexicans, so that they love their country, its traditions, its language, and its institutions. The chosen nationality of men is based in the instruction he has

---

<sup>46</sup> After most of the colonists had left their settlement at Los Mochis--which was the heart of the colony--it became a significant Mexican city, as it remains today. Anita Padilla was instrumental in the shift from small American colony to Mexican city. Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*; Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*.

received.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, the schools would have undue influence on whether the colonists’ children would become a new generation of Mexicans or the remain an enclave of Americans.

The colonists hoped that this attention would help them gain government funding to develop the schools further. In a report to the Sinaloan state government, Owen explained that the colonists were encouraging Mexican parents to send their children to colony schools. He hoped that the state or federal government would provide the official public school text books “*for the use of our children and those who may be attracted to attend our places of instruction.*”<sup>48</sup> Shortly after Owen submitted the report, the Sinaloan governor, Francisco Cañedo wrote to Owen to echo Owen’s own hopes for the colony. Governor Cañedo promised the full support of the state government in establishing Topolobampo schools, “in which will be taught the English and Spanish languages and useful crafts.” Cañedo commented that the project would greatly benefit the colony and suggested that, in turn, the project “may mean substantial improvement for this country.”<sup>49</sup>

While the schools served as an important place for Americans and Mexicans to interact, they were also telling sites of exclusion. As the children and their teachers turned a Spanish lesson into a game, Sera Wilber noted that “three dark skinned, almost naked Indian boys watch the performance at a little distance. They smile but are quiet. The

---

<sup>47</sup> “La Colonia de Topolobampo,” *El Economista Mexicano*, December 5, 1891.

<sup>48</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, “Official Report of the Credit Foncier Company,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 10, 1887. Emphasis is in the original.

<sup>49</sup> Francisco Cañedo, “Letter to A.K. Owen,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, June 7, 1887.

native children often come and watch the school in a grave, serious way.”<sup>50</sup> Sera never questioned in the letter why the Indian children weren’t part of the games. She simply described them in terms of their physicality, their nakedness, as if they served as a backdrop for the white children’s play. The colonists discussed elite Mexicans in terms of their behavior, connections, and material wealth; they used their names and wrote about conversations with them; they invited them to take part in colony life. Despite the fact that many of the colonists spoke highly of indigenous ideas of communal property, there was never any attempt to include Indians as part of the colony. While the colonists expressed a form of racial egalitarianism uncommon for the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were definitely fissures in the ideal. These fissures revealed contradictions between their language of universal welcome and admiration of (their interpretation of) Indian values, while implicitly excluding Indians from being members of the community.<sup>51</sup>

The colonists frequently expressed admiration for the Indian population in the region. Christian B. Hoffman once wrote in *The Credit Foncier*:

Let me here express, on behalf of our people, the good opinion we have of our native neighbors. Kind, gentle, simple in manners, the Indians are pleasant, unassuming neighbors. They are neither a hindrance nor a menace to our progress. On the contrary, these children of nature have many ideas in common with us. Their land tenure is similar to our own. An Indian said to me the other day, when asking him what he would charge us for the use of his well: ‘God made the water

---

<sup>50</sup> Sera E. Wilber, “Letter to Mr. Messinger,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 8, 1887.

<sup>51</sup> Many Mexican elites, as they worked to define what it meant to be Mexican at the end of the nineteenth century, similarly idealized the historical idea of Indians while working to eradicate indigenous practices. Moisés González Navarro, “Mestizaje in Mexico During the National Period,” in *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Mörner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Susanna Rostas, “Performing ‘Mexicanidad’: Popular ‘Indigenismo’ in Mexico City,” in *Encuentros Antropológicos: Politics, Identity and Mobility in Mexican Society*, ed. Valentina Napolitano and Xochitl Leyva Solano (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998); Nicole Marie Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).



and as long as there is any, you are welcome to a share of it.' Speaking of the land he cultivates, he said: 'I will not sell it. It is my home. God made all the land and any one has a right to use it. I have a better right to my field than someone else does, only because I have fenced and cultivated it.'<sup>52</sup>

Hoffman described the Indians as “children of nature,” placing them in an eternal state of childhood. The condescending language is reminiscent of language used for centuries to justify denying rights to indigenous populations of the Americas. At the same time, he valued the similarities that existed between Indian ideas about land rights and the colony’s ideals.<sup>53</sup> Despite these shared ideas, Hoffman never suggested that they should offer Indians anything other than 50 cents a day for their labor.

Marie’s descriptions of Indians were similar to Hoffman’s. On the one hand, she relied on tropes that had been used for centuries to describe indigenous peoples throughout the Americas that focused very much on their bodies. Marie repeatedly described Indians in physical terms: their idleness, their nakedness, the drape of their clothing, their dark skin, their “strong and straight” bodies, how “neglected” they looked. She called the women carrying *ollas* “Rebeccas” in reference to the biblical figure, which not only referred to their jugs of water, but placed them in an unchanging historical past. She interpreted their lack of Spanish-language skills as a stubborn refusal to learn.<sup>54</sup> She referred to a group of Indian children playing as “our dark-skinned cupids.”<sup>55</sup> Many American travelers in Mexico referred to Indian children as “cupids” because of their

---

<sup>52</sup> C.B. Hoffman, “A Letter from C.B. Hoffman,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 1, 1891.

<sup>53</sup> Philip Joseph Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, Rev. Ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> Marie Howland, “Editorial,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 15, 1891.

<sup>55</sup> Marie Howland, “Our Second Visit to La Logia,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 1, 1888.

nakedness, and Marie's use of "our" to describe the children reveals a deep condescension that contradicted her message of egalitarianism.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Marie referred to the Indian population as "the most promising" portion of Mexico's population. She was likely referring, like Hoffman above, to the practice of communal ownership. The colonists—like the Mormons discussed in the next chapter—often found that they preferred the idea of Indians to the actual Indians that they knew.

Many colonists complained that the Indian population was incapable of planning ahead, the most common evidence for this was that they were "unwilling" or had never even considered to save up money to buy blankets for cold nights.<sup>57</sup> Burt Pressey wrote detailed descriptions of his experiences working on the survey for the railroad in long letters to his sister Anna, which were then published in the *Credit Foncier*. Their group of workers included nine Indians, who had neither blankets nor warm clothes. Instead of saving up for blankets, Burt told Anna, they would gamble away all their money: "they will come back to-night or to-morrow morning without a cent." On cold nights, Burt said, they would "build a big fire [and] give us a kind of Indian war-dance;...then they all lie down around the fire and go to sleep till the fire goes out and they are nearly froze; then they will get up and build another fire."<sup>58</sup> Burt was paid \$3 a day for his work on the

---

<sup>56</sup> Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*; See also: Coll-Peter Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place*, Weyerhaeuser Environmental Book (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; Erika Marie Bsumek, *Indian-Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868-1940*, Culture America (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Burt Pressey, "Letter to Miss Anna Pressey," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 14, 1886.

survey—the price all colonists earned for a day’s work; the Indian workers were paid fifty cents. Burt applauded Owen’s generosity in offering such a high sum, since laborers in Sinaloa often made less than two dollars a week. But, he never questioned why they were paid less than he was. Nor did he see their attempts at risking their meager funds on the chance they could double or triple them as anything other than bad planning and a deficiency of character.

The way that the colonists simultaneously gave lip service to the superior values of Mexico’s indigenous population while also denigrating or ignoring them likely stemmed from the fact that local Indians were simultaneously a cheap source of labor and a source of competition for the colonists. Marie wrote that many colonists wanted the company to hire “natives to do the purely laborious work and relieve the skilled hands for other and more paying lines. It is asserted that it is folly to attempt to compete with the natives, at thirty-five cents per day, in unskilled labor, and that with overseers they will do just as good farm labor and more of it than our people—also that the natives would thank the company to do so.”<sup>59</sup> Both digging the Ditch and surveying land for the railroad had involved significant amounts of hired labor, but the work that was done within the colony, such as agricultural work, had been done by the colonists themselves. Although the colonists argued over whether or not such labor should be done by hired Indian workers, they never considered inviting Indians to join the colony. Instead, the question inspired furious debates that, like the “straddle riding” incident, succeeded in nothing but sowing more bitterness among the colonists.

---

<sup>59</sup> Marie Howland, *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, December 15, 1893.

## FESTERING BITTERNESS

By 1896 the Topolobampo Colony was crumbling. Most of its inhabitants had moved away, either returning to the United States or moving throughout Sinaloa to find work. Record keeping was poor at this point, but there were fewer than 200 people living in the colony, down from over one thousand in 1893.<sup>60</sup> “Some twenty or thirty” others had separated from the colony and engaged in a legal battle for rights to the land that they had worked and access to the irrigation canal they had helped build while colonists.<sup>61</sup> Most of those who remained in the colony were struggling to grow enough food, had no cash left over for necessities, and were caught up in legal battles to access irrigation. Many of the colonists left bitter and angry. One such colonist, Nannie Bragg, wrote to Owen to contemptuously ask why he was doing nothing to alleviate the colonists’ problems “if you are a good man as you pretend to be?” She challenged Owen to come to Topolobampo “like a man & set your food down on such *crookedness*. Then we will be glad to acknowledge we were mistaken” in blaming him for their suffering. Barring that, she insisted that the only possible conclusion was that Owen was a swindler, “having such *desperate low characters* to try to *control*, crush the very life out of those that you have *duped* here, with your *beautiful, dreamy words*.”<sup>62</sup>

Nannie’s husband William had joined the colony 1893, leaving Nannie with their three children in Arkansas while he considered whether the entire family should move to

---

<sup>60</sup> Ortega Noriega, *El Edén Subvertido*.

<sup>61</sup> George Page to Manuel Fernandez Leal, “Annual Report of the Topolobampo Colony,” June 30, 1895, Albert Kimsey Owen Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

<sup>62</sup> Nannie Bragg to Albert Kimsey Owen, 1896, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

Topolobampo. After several months in the colony, William decided that he was sufficiently convinced of the colony's future success to bring not only his family, but some of his Arkansas neighbors as well.<sup>63</sup> Over the next few years, the Braggs invested \$530 in the colony, spent over \$80 to construct beehives for the colony, gave some \$100 to help buy the colony cattle, and dedicated nearly four years of their labor. They had even taken out loans to help the colony pay for lumber and labor on the ditch. According to Nannie, they had “invested to help build us an ideal home in the 'sunny south,' that beautiful country pictured and by A.K. Owen. [We] left paradise of a home to come here, brought our children out of one of the best schools.” But, she concluded, “we are the worst duped victims on *God's Footstool*.” In return for these sacrifices, Nannie wrote, William had received nothing but “worthless credits,” all the while “thinking he was helping a noble cause.” They couldn't even use the credits to meet their most basic needs, so their son Arthur, now 20, was working in Batopilas to earn money for the family. Meanwhile, Nannie suffered from illnesses, worsened by her anxiety for their situation, and lacked sufficient medical care.

In 1896, they were preparing to leave the colony—as “we can bear this *hell* no longer”—but before they left, Nannie felt that she had to inform Owen of how disgusted she was with the colony. She fumed against the implications that those that left the colony were lazy malcontents who wanted to kick back and relax while the colony supported them. She insisted, “There has never been an enterprise started here that we

---

<sup>63</sup> William Bragg to Albert Kimsey Owen, February 7, 1893, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

have not done all in our power, as long as we had a dollar & health to work with then we have not willingly helped.” Despite their strenuous efforts, no good had come of their experience in the colony. Nannie scoffed at the idea of an ideal life with integral cooperation “among *such* a set of *thieves & worldly schemers*.” Many of the colonists, in particular the leadership, were “the most demoralizing element that ever was any one’s misfortune to fall in with.” She complained of the excessive control that colony leaders tried to manage over the colonists. “*Men* who are as *devoid* of principle as the criminals seem to have control here...We would not have the privileges of a *peon* if we submitted to the *tyranny* of ‘your loyal 12.’” Owen, she claimed, had “*duped* us to sacrifice our beautiful homes, cursed *hundreds of families* to sacrifice domestic bliss to come in this place to be crushed by your *willing accomplices*.” Among the hundreds of duped families, she pointed to “Poor old man Marsh” who was then 82. According to Nannie, Owen had convinced him to invest all of his money in the railroad. Since the bonds wouldn’t come due until Marsh was 110 years old, he had expected that he would be supported in the colony. Instead, he had to sell off his precious family relics in order to buy food and fire wood. Nannie concluded, “*We* are only victims among *many*. It makes no difference where I may be in the future, *my experience* in Topolobampo is one of the *most bitter*. No pen picture can ever portray the sad thoughts of our hearts as a *wronged, misguided people*.”<sup>64</sup>

Historians of Topolobampo often portray the 1893 Split as the moment that divided the colony, and sounded its death knell. According to Gilberto Gill, the

---

<sup>64</sup> Bragg to Owen, 1896.

completion of the ditch, which “should have been the beginning of consolidation and the triumph of the colony was, in reality, the beginning of the end of the Utopia. The seed of capitalism that Hoffman introduced had developed in those 18 months” that the colonist spent constructing the Ditch.<sup>65</sup> But the stark division between the colonists had been a long time coming, and the 1893 split was only a symptom of deeper problems. While, on the surface, things had started to improve between 1888 and 1893, bitter tensions had festered as the colonists struggled to establish their own sets of cultural norms about social control, labor, money, gender, acceptable behavior, and even food. When a group of colonists planned a hunting trip to provide the colony with “good venison steak,” Marie stated that “the higher nature of others revolts when they think of killing the pretty creatures—pictures of innocence.”<sup>66</sup> Every possible question became fodder for angry debates among the colonists.

Many colonists pointed to the problem as one of poor leadership, especially considering that Owen was rarely in residence at the colony. Besides the first flush of colonists who denounced Owen as a fraud in the US press, the colonists who remained firmly maintained their faith in Owen. When Owen spent a few months in the colony in 1887, one colonist wrote to Marie, “There is not a man or woman on the ground who has not the most implicit confidence in Mr. Owen or in his ability to carry out what he undertakes.”<sup>67</sup> But Owen spent very little time there after 1888, and never returned at all after 1893. He spent much of his time looking for investors in the railroad, moving

---

<sup>65</sup> Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*.

<sup>66</sup> Howland, October 15, 1888.

<sup>67</sup> “Report from the Colony,” *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, July 19, 1887.

between London, Washington D.C., and his home in New York City. Some colonists were convinced that if Owen would just return to the colony, things would improve. John Lovell wrote to Marie that “If Mr. Owen were to remain in Sinaloa in charge of affairs, something might be accomplished, though this even is doubtful in the present state of our finances. But he would have to go as a Master and all the others be his servant to do as he bid them. There would be no other way to bring order out of the present chaos.”<sup>68</sup> Given the immense faith that so many colonists had placed in him, many very likely would have been willing to follow Owen’s orders. As historian Ray Reynolds commented, “Owen had called the Credit Foncier Company a ‘good father’ many times, but the only good father the colonists seemed willing to accept was Owen himself.”<sup>69</sup> Since Owen was gone so often, his opinion was sought for everything through letters. His responses were often vague and were intended, above all, to keep the peace as much as possible, which then led to fights about how Owen’s responses should be interpreted.

The colony was supposed to be led by 12 “Resident Directors,” the “loyal 12” that Nannie Braggs so angrily scorned in her letter to Owen in 1896. Very few of resident directors had much experience in their supposed field of expertise. One colonist, William Green, actually refused to be involved in farming because the resident director of agriculture at the time, William Friend, “was no farmer and I was.” According to Green, “I can do the work in one day of eight hours under my own management than I could under his in two to four days. He said he was a wheat and hog raiser; the last might apply

---

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Reynolds, *Cat’s Paw Utopia*, 66.

<sup>69</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 73.



to his family; I think probably he raised such poor wheat that it not being worth cutting he would get a lot of hogs on the sheaves, turn them into it.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Marie Howland also served as the director of education, despite the fact that she had no teaching experience. The experienced teachers who taught in colony schools had to request her approval for their methods and lessons. Edward Lovell found himself disgusted with the “miserable and deplorable management,” because when the colony was suffering for food, Alvin Wilber supposedly said that he would rather people go without food to “get rid of the malcontents,” than to allow some of the young men to go hunting.<sup>71</sup> One year, Alvin even ordered the corn at La Logia to be harvested early in case the river flooded. Not only did the river not flood, leaving the colonists with unripe corn, but they had no where to store it, so much of it was left to rot in the fields. And later that summer, when the much-awaited relief corps arrived in the colony, they brought farm implements, seeds and 2,600 books. But as many people pointed out, the colonists desperately needed food, clothes and medicine, of which they had brought almost none.<sup>72</sup>

Many of the complaints about Alvin Wilber, however, went well beyond his alleged incompetence. Alvin’s occupation of the position had Owen’s support, yet many colonists felt that he exercised that power far too liberally. According to Rudolph Kobitzch, Wilber’s rule had devolved into “autocratic tyranny.” Throughout 1890, Kobitzch repeatedly complained to Owen that Wilber refused to even listen to colonists

---

<sup>70</sup> William Green to Albert Kimsey Owen, August 19, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Reynolds, *Cat’s Paw Utopia*, 66.

<sup>72</sup> Rudolph Kobitzch to Albert Kimsey Owen, September 26, 1888, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

at public meetings.<sup>73</sup> In one instance, the colonists unanimously agreed to instate a rule requiring people to continue working in order for them to be able to draw on the company commissary. This was to solve the problem that some colonists would accumulate credits on the company ledger and then stop working as they continued to draw resources. Alvin Wilber, however, insisted that the colonists had no right to make such a change. According to Kobitzch, Alvin announced, “Whether you shall pass this resolution or not, it will make no difference to me. *I shall not carry them out!* You cannot make rules or change any plans, *for you have come to obey.* (?!?!?) I have been given full power by Mr. Owen and shall act accordingly.” All of the emphasis and exclamation marks are in the original, effectively conveying Kobitzch’s horror.

At another meeting, Alvin Wilber supposedly denounced democratic institutions, insisted that popular elections could “never succeed.” Colonists that believed otherwise were free to leave the colony.<sup>74</sup> In response to these complaints, Alvin insisted “I have never used any undue authority...In my opinion, the insemination of usurpation are a mask to cover jealousy and malice.”<sup>75</sup> He defended frequently ignoring or shutting down

---

<sup>73</sup> Rudolph Kobitzch to Albert Kimsey Owen, April 24, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno; Rudolph Kobitzch to Albert Kimsey Owen, June 5, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno; Rudolph Kobitzch to Albert Kimsey Owen, n.d., Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno; This letter is undated but context suggests that it was written early 1890.

<sup>74</sup> Kobitzch to Owen, n.d.

<sup>75</sup> Alvin Wilber to Marie Howland, n.d., Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno; the letter is undated, but was clearly written mid-August 1890.

complaints against the way that the colony was run by claiming that criticism or even unpleasant words would destroy the colony.<sup>76</sup>

This thread of totalitarianism—despite Kobitzch’s dismay—was actually an inherent part of the ideology that formed the basis of the community. Marie Howland was also instrumental in creating an environment that banned any criticism from colonists as labeling “fault-finding” as a danger to the community. “Fault-finding,” in fact, was the most common retort to anyone raising concerns about the running of the colony, even those who attempted to do so in good faith. While freedom of expression was, in principle, sacrosanct in the community, the stipulation that all such expression needed to be in “friendly” and “constructive spirit” was open to interpretation and provided vast opportunity for strict social control. Marie consistently refused to publish any articles in the *Credit Foncier* that were written by “fault-finders” or that might reflect poorly on the colony. C.J. Lamb, while working at the Ditch, wrote to Marie pointing out that the colony’s Principles state that every member should “be given facilities, free of charge, to publish over his or her name any criticism, idea, nomination, or argument.” Lamb was carefully going for a tone that could not be labeled “fault-finding,” but he did point out that the paper frequently “refused the publication of articles from members who have been honestly, actively and exclusively engaged in our work for many years.” He suggested that the *Credit Foncier* should have a forum for one or two pages of each issue

---

<sup>76</sup> Kobitzch to Owen, April 24, 1890.

where members could present their ideas and concerns—provided they could do so concisely and politely.<sup>77</sup>

Lamb's letter was one of many such complaints, and in the face of this criticism, Marie finally had to address the issue. Her answer, however, entirely ignored that there was any problem at all. She claimed to exclude "bitter criticism" from the paper because "like most of our sex we hate dispute and forensic display." (She often used the "royal we" in her articles.) She wished she could publish more of the "mass of contributions to this paper, regretting always that we cannot print more and no doubt deciding sometimes too hurriedly." But she also implied that many of the submissions that she didn't print failed to meet the standard of "The Support, the Progress, the Harmony of life." People shouldn't be "declaiming against the less perfect way of others," but instead simply take the "better way." She concluded by adding that she ("we") had worked "long and faithfully in our cause," and only asked "that the spirit of all communications shall be constructive instead of destructive, positive instead of negative and above all things conceived in friendliness to our cause."<sup>78</sup> This attitude, like Wilber's, infuriated people to the extent that many felt that they were better off in the United States.

When Kobitzch wrote to Owen to complain about Alvin and Marie's "tyranny," the complaint was hardly a new one. In fact, the earliest letters from disgruntled colonists complained that "the damnable principle of paternalism is becoming more obnoxious here every day." The letter claimed that colonists "were expelled from the colony without

---

<sup>77</sup> C.J. Lamb to Marie Howland, June 8, 1892, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>78</sup> Marie Howland, *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, July 1, 1892.

a trial” simply for refusing to blindly obey. The colony directors, he wrote, were not “bound to respect” any of the laws themselves, but colonists must “do as the directors please, eat your mush and be quiet or *git*.” Ultimately, he summarized, “the people are forced to bear the same relation to the directors that a child does to his father, or leave the colony on *very short* notice, without even a trial.”<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps more colonists should have been better prepared for this, though. Marie was frequently chiding people for not knowing the colony’s principles and Owen’s writings well enough, and Kobitzch’s horror about the way that the colony was being run reflects this. Owen himself was highly skeptical of democracy, writing “majorities have never been right in anything. The best thoughts and the kindest purposes remain still with minorities—with those who think.”<sup>80</sup> Historian Arthur Lipow has pointed out a similar underlying ideology of authoritarianism in Edward Bellamy’s Nationalist movement, based on the idea that social change could only be imposed from above.<sup>81</sup> The “intelligent” class would need to show the general population the best way to live, and social reformers like Bellamy and Owen expected and hoped that the population, recognizing the superiority of their ideas, would follow docilely. In fact, anti-democratic

---

<sup>79</sup> Harrold M. Arnold to Albert Kimsey Owen, May 30, 1887, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>80</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, *Integral Co-Operation: Its Practical Application* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975).

<sup>81</sup> Arthur Lipow, *Authoritarian Socialism in America: Edward Bellamy & the Nationalist Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

and authoritarian ideals underlay many of the reform movements at the heart of the Progressive Era.<sup>82</sup>

And yet, in an apparently contradictory way, the idea of freedom and liberty was equally at the heart of the colony's foundation. The colonists proclaimed they were going to sow the seeds of freedom and liberty. The refrain for the colony's song repeated, "Home of the free! Home of the free! In this beautiful land by the sea."<sup>83</sup> One settler's letter published in the *Credit Foncier* exclaimed that "Every liberty-loving man's heart in America should leap for joy at the prospect of the dawning of a brighter day. Every liberty loving bosom of the thousands of our poor slaving women should swell at the thought of the battle begun in Sinaloa for their liberation."<sup>84</sup> The concept of rights, liberty and freedom provided the underpinnings for the rights that they believed workers were entitled to. Which is why it might have surprised some readers when the *Credit Foncier* bluntly stated, "Disobedience at this time is a crime. Let none forget it." And since the colony had control over any wealth that they had invested in the colony (often all they had), disobedience could be punished as if it were truly criminal. But the concept of liberty had proved very contentious to define. In a way, the very process of defining liberty itself justified social control over the colonists.

From the beginning, in *Integral Cooperation*, Owen wrote that all colonists must "*live as a civilized person should*. Nothing more is asked. This will be enforced." No one

---

<sup>82</sup> Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>83</sup> Cited in Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*.

<sup>84</sup> W.A. McKenzie, "Letter to Edward F. Underhill," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, May 3, 1887.

should be allowed to live in a manner that mars the beauty of the city's environment, not only for the sake of fellow colonists, but "Even if it were possible for a colonist to live in his own pollutions he could not be allowed to do so, for his health is the solicitude of the Credit Foncier." Furthermore, the idea of "natural rights" was in opposition to civilized society; "If a person wants '*natural rights*' he should be a barbarian and live alone." Everyone who wished to become a part of a "refined...civilization," must give up their "natural rights."<sup>85</sup> In 1894, Owen wrote an article for the *Credit Foncier* about the ideal of liberty and the concept of individualism, likely as a veiled reference to complaints about a lack of liberty in the colony. He argued that people who spoke of "liberty" usually meant "individualism" or "the liberty to do as one pleases." That was not true liberty, and "the Topolobampo Colonists know that we can reach 'individual liberty' only through strict discipline upon industrial and equitable lines. The rules between all refined persons are strict; and the higher in the scale of personal liberty a class or people attain, the more strict are their rules of etiquette." Protecting liberty, therefore, "requires a strong central organization to secure this freedom."<sup>86</sup>

This definition of liberty justified what many colonists felt was unjustifiable social control. What Rudolph Kobitzch saw as Alvin Wilber's "autocratic tyranny" and Nannie Bragg called "tyranny of 'your loyal 12'" was actually an authoritarianism inherent to the idea of the colony—indeed, to many nineteenth-century reform

---

<sup>85</sup> Owen, *Integral Co-Operation*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> Albert Kimsey Owen, "A.K. Owen, the Founder of the Colony, Answers Some Written Questions Showing the High Plane of Thought and Moral Purpose of These Much-Talked-of-Settlers," *The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, November 15, 1894.

movements.<sup>87</sup> The ideas and expectations that formed the cornerstone of the colony—“The Support, the Progress, the Harmony of life”—justified actions that were ultimately a part of the colony’s undoing. Owen, however, shifted the blame back towards those who complained. True colonists, he claimed, were willing to sacrifice “individualism” on behalf of liberty for the entire community.

And indeed, while many people complained at length about the failures of colony leadership, there was no shortage of complaints about the colonists themselves. In his first summer in the colony, L.F. Austin blamed the failures of the colony on the fact that “a large majority of the colonists, I am sorry to say, are men of a caliber too small to comprehend” advanced ideas such as those that Austin and Owen understood . He sympathized with Owen having to deal with such people, especially farmers who didn’t understand “*business principles*...What a lot they are.” He suggested that most of the workers came to the colony intent on managing themselves, which was the main reason that the colony was struggling. “I sometimes think that neither you or anyone can succeed in establishing it with these people who have been pioneering here for so long, because, instead of working their way to success under competent management and control in the several departments, they have been managing themselves too much.”<sup>88</sup>

Many of the colonists would have scoffed at the idea that they managed themselves too much. But, most would have agreed with Austin that the colony’s problem was, in large part, “bad colonists.” However, no one could agree on who the

---

<sup>87</sup> Lipow, *Authoritarian Socialism in America*.

<sup>88</sup> L.F. Austin to Albert Kimsey Owen, June 22, 1892, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.



“bad colonists” and “good colonists” actually were. Owen had written in an open letter that had certain colonists “fallen into the company of good colonists” in Topolobampo, they would have been more likely to stay in the colony instead of taking their negative reports back to the United States. Instead, many “fell into the company of bad colonists and became dissatisfied.” Eight colonists wrote to Owen from the Ditch Camp in 1891 asking for clarification on the matter: “Will you please tell us the specific qualities required to constitute a ‘good’ colonist and what a ‘bad colonist’?”<sup>89</sup> The question what makes a good colonist was never fully answered, but in 1891 Christian Hoffman insisted “I refuse to believe in the ‘cussedness’ of our people, or in their lack of intelligence or in their lack of honest purpose...if our class of people cannot co-operate, then indeed is co-operation a long way off, and the sooner we find it out the better for all concerned.”<sup>90</sup> This was in response to the growing frequency of complaints that the problems in the colony were due to the fact that the colonists consisted of the wrong “class” of people.

During the summer of 1888, the colony shoemaker, Rudolph Kobitzch, was working harvesting crops. While Kobitzch resented that Alvin Wilber had presented this as an order, he didn’t mind the change in responsibilities, since the fine corn crop of 1888 should have prevented a repeat of the hardships of the previous summer. Accordingly, he worked long and hard at Sufragio to bring in the crop. During this time, the only food he had access to was hominy “3 times every day, which was usually through the carelessness of Mrs. Bolin either sour, smoked, burned, or only half-cooked and hard.”

---

<sup>89</sup> Albert Baldwin to Albert Kimsey Owen, July 25, 1891, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>90</sup> Hoffman, “A Letter from C.B. Hoffman.”

According to Kobitzch, he eventually grew extremely ill from “overwork,” and spent two weeks feverishly in bed. When he returned to La Logia, he was shocked to learn that its residents hadn’t brought in the crop at La Logia, and were “sitting in camp conversing about the weather.” They asked why they should bother working to harvest all of it when they could never consume such a large crop anyway? Kobitzch was more disgusted than surprised by the fact that later that year they had to purchase corn from Mexicans in order to keep the needs of the colony met. He admitted to Owen that “I have often felt discouraged about the laziness & carelessness of some of our men...but I have sometimes felt almost inclined to refuse to work also, for when the result of all your extra efforts & exertions is only sickness & a direct material loss, a person cannot feel encouraged to do the least more than compelled to.” Especially when all colonists were paid \$3 a day whether they spent it in the field or lounging around the campfire.<sup>91</sup>

This kind of resentment was common, but other colonists also resented that they were expected to work in the fields at all. The colony had no shortage of professional workers: “doctors, dentists, photographers, surveyors and even preachers. There was no scarcity of literary people,” plus a Swiss artisan that made jewelry and ornaments from turtle shells.<sup>92</sup> What the colony needed, though, was people who would plant and harvest the crops and maintain the irrigation ditches—all of which were difficult, laborious work. Many colonists expected that they would arrive in the colony and practice their trade for eight hours. Disappointed that the colony needed their labor more than their

---

<sup>91</sup> Rudolph Kobitzch to Albert Kimsey Owen, March 5, 1890, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>92</sup> Moore, “Paradise at Topolobampo.”

craftsmanship, they “went in the field & hid themselves for half of the working time in the shade, giving in full time to the time keeper.” Charles Moore wrote that Derrill Hope, a young author who sometimes helped publish *The Credit Foncier*, “tried the patience of her neighbors by calling on them to do her irrigation and other chores while she wrote her articles against the people of the Plat, upholding Owen in his claims.”<sup>93</sup>

Closely related to the fight over labor in the colony was the fight over cash. Owen’s plans for an ideal city used the idea of “credits” as a form of payment for labor. The credits could be turned into the commissary in exchange for goods. Owen’s writings didn’t provide much further detail, so when the colonists arrived in Topolobampo they decided that credits would be based on US dollars, and an eight hour work day would earn \$3 worth of credits. Colonists would deposit the cash that they brought with them at the commissary, receive credits on the colony ledger in exchange, and be able to withdraw any resources that they needed from the commissary. The plan was supposed to be temporary, but it continued to shape labor and money for the rest of the colony’s existence. A common wage of \$3 per day and a frequently empty commissary meant that colonists who had been in the colony for any length of time had more credits than they could ever spend. Some took the opportunity to stop working. Others who arrived in the colony later either resented the system, or decided not to give their cash reserves to the commissary.

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

The idea was similar to that of a company town with wages paid in company scrip that workers could spend at the company store.<sup>94</sup> Similar systems were not uncommon in Mexico on large haciendas. Hacendados found that paying workers with credit that they could spend only at the hacienda was not only more cost-effective, it meant that their workers were less likely to move away or “waste” their money on gambling and drinking, which in turn made them more efficient workers.<sup>95</sup> A few members of the local elite were sometimes willing to accept the colonists’ credits, perhaps because they were familiar with similar payment systems, and had enough faith in the colony’s future success that they expected credits to maintain or increase in value.<sup>96</sup> However, it quickly became clear that the glut of credits on the colony ledger had completely devalued credits. Owen and Hoffman decided in 1890 that they should pay workers on the ditch in a separate form of credit, which they called “ditch script.” It worked similarly to credits, but also included water rights from the ditch, which Owen and Hoffman hoped would help the script keep its value. They were wrong. The colonists still needed cash for most of their purchases. The fact that cash was extremely limited and unevenly distributed in the colony made it highly contentious.

When the Moore family arrived in the colony in 1893, they brought all the washing materials they could with the intention of being the colony launderers. The problem, they quickly discovered, was that they were paid for their labor in credits, but as

---

<sup>94</sup> Hardy Green, *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Terese Newman, *Biography of a Hacienda: Work and Revolution in Rural Mexico* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014).

<sup>96</sup> Robertson, *A Southwestern Utopia*.

they ran out of soap and bluing, they had to buy more in cash. They agreed to do so, but refused to do laundry for any families, only single men. This frustrated many of the colonists, who felt that, since the Moores had refused to turn over their cash to colony commissary, they *should* buy soap and bluing for the colonists. The Moores had furthermore spent \$25 to have lumber shipped from Guaymas in order to construct a proper house for themselves, and paid a Mexican, in cash, to help them construct the house. They even bought lard from Fuerte so that they could have fat for cooking and baking. The colonists who had been in the colony for years without these comparative luxuries resented that the Moores had refused to turn their cash into the colony in exchange for credits as many of the early colonists had done. Even years later, Charles Moore sympathized with the colonists who lacked cash, but the family felt “not yet altruistic enough to share our little all.” Instead, he felt that they too should have heeded the warnings in the *Credit Foncier* that they should not have come without sufficient goods to take care of themselves for four years. He didn’t recognize that by 1893, many colonists had been there for six years. Others had willingly handed over their cash to the company and taken credits in exchange, or invested their cash in Owen’s railroad schemes with the expectation that the colony would care for them.

The colony’s tinsmith, Mr. Patrick, faced a similar problem. Patrick paid cash to have tin shipped from the US, and agreed to colonists cash for the materials, and would accept credits for his labor. Few colonists could afford the cost of tin. Meanwhile, Patrick would sell his goods in the local Mexican economy for cash, earning a decent profit for himself. Rudolph Kobitzch faced a similar problem when he worked as colony

shoemaker. Leather was scarce, but many colonists were all but barefoot. Kobitzch traveled to El Fuerte and used his own cash to purchase leather. Kobitzch soundly resented the difficult position that this put him: he had to choose between using his tiny cash reserve for the sake of other colonists; charging colonists cash for the shoes they desperately needed but couldn't afford; or simply refusing to make shoes anymore. In 1890, he decided on the last of these options and went back to farming.

The colonists who had no cash felt the injustice of coming to work at a cooperative colony, but being unable to spend their credits on the goods that they needed. This frustration was amplified by the fact colonists with skills and tools to make cash in the Mexican economy would do so, including doctors, teachers, Patrick the tinsmith, the Moore family with their laundry service among others. Those who didn't have the skills or capital to earn cash could only earn credits, and felt that those "who had a little money left ought to turn it in for the benefit of those who had none."<sup>97</sup> They argued that those who earned cash in the Mexican market were violating colony rules, which stated "The supply departments of the Credit Foncier will embrace all articles of food and utility, and all manufacturing will be done exclusively by the Credit Foncier. *No man, woman or child will be directly employed by another man or woman.* All occupations will be through the Department of employments."<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, selling goods or services for cash should have been expressly forbidden.

---

<sup>97</sup> Moore, "Paradise at Topolobampo."

<sup>98</sup> Owen, *Integral Co-Operation*, 144–145.

Rudolph Kobitzch's most bitter letter to Owen was after he had learned that the company would pay colonists who worked on the survey team with cash instead of credits. In the letter, Kobitzch's usually neat and orderly handwriting became a furious scribble heavily marked with underlines, exclamations, question marks and quotation marks that conveyed a disgusted irony. He wrote of the new "business arrangement" [which] is simply another *monstrosity* of 'business' & injustice." He asked Owen, "is thus the hard arduous work, the privations & sufferings of the pioneers (once praised as 'heroes') regarded as absolutely worthless, as just nothing?" The ink in the phrase "absolutely worthless," right in the middle of the page, is watery, as if a drop of water (perhaps a tear?) had fallen on it. The only colonists who were asked to join the survey, he claimed, were those who had successfully played the popularity game in the colony and who had already been earning cash working in the Mexican economy. Those who had already—as Kobitzch saw it—shirked their work for the colony in order to make cash for their "own pocket" were going to receive cash pay from the company "while the others, many of whom need bedding, blankets, clothes & shoes, etc very bad shall continue to work for credits, for which they cannot buy what they need." In the end he asked, "Is there no end that terrible injustice? For heavens sake then let us throw away our principles & phrases & kneel before Jay Gould & work for him."<sup>99</sup>

#### THE END OF THE COLONY

When Benjamin Francis Johnston arrived in Los Mochis, he had no money. However, his knowledge of sugar cane drew the attention of local *hacendados*. Zacharias

---

<sup>99</sup> Kobitzch to Owen, March 5, 1890.

Ochoa and Edward Lycan, who had together began a company refining sugar, hired Johnston to run their mill. Johnston, however, saw the opportunity to make a fortune out of the crumbling colony. Ochoa and Lycan lent Johnston enough money for him to buy the supposedly worthless ditch script from discontented colonists for pennies on the dollar. But the ditch script was more than just a temporary currency—it conveyed water rights from the ditch. Accordingly, Johnston was able to convince the local courts—which was still dealing with the colonists squabbles—to declare that the ditch was his. Meanwhile, after the death of Zacharias Ochoa, Johnston claimed ownership of Ochoa’s and Lycan’s sugar mill. In the course of the legal fights, Johnston noticed something that would be the final undoing of the colony: Owen had failed to complete all the required paperwork and payments to finalize his ownership of the land that the colonists lived on. With that knowledge, and his ownership of the ditch, Johnston managed to gain ownership of all of the colonists’ land in Los Mochis in 1903. With land, irrigation and a sugar mill in hand, Johnston created one of the largest and most influential companies in the region: the United Sugar Company.

In 1905, the last five families of the Topolobampo colonists were evicted from the lands that they had been working since they had arrived some 15 years earlier. When the judge handed down the ruling to evict the colonists, they were stunned. After years of lobbying the Mexican federal government to intervene and maintaining faith that Owen would come through at the end to reward the loyal colonists, they had never really expected that they would lose. Aime Heliot wrote to Owen, “when we had to leave the place we could not hardly believe it.” Aime had always thought that Owen could prevent



their eviction. "It is something I cannot understand," he wrote, but still maintained faith that Owen had "done all that was possible to prevent all this trouble."

Fifteen years earlier Aime and his wife Louise sold their 160 acre farm in Kansas to join the colony. They sacrificed the proceeds of the sale of their home to the cause of Integral Cooperation. Now, in 1905, Aime was 72 years old, Louise 66 and "we have not a foot of land I can call mine. We have lost all our property."<sup>100</sup> The couple moved in with one of their sons in California with great heart ache. Aime wrote Owen, "I am afraid it will be hard for us to have a comfortable living. We do not deserve such a fate for I have been a true colonist to the last." Aime ended his letter with the note that Owen had not responded to his last letter some months ago, adding "I wish a few words will do me some good." Owen often marked his letters after he responded to them. Aime's plea for a "few words" have no such mark, suggesting that Owen never responded. They are the last of Aime's words in Owen's collection.

This unhappy ending also brought out the limitations of the colonists' sense of *Mexicanidad*. Not only did dissatisfied colonists almost uniformly return to the United States, they often sought legal redress from the US court system. Despite the fact that the colonists had agreed that, for all legal purposes, they would be considered as Mexican citizens, they used their claim to US citizenship to decry their supposed mistreatment at the hands of the Mexican legal system, appealing to the American consulate in Mexico, the US Department of State, and even US President Theodore Roosevelt. A small handful

---

<sup>100</sup> Aime Heliot to Albert Kimsey Owen, May 30, 1905, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

of colonists remained, purchasing land or settling in the region's growing number of towns. But even those colonists left in 1914 in the face of revolutionary violence.

While the Heliois pressed A.K. Owen and the Mexican federal government to help them gain the title to lands they had cultivated for some 15 years, other colonists appealed to the US government for aid. R.J. Kendall wrote directly to President Roosevelt, asking that Roosevelt "instruct the American consul, or consuls, whom it may concern, and whose duty it is, to look into the matter of the eviction from their holdings of American citizens at, and near, Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico, and to uphold their rights and to see that they have justice in the Mexican courts." Kendall gave a brief overview of the situation, emphasizing that the colonists had been promised the title to the lands, while ignoring the fact that they had never actually received the titles, which was hardly the fault of the Mexican courts.

Kendall added that "the American consuls and officials are indifferent to [the colonists'] rights and the justice in the case." He asked Roosevelt begin an investigation to see "that justice be done and that the rights of American citizens be maintained." He argued that "The United States has been altogether too lax in the past in like matters, and it is high time that a new departure were made in this regard, and that all foreign governments be taught that they cannot override, with impunity, the rights of American citizens." Kendall concluded by begging for urgent action, "as some two hundred Americans are in imminent danger of being rendered homeless and penniless in a foreign

country.”<sup>101</sup> Kendall’s efforts in appealing to the US government are intriguing for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that he had joined a colony in a foreign country on the basis of the idea that the United States had failed them. When joining the colony, the colonists were required to accept that they should be considered Mexican for all legal purposes, and lose the right to appeal to the US government. Kendall then appealed to the US government on the basis of his US citizenship, even adding his disgust that the US had failed to sufficiently protect the “rights of American citizens” from foreign governments.

By the time that R.J. Kendall and Aime Heliot were making their desperate appeals, most of the colonists had already given in for their own reasons and in their own ways. Some went back to reveal the depths of the colony’s failure and Owen’s complicity in it to the US press, so that no one would ever be duped by him again. Others tried to convince Owen to start a new colony, assured that *this time* it would be a success. Most, however, quietly found homes elsewhere in Northern Mexico or returned to the United States to begin their lives again. All agreed that the experiment was a miserable failure.

In the end, it’s hard to know exactly what to think of Owen. Was he a fraud? An unprepared dreamer? The colonists themselves were undecided. One colonist wrote to Owen that, “Herein I consider myself to have been just plainly swindled as by no reading of the advertisements which dealt with the matter can such an intent be understood.”<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Robert J. Kendall to Theodore Roosevelt, n.d., Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>102</sup> William Chalmers to Albert Kimsey Owen, May 24, 1894, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

Many people accused Owen of being a swindler or a scammer and such reports abounded in the US newspapers.

But others, like the Heliot family, maintained faith that Owen was working to set things right. William Green was another colonist who stayed in Mexico and hoped to entice Owen into fighting the good fight and joining into their scheme. Green had moved to Tepic, Mexico after he left the colony. In 1903 he informed Owen that it was “the best agricultural spot in the world and getatable [sic] at a very small price. This land is all naturally irrigated consequently you need no concessions for water fights from Government.”<sup>103</sup> If Owen would just make another attempt, Green was certain it would work. In 1896, Thomas McBride wanted Owen to get “a concession of a mining zone for us,” from the federal government. He still hadn’t given up faith on the colony and believed that “If we were able to work on this body of ore we would soon get out of our financial difficulties and we feel sure you will do what you can to help us.”<sup>104</sup> The next year, still hoping that Owen had some control over the colony he begged Owen to tell colonists to be kinder to poor Mrs. Patrick, who was struggling and being forced to pay “extortionist” rates for water and wood. Thomas’s letter concluded with a request that Owen “send me a line or two when you have a chance. It would be a great comfort where blessings are scarce.” He even maintained that “I am vain enough to believe we can make

---

<sup>103</sup> William Green to Albert Kimsey Owen, February 19, 1903, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas R. McBride to Albert Kimsey Owen, January 14, 1895, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

it yet.”<sup>105</sup> As late as 1900, Thomas McBride still expressed faith in the cause. He was in San Blas examining copper mines, and hoped to interest Owen into yet another colony attempt.<sup>106</sup>

Most US historians take Owen at his word that his ultimate goal was a Utopia. Many Mexican historians disagree, and instead see his ultimate goal as one of empire, conquest and developing Northern Mexico. He had seen towns in the western United States being developed, so he must have known the immense amount of capital it took to establish a town. It’s hard to know for sure whether or not Owen really believed all these things were possible. At the same time, Owen spent a lot of time outlining these goals, writing about them and speaking about them at length. Owen convinced people to join his dream through his passion, and there’s no reason to think that passion wasn’t real. I think he really did imagine that he could build an ideal city with pneumatic tubes connecting all the buildings in town. But it’s also clear that Owen was horribly prepared for the realities of the colony. In the end, his brilliance as a visionary didn’t make him good leader.

---

<sup>105</sup> Thomas R. McBride to Albert Kimsey Owen, August 25, 1896, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas R. McBride to Albert Kimsey Owen, January 26, 1900, Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

## Chapter 4: Barbarians or Civilizers— Mormon Colonies in Chihuahua

Early in 1885, William Derby Johnson was on the run from the US marshals. He spent much of February hiding in the hills of Utah, sneaking into his own house late at night to see his family. He had recently finished building his family's new house: a two-story, fourteen-room home with complete with carpets, curtains and furniture. But, he lamented to his journal, "It seems the old Devil thinks I am too happy with my four wives and children under one roof & will now break up my home."<sup>1</sup>

William's run from the law was in fact *because* of his four wives and children living under one roof. The Mormon practice of plural marriage horrified many Americans. They felt there was an inherent incompatibility between whiteness, civilization and modernity on the one hand, and Mormonism on the other. They imagined that Mormon "fanaticism," theocracy and polygamy placed the entire nation at risk of a downward descent from modern civilization to a backward barbarism.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, there was significant pressure for the federal government to act against Mormonism. The Edmunds-Tucker Act, passed in 1882, made it much easier for federal and state officials to prosecute Mormon polygamous families. The law also gave Mormon Church leaders a sense of urgency to find a "place of refuge" for those families. For decades they had considered that Mexico could be that refuge, and in the spring of 1885, Church leaders decided it was finally time to take advantage of the possibility. Members of polygamous

---

1 "William Derby Johnson Diary," Feb 23, 1885, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

2 W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

families felt that they had done nothing wrong, and that US government was persecuting them for simply “following the Command of the almighty.” But for many, the only way to keep their families together was by moving to Mexico.

William’s situation was made worse by the fact that his first wife, Lulu, was seriously ill. The heart disease that had plagued her for years had worsened in the previous months and William feared that the stress of his arrest would cause her death. In February, Mormon Church President John Taylor warned William that his arrest was imminent and encouraged him to leave the country as soon as possible. Together with church leaders and his wives, William decided that he would join a group of Mormons who were likewise looking to avoid prosecution by going to Mexico. William’s second wife, Lucy, and their one-month-old son would make the journey with him. Lulu was too sick to move and William’s third wife, Charlesetta (Yetta), was seven months pregnant. Lulu and Yetta stayed in Utah with the four oldest of the family’s five children, until it was safe for them to join William in Mexico. His fourth wife, Mary, who had only married into the family last spring, went to stay with her brother in Arizona.

In the days before they left, the entire family was “quite uneasy for fear the Marshals will come and arrest me before I can get out of the country, as the shock would, I fear, kill Lulu.” The night before Lucy and William left, he “blest Lulu & with great anguish of soul bid her a fond & tender good bye with the hope...that we should meet again in Mexico.”<sup>3</sup> Early the next morning, William cut his beard and put on a “common cowboy hat” to disguise his appearance as much as possible. He, Lucy and baby Fay

---

3 “William Derby Johnson Diary,” March 11, 1885.

claimed into their wagon and joined a small group Mormons heading South. All of them remained on edge, still fearful of getting caught, until they were safely out of the reach of US Marshals.<sup>4</sup>

After a month of travel, William, Lucy and baby Fay finally reached their destination. They joined nearly 350 Mormon colonists spread among several camps along a sixty mile stretch of the Casas Grandes River in northern Chihuahua. After about a month in Mexico, William started making arrangements for Lulu and Yetta to come join him and Lucy by train. But before the family could be reunited, William received the heartbreaking news that Lulu was dead. In his journal he wrote, “I returned to camp & found Lucy in tears. She gave me a letter from Yetta in which she states Lulu is dead. Oh God give me strength to bear up under this blow...[Yetta] writes 'I am almost crazy. Do send for me.'” According to Yetta’s letter, a US Deputy Marshal came to the house shortly after William and Lucy arrived in Mexico, and just two days after Yetta had given birth. The deputy brought a subpoena for Yetta and the family’s two oldest children—fifteen-year-old Willie and Domer—to testify against William in court. William wrote that, “Lulu, fearing all her dear ones would be taken away, was literally frightened to death.”<sup>5</sup>

As a whole, that spring was difficult to for the Johnson family, even after Lulu's death. Yetta was left to care for five children, including her newborn, waiting for a train ticket to travel to an unknown country. Lucy was caring for her own infant while living in

---

4 Ibid, March 12, 1885

5 Ibid, May 18, 1885.



a wagon box on the banks of a river. William paid over \$30 in duties on his wagon and horses at the border crossing, only to have the horses stolen two weeks later. And perhaps worst of all, none of them knew whether or not the refuge they had found in Mexico would be permanent. In April, Mormon leaders received notice from the governor of Chihuahua informing them that they had ten days to leave the country. “Thus, Oh Lord,” wrote William, “has thou tried me...My burden does seem so heavy to carry.”

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the colonies that the Mormons settled in Chihuahua and Sonora. The chapter then moves on to make two main arguments. The first is that the Mexican federal government had high hopes for the Mormon’s ability to develop the economic potential of northern Chihuahua yet hesitated to give public support for the colonization because of mass opposition. I describe the complex relationship that existed between the colonists, the federal government and the Mexico City press. The Mormon colonists were the most contentious of all the 'white' US American colonists in Mexico. While the federal government encouraged Mormon colonization behind closed doors, for many years they refused to do so publicly because of the universal opposition among the Mexican public. Throughout the 1880s, the consensus in the Mexico City press was that Mormon immigrants posed a danger to the security and civilization of Mexico. However, as Mormon success became increasingly assured, liberal newspapers portrayed the Mormon immigration in a more positive light.

It seems likely that the federal government, which subsidized much of the liberal press, encouraged, or even pushed, editors of the liberal press to portray the Mormons

more positively.<sup>6</sup> As the Mormon colonies continued to do well, the federal government, which desperately needed a colonization success story, wanted to be able to point to the Mormon colonies as a success. At the same time, in their eagerness that Mormons would develop northern Mexico's resources, government officials granted leniency to the Mormon colonists that was not granted to Mexican citizens, just as they had done for the socialist colonists. Even as the Mormons and the liberal press insisted that the colonists were not guilty of polygamy, the Mexican government overlooked their communally held land and practice of publicly practicing and proselytizing their faith. Both of these were practices that the federal government had been trying to get rid of in Mexico. The Mexico City press is an extremely valuable resource for understanding this dynamic. Since so many histories rely on Mormon sources, it can seem that the support of the federal government for the colonies was public and unfailing from the very beginning.<sup>7</sup>

Second, I posit that Mormons in Mexico shaped their own story of settling in Mexico based on their own understanding of themselves as colonizers of the desert wilderness. It is true that the colonies settled in a region where establishing agriculture and industry was difficult, that northern Chihuahua is a desert, and that the Mormons worked hard to keep themselves socially and culturally Mormon. These are the stories

---

<sup>6</sup> For more on the relationship between the Porfirian government and the Mexico City press see: María Ruiz Castañeda et al., *El Periodismo En México: 450 Años de Historia* (México: Editorial Tradición, 1974); Florence Toussaint Alcaraz, *Escenario de La Prensa En El Porfiriato*, 1. ed (México, D.F.: [Colima]: Fundación Manuel Buendía; Universidad de Colima, 1989); Laura Navarrete Maya and Blanca Aguilar Plata, eds., *La Prensa En México: Momentos Y Figuras Relevantes (1810-1915)*, 1. ed (México, D.F: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> This is not limited to histories written by Mormon historians. See, for example, John M. Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 240. Hart suggests that “The Mexican elites, led by Díaz and General Carlos Pacheco, openly supported them, arranging land concessions and tax exemptions.” This wasn’t actually true until nearly ten years after the colonies were first settled.

that abound in Mormon histories of the colonies. However, it is *also* true that the river that ran through the valley created beautiful, productive land along its banks. The Mormons also relied heavily on Mexican support and labor in order to create their colonies. However, these truths are not the ones that the colonists chose to remember. It is the first truths—which support their idea of themselves as settlers of a desert wilderness, as the bringers of civilization to wild places—that the Mormons most frequently write about. And just as the Mormon histories of Utah forget the life-giving presence of the lake in Provo or their early relationships with Native Americans,<sup>8</sup> the Mormon histories of the colonies in Mexico forget the river and the extent to which they depended on Mexicans to support their colonies. This understanding of themselves as civilizers of the desert wilderness often led the colonists to portray themselves as both part of Mexico, much desired by the progressive elite, while also distinctly separate from Mexicans, inherently superior to the less civilized inhabitants of the nation.

The chapter wraps up in 1912 when church leaders ordered the Mormons out of Mexico during the Mexican Revolution. With the order from church officials, all of the approximately 4,000 colonists left Mexico in “The Exodus.”<sup>9</sup> The experience of the Revolution and the Exodus, however, is an extremely revealing moment for the

---

<sup>8</sup> Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> An estimated 10% of the approximately 4,000 colonists returned, and several of the colonies continue to exist to this day. The period after the Exodus offers great opportunities for further research. The LDS Polygamy Oral History Project is an excellent source for this time period since it includes quite a few interviews with people who returned to the colonies after the Exodus. Some of the descriptions of segregation within the towns are fascinating. For example, Rinda Bentley Sudweeks recalled that “The LDS Mexican students were allowed to come to school. But we were not allowed to dance with them. But they could dance with their own people and so they would be at the dance.” Rinda Bentley Sudweeks, interview by Jessie Embry, June 8, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Mormons. These last two sections rely largely on an underutilized collection of resources: the LDS Polygamy Oral History Project. Historians at Brigham Young University in the 1960s-1980s interviewed nearly 250 members of the church who had grown up in polygamous families. Many of these had lived many years in the Mexican colonies, and some even still lived in Colonia Juarez. This is a fascinating collection, underutilized as a resource for a history of the colonies.<sup>10</sup> The oral histories reveal a tension between the idea of the colonies as exclusively Mormon enclaves and their reliance on Mexican labor and Mexican officials, as well as the complicated ways that they constructed an identity that was simultaneously part of Mexico yet distinct from Mexicans.

#### **FOUNDING THE MORMON COLONIES**

William Derby Johnson, whose flight to Mexico opened this chapter, was among the very first Mormons to permanently settle in Mexico. Throughout the spring of 1885, some 350 Mormon colonists spread out into several small communities along a sixty mile stretch of the banks of the Casas Grandes River. But they weren't the first Mormons in Mexico.<sup>11</sup> Mormon experiences in Mexico began as a dual effort to make connections for

---

<sup>10</sup> The underutilization is due in part to the fact that the point of the oral history project was actually to understand the lives of polygamous families. The histories of the colonies were often a byproduct that even the interviewers themselves had not always intended; based on a personal conversation with Jesse Embry.

<sup>11</sup> Some of the earliest Mormons in Mexico had been part of the Mormon Battalion during the Mexican American War. Samuel Brannan had sailed with a group of Mormon colonists from New York to (Mexican) California in 1846 only to find when they arrived that the United States had claimed the area for itself. Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2005); Reva Scott, *Samuel Brannan and the Golden Fleece, a Biography* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1944); Norma B. Ricketts, *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1996).

proselytizing in Mexico as well as looking for lands to colonize. Colonization was an important aspect for Mormon life. All Mormon heads of household would ideally own their own plot of land to work, creating self-sustaining family units. This required the frequent purchase of new lands for new Church members and young families. Perhaps just as importantly, however, looking for new lands to colonize provided Mormons with a potential refuge. The violence that church members had experienced since the Church's inception meant that many sought protection from the US government or angry mobs enacting extrajudicial violence yet again. Historian W. Paul Reeve has argued that the Mormons were the only people in US history who were marked for “state-sanctioned extermination” on the basis of religion.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Church leaders saw Mexico not only as a population ripe for proselytizing, but also recognized a government that was willing to ignore their practices as long as they could bring “progress.”<sup>13</sup>

For the first group of colonists, the Mormon Church rented some land from a Mexican land owner along the banks of the Casas Grandes River in the Galeana district of northern Chihuahua. Throughout the spring of 1885, the colonists waited impatiently

---

<sup>12</sup> W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 69; Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Matthew C Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar the Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1907-1921* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2007), [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress\\_pubs/44](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_pubs/44); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America*, Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Many Mormons saw indigenous Mexicans as “Lamanites,” as they had Native Americans in the United States. Thus, they felt they had a particular mission to bring indigenous Mexicans into the Mormon Church. The mission met similar limitations in Mexico that it did in the United States. John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); W. Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

for word that they could purchase lands from local Mexican land owners and get crops planted. But the Church leaders were cautious, and it took several months before they found enough land at the right price, with good soil, irrigation and uncontested titles. This last aspect was important, and from this beginning, the colonists relied on Mexican lawyers from the town of Casas Grandes who could help them navigate the frequent contestation of land and water rights in northern Mexico.<sup>14</sup> The colonists' first tract of land was just west of Casas Grandes and was eventually named Colonia Diaz. Church leaders—under the direction of Church president John Taylor—established the Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company (MCAA) in order to purchase land for colonization by Church members.<sup>15</sup> The MCAA—headed by Moses Thatcher and A.F. Macdonald—used \$12,000 of Church money to purchase nearly 1000,000 acres of land from Luis Terrazas, the wealthy former governor of Chihuahua. The colonists who had already arrived in Mexico decided by popular vote that the land should be kept in common, divided into lots, and allocated with usufruct rights to colonists in good standing with the Church. Each head of household would get a 1.25-acre lot in town and 20 acres outside of town for agriculture.<sup>16</sup> Those who wanted more land and had the capital to buy it could do so—either from the MCAA or from Mexican landowners.

---

14 Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2005); Also see Brandon Morgan, “Colonia Díaz and the Railroad That Almost Was: The Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific, 1887-96,” in *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, ed. Jared M. Tamez and Jason Dormady (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015) for more about the colonies’ dependence on the town of La Ascencion.

15 The Mormon Church already had experience creating companies to facilitate collective purchases, such as the Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution. Godfrey, *Religion, Politics, and Sugar the Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1907-1921*; Martha Sonntag Bradley, *ZCMI, America’s First Department Store* (Salt Lake City, Utah: ZCMI, 1991).

16 Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 62. This followed a similar pattern as the settlement of Salt Lake City.

According to former colonist and historian Thomas Cottam Romney, the practice of holding the land in common and granting usufruct rights was intended “to insure against the influx of non-members of the Church and other undesirables.”<sup>17</sup> However, in the following years, as more than three thousand Mormons joined the colonies, individual ownership became the most common practice.<sup>18</sup>

From that point, the situation of the colonists improved quickly. The Mormon colonies were much better organized than either of the other colonies discussed in this dissertation, largely due to the support of the church. As historian LaMond Tullis pointed out, the fact that church leaders were the those that were most likely to practice polygamy, a large number of Church leaders like Apostle Erastus Snow lived in the colonies, even if only temporarily. According to Tullis, “the self-selection of some of the church’s most able families to participate in this particular colonization effort virtually assured that the communities would be well organized, purposeful, and solid.” These “most able families,” kept in close contact with leaders in Salt Lake City, receiving advice and directives from President Taylor. With this organization, Church leaders could hire lawyers to make sure that land titles were clear, design the layout of towns, and organize the colonists' labor to build irrigation ditches, roads and schools.

By 1910, the Mormons had established nine different colonies in Chihuahua and Sonora, most within 20 miles of the nearest Mormon colony, with some four thousand colonists living in them. Colonia Juarez served as something of a capital and center of

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

culture for the colonies. Because Juarez was on a small tributary of the Casas Grandes river, making irrigation and agriculture more difficult there than the other colonies, Juarez was more industrial than any of the others. One of their primary forms of industry was the canning of fruits and vegetables, particularly peaches, that were produced in Colonia Díaz and Colonia Dublan. These two colonies were situated along the rich soil of the Casas Grandes River. Estelle Webb Thomas recalled that when her family arrived at Colonia Dublan, they had never seen “such tall corn, such rich wheat and alfalfa fields, nor such quantities of fruit and vegetables.”<sup>19</sup> It was this wealth of produce from Dublan and Díaz, and the industrial abilities of Juarez that allowed the Mormon colonies to can and sell their produce across Mexico and into the United States.

These three colonies were the largest and most socio-economically diverse, with several hundred to a thousand inhabitants each. Many families that settled here had brought capital and were able to purchase more land and hire additional hands, often from nearby Mexican towns and villages. Some were even able to rent out their land to other families while they themselves were engaged in less physical work such as keeping stores or contracting livestock sales between Mexicans and other colonists. Thomas Cottam Romney, who was raised in the colonies before growing up to become an academic historian, wrote that “there was not class distinction because there was but one class”—Mormons.<sup>20</sup> This failure to identify differences among the colonists may have

---

19 Estelle Webb Thomas, *Uncertain Sanctuary: A Story of Mormon Pioneering in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: Westwater Press, 1980).

20 Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 89.



been a reflection of the fact that the Romneys were among the wealthier families of the colonies.

Oral histories suggest that there was more distinction than what Romney may have noticed or was willing to recognize. According to Antone Romney, “I was a member of one of the well-to-do families at this time. Father owned part of the first mills that were established there.”<sup>21</sup> Even 60 years later, other colonists had strong memories of class difference. Catherine Brown, for example, recalled how embarrassed she was growing up that her father wasn’t a good provider. While she and her siblings were in school, her father worked as a janitor at the school. She was mortified, particularly when he expected them to stay after school and help him. She also recalled that “there were a few people that felt that they were elite. They were the ones that had the means.”<sup>22</sup> When Catherine married she was so proud that her husband was “the best provider in town.” The newlyweds settled in Colonia Chuichupa where they hired Mexicans to help take care of the children, do the farm work and manage the cattle. They also hired a “very good Japanese cook,” who took care of much of the household so that Catherine could manage her husband’s business selling livestock when he traveled. These were all benefits that Catherine’s mother certainly didn’t have when she was raising Catherine and

---

<sup>21</sup> Antone K. Romney, interview by Key Alta Haynes, February 21, 1974, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine S. Brown, interview by Jessie Embry, May 3, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

her siblings.<sup>23</sup> So, despite the fact that the group was bound by religion, they were divided by their immediate material conditions.

Life was more uniform among the smaller colonies in the mountains of Chihuahua and in Sonora, most of which consisted of a few dozen families. Mary Sheratt recalled that up in the mountains, life for the colonists of Chuichupa required everyone share their meager resources with each other:

We were all like a big family and we lived like a big family. We didn't have post offices, stores and things like that. We exchanged things one with another. If my father killed a beef, we didn't have any way of preserving it too much. My father would divide it. Then when the other man would kill a beef, we would get that part back...If we raised something like potatoes and had more and other people didn't have it, we divided it with them.<sup>24</sup>

Wasel Blackburn also grew up in the mountain colonies, and recalled that "We lived pretty much in poverty, but we weren't used to anything else and we didn't realize how much we didn't have."<sup>25</sup> The smaller colonies were more subsistence based but not necessarily unskilled, and they gained a reputation in the region for having excellent livestock. Mormons were inspired by a religious mission worked hard to accomplish it.

One of the most important features of the colonies was the incredibly tight support network that the Church facilitated. While a poor growing season or lack of capital would send Confederate colonists back to the United States and their own networks, the Mormon colonists could steadily rely on each other and the Church. In

---

23 Catherine S. Brown, interview by Jessie Embry, May 3, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

24 Mary Diantha Cox Sherratt, interview by Stevan Martin Hales, April 23, 1982, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

25 Wasel Black Washburn, interview by Jessie Embry, November 3, 1983, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

general, the colonists who left letters or oral histories about their experiences discussed a life of hard work, religious testimony, and happiness despite hardship. And until 1912, they lived a life of relative security.

#### **MORMON COLONISTS, THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, AND THE MEXICO CITY PRESS**

When William Derby Johnson joined the Mormons already settled on the banks of the Casas Grandes River, he expressed how relieved he was to be there. His fellow colonists, however, told him “not be so glad as Mexican officials of this state, Chihuahua, had ordered us out of country.” The Mormons had been given 16 days to leave Mexico, by order of Chihuahua’s interim governor, who claimed they were an invading army. The next few weeks were a rush of frantic effort to coordinate between Church officials in Salt Lake City, the city of Chihuahua and Mexico City. Brigham Young Jr. and Moses Thatcher rushed to Mexico City and requested interviews with key members of Díaz’s cabinet, including the Secretary of State, Ignacio Mariscal and the Secretary of Fomento, Carlos Pacheco.<sup>26</sup>

Young and Thatcher were extremely pleased with the outcome of these meetings. They reported that Secretary Mariscal “received us warmly and manifested an honest desire to forward our interests by his influence with the President and Cabinet.” Secretary Pacheco “expressed personal regards for our people and in all our conversation, when opportunity afforded, expressed the hope that Mormons would conclude to colonize within the Mexican borders.” They even met with President Díaz who similarly told them

---

<sup>26</sup> Pacheco was also the governor of Chihuahua, and his role in Díaz’s cabinet was the reason that Chihuahua had an acting governor at the time.

that the federal government was pleased at the prospect of having them develop the country. The federal officials not only reversed the expulsion order, they fired the acting governor of Chihuahua and replaced him with someone who would be friendlier towards the Mormon colonists.<sup>27</sup>

When Young and Thatcher met with Pacheco, he expressed surprise that they had "received such abusive treatment as he had given orders to the acting governor to treat them courteously."<sup>28</sup> If Pacheco truly expressed surprise at the treatment of the Mormons, it was likely disingenuous. Pacheco, Mariscal and even President Díaz himself had to have been aware that there was intense opposition to Mormon colonists in 1885—it was almost universal in the Mexico City press. From the perspective of Mormon sources, the Mexican federal government seems to have been doing everything in their power to encourage Mormon colonization. One thing that the Mexican officials did not do, at least in these early years of colonization, was provide the Mormons with concessions such as land subsidies and breaks from import duties to colonize Mexico. These concessions, such as the ones that Owen received to found the colony at Topolobampo, could have done much to help the early Mormon colonists. As immigrants, they were already exempted from federal taxes and being called for military duty for their first ten years in Mexico. However, with a concession, they may have received subsidized land and been relieved of import duties for their goods. This might not sound like much, but considering

---

27 Brigham Young Jr. and Moses Thatcher to A.F. Macdonald, May 15, 1885, cited in: Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 59; Jane-Dale Lloyd, *El Distrito Galeana En Los Albores de La Revolución: Rancheros Y Mormones: Espacio Regional, Comercio Y Un Proceso de Desamortización Tardío*, Biblioteca Chihuahuense (Chihuahua, México: Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, Secretaría de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2011), 172.

28 Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 59.

that William Derby Johnson spent the last of his cash on duties for his horses, the concessions could be of great help to the colonists. Others even had to sell goods or cattle if they couldn't afford the high cost of importation duties. However, such concessions would have made the government support for Mormon colonization public. And in 1885, the Mexican government was unwilling to draw attention to their support of a population that faced such broad opposition in Mexico.

As Mormon leaders received a warm welcome from Mexican federal officials, newspapers of Mexico City gave the impression that the entire country was united against Mormon immigration. A prominent paper, *El Monitor Republicano* wrote that permitting Mormons into Mexico would "open a breach in the wall that progress has raised between modern society and the centuries of barbarism and corruption."<sup>29</sup> *El Nacional* declared, "we already have a new volcano, floods, earthquakes...locusts, and finally the Mormons come to be the height of the many *plagues* we have. Mercy!"<sup>30</sup> Until 1890, the Mormon colonies faced the most solidified opposition of any of the Anglo-American colonies in Mexico.<sup>31</sup> The city's prominent conservative papers, *El Tiempo* and *La Voz de México*, were in an almost unprecedented agreement with the city's liberal press that Mormons were barbarous, backwards, and uncivilized. Their immoral practices such as polygamy would destroy the moral fibers of the country. *El Tiempo* reprinted an article in *The Two*

---

29 Nicanor Bolet Peraza, "Correspondencia Particular Para El Monitor Republicano," *El Monitor Republicano*, October 14, 1885.

30 "Mormones," *El Nacional*, July 20, 1887.

31 Tlahualilo, the colony of African-Americans in Durango, was certainly more feared and hated, especially among conservative papers that wrote fear-mongering panic pieces about black colonists rampaging through the Mexican countryside and destroying the purity of the Indian race.

*Republics* that encouraged President Díaz to act with an “iron fist” against Mormons; *El Tiempo* added that Mormons were “evil, with terrible consequences for society.”<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the only noticeable difference between the Conservative and Liberal opposition to Mormons in Mexico was that the Conservative papers included their fears about the American colonies in general. The conservative paper *La Voz de México* wrote that “we cannot calmly watch as our lands, so close to our border with North America, are populated with Yankees--protestants or polygamist. Sooner or later...they will proclaim their independence then join the United States, to whom their blood also calls.”<sup>33</sup> Clearly, the Mormons status as Americans did not help them among Mexican Conservatives. The similarly conservative paper *El Tiempo* declared that Mormon immigration was just one more step in the process of Mexico becoming “the sewage drain through which the social waste of Northern Republic leaves,” as the Mormons, like “the Chinese and the Negroes, immigrate in mass to Mexico” from the US. Not only did this migration rid the United States of its “sewage,” the immigrants also served as an “efficient way to prepare for the peaceful conquest (or non-peaceful) by our ambitious neighbors.”<sup>34</sup> There were only two possible outcomes from this immigration, they argued. In the worst case scenario, Mexico would lose Chihuahua and Sonora to the US. In the best case scenario, the Mormons would destroy the moral foundation of the nation.

---

32 “Los Mormones,” *El Tiempo*, January 23, 1885.

33 “Los Mormones En Mexico,” *La Voz de Mexico*, January 13, 1891.

34 “Grandes Progresos de Las Colonias Mormonas,” *El Tiempo*, April 10, 1900; This comparison of Mormons to blacks and Chinese is remarkably similar to the rhetoric used in the United States. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

While conservative papers took the opportunity to remind readers of their opposition to *all* immigration from the United States, the vast majority of the opposition—from both liberals and conservatives—focused on one specific issue they associated with Mormonism: polygamy. *El Nacional* called Mormonism and their practice of polygamy a “relic of Asiatic barbarism.”<sup>35</sup> They later even compared the Mormon “invasion” to “Attila at the gates of Rome:” “we are not exaggerating...If we do not arm ourselves, they will overwhelm and crush us.”<sup>36</sup> *El Tiempo* said Mormonism was “actually nothing more than a remnant of the idolatry of ancient eras.”<sup>37</sup> This close association between Mormonism and the idea of an ancient, often Asian, barbarism closely resembled language used to describe Mormons in the United States. According to historian W. Paul Reeve, it was one of the many ways that non-Mormons questioned the whiteness of Mormons and denied them access to the privileges of whiteness. Configuring Mormonism as an “oriental problem” was “a clear indication as to how thoroughly the Mormons were imagined as foreign enemies on American soil.” Moreover, by comparing Mormons to Asian cultures they were both referencing the ideas of the sexual excesses of a Muslim harem and the perceived threat of foreign invasion by Chinese immigrants.<sup>38</sup>

This trope was extremely common in the Mexico City press as well. *El Economista Mexicano* compared Mormonism to Eastern civilizations, while simultaneously questioning how “civilized” either actually was. They described

---

35 “Los Mormones,” *El Nacional*, November 11, 1886.

36 “El Mormonismo,” *El Nacional*, February 14, 1891.

37 “Los Mormones En México,” *El Tiempo*, July 27, 1888.

38 Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

Mormonism as an “inharmonious mix” of Christian doctrine, Jewish law, “and the vulgar lust of Islam.” They claimed that Mormon men

transform their homes into harems, within which reigns a Mormon as sovereign as a Muslim in his seraglio--with this difference, that the civilization (?) of the first concedes to women certain social prerogatives, among which, the freedom to display their weaknesses and moral degradation in the avenues of their cities.<sup>39</sup>

The “(?)” is in the original article and conveys the ironic tone with which the author referred to Mormon and Muslim “civilization.” *El Economista* was even suggesting that by granting a Mormon woman the “social prerogative” of going out on the streets (leaving the “seraglio”), she only gained the ability to display her degradation. Similarly, *La Voz de México* argued that if the Mormons were “fed up with the persecution in their own country,” they should go to Asia, which they had shown was “their natural part of the world because of their customs and their many women.” *La Voz* hoped that the Mormons would “establish themselves in Persia, Turkey or China,” countries where “we don’t doubt that they will prefer [the Mormons] more than we do here in Mexico.”<sup>40</sup>

Asia didn’t always serve as the comparison point for Mormonism with “less civilized” cultures. *El Tiempo* described the incompatibility between civilization and Mormonism by declaring that “the Mormons, for the most part, are stupid, ignorant people with disgusting manners and outside of the fact that they wear clothes and are the color of Europeans, they are, in the rest, more savage than the Tarahumaras of the Sierra

---

39 “Estudio Social: El Mormonismo Y Sus Adeptos,” *El Economista Mexicano*, June 24, 1886. The term “seraglio” refers to the part of an Ottoman palace in which the women of the Sultan’s harem lived.

40 *La Voz de México*, November 1, 1885.



Madre.”<sup>41</sup> This article from *El Tiempo*, relied on the understood savagery of Indians—the Tarahumaras were thought to be particularly savage and backward—to place Mormonism and modernity in opposition with each other. Together, these articles denied the civilization and whiteness of the Mormons. While these arguments were common in the United States, they may have been particularly pertinent in Mexico, where the entire premise of immigration was to bring the elusive idea of progress and to civilize Mexico's Indian population.

Other articles dehumanized Mormons completely by using the language of “plagues” to describe them. *El Nacional* called Mormonism “a most dangerous social plague that threatens us with invasion.”<sup>42</sup> *El Tiempo* referred to “the disgusting and loathsome leprosy of Mormonism [that] is an incalculable evil that we will fight at all costs.”<sup>43</sup> They claimed that Mormons were “more disgusting than smallpox, more frightening than cholera,” and worse than leprosy, a “stain on our soil.”<sup>44</sup> *El Monitor Republicano* warned “a new plague threatens Mexico.”<sup>45</sup> American officials frequently used similar language, such as the phrase “nits make lice” against Mormons. Such dehumanizing language was generally reserved to justify the extermination of Native Americans in the United States, but also justified violence against Mormons.<sup>46</sup> The

---

41 S.S.Q.B.S.M., “El Mormonismo En Chihuahua,” *El Tiempo*, January 23, 1901. “Por otra parte son los mormones, por lo general, gente estúpida, ignorante, y de modales los más groseros, y fuera de que andan vestidos y tienen color europeo, en lo demás son más salvajes que las taramaras de la Sierra Madre.”

42 “El Mormonismo,” February 14, 1891.

43 “Los Mormones En México Y The Two Republics,” *El Tiempo*, April 10, 1889.

44 “Politica,” *El Tiempo*, April 11, 1889.

45 “Mormones En México,” *El Monitor Republicano*, September 24, 1890.

46 Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 54.

Mexico City press used it to justify the exclusion of Mormons from Mexico by any means necessary.

Occasionally, liberal papers would describe their opposition to Mormons by first recognizing an apparent contradiction between their liberalism and their opposition to Mormon immigration. This apparent contradiction, however, was satisfied on the basis that polygamist Mormons were threats to civilization and to Mexico. *La Patria*, for example, prefaced one article against Mormonism by saying “we are supporters of foreign immigration, and we believe that the more immigrants that come, the greater will be the development and advancement of our country.” Despite this beginning, *La Patria* completely rejected Mormonism as a “hateful doctrine should not be tolerated in any civilized nation.”<sup>47</sup> *El Monitor Republicano* similarly recognized that, as a liberal-leaning paper that respected freedom of religion, it might seem contradictory for them to oppose Mormonism. However, they argued that any “civilized country” must place some limits on the “exercise of religion.” They went on to argue, “if a cannibal professes a faith in eating his neighbor raw or grilled and worships a cannibal god, it wouldn’t occur to anyone to authorize the practice under their own laws.” While comparing Mormonism to cannibalism seems extreme, *El Monitor Republicano* insisted that it was an apt comparison. Marriage formed the foundation not only of the nation, but of morality, and “the religion that undermines these principles cannot be considered as a moral one among the various other faiths in the civilized world.”<sup>48</sup> Again, these articles placed

---

47 J.F.G., “Boletín,” *La Patria*, February 19, 1886.

48 Bolet Peraza, “Correspondencia Particular Para El Monitor Republicano.”

polygamy and Mormonism with backwardness and barbarism in direct contrast to civilization, modernity and progress.

The supposed contradiction between civilization and Mormonism led some members of the press to doubt that Mormonism was sustainable. For example, the liberal paper *El Universal* wrote that “the Mormon church can’t exist in the face of modern influences, as they oppose so many of the tendencies of this progressive century.” The Mormon church, they argued, could “only exist in a place isolated from contact with the world;” it was the “progressive instincts of humankind” that drove the Mormons from Illinois decades ago, and now from Utah.<sup>49</sup> *El Tiempo*, too, expected that Mormonism couldn’t last. They argued that “this society is destined to a quick end by means of the elements of progress in the United States” provided the Mexican government didn’t let Mormonism find new life along the Mexican frontier.<sup>50</sup>

However, *El Tiempo* frequently worried about the impact the Mormonism would have on Mexico's rural population. They argued that the general population was “extremely docile to follow an honorable and moral path when pushed towards it by laws that prohibit vices and are encouraged by the example of their superiors,” but also risked being “dragged down.” With this condescending view, the author argued that the “superior” class had a responsibility to make sure that Mexicans “remain completely isolated from the wild Mormon mob” in order to protect them from such evil influences.<sup>51</sup> Several years later, after the federal government openly supported the

---

49 “Inmigración Mormónica En México,” *El Universal*, October 6, 1888.

50 “Los Mormones,” *El Tiempo*, January 29, 1885.

51 “La Nueva Calamidad,” *El Tiempo*, June 5, 1886.

colonies, *El Tiempo* still had the same fears. *El Tiempo* reprinted an article from *El Mundo* in which the latter paper discussed the Mormon colonies “with the most unheard-of serenity and without the smallest commentary.” After quoting the article at length, *El Tiempo* repeated parts of it to express their dismay and horror:

They have established schools “where education is given not only to the children of the colonists BUT ALSO TO THE ‘children’ OF THE MEXICAN FAMILIES THAT LIVE IN COMMUNITY WITH THE IMMIGRANTS!!” That means that not only are they authorized to establish themselves, but according to the science of the Mexican political authorities, they are permitted to spread propaganda among the people of this country about their immoral principles and practices.<sup>52</sup>

The exclamations and capitalization are from the original article and conveyed how horrified *El Tiempo*'s authors were at the damage the Mormon colonists could supposedly do to Mexican communities.

*The Two Republics*—the dominant English-language paper written for Americans in Mexico—had a similar fear in 1886. Mormonism in Mexico, they argued, would be even worse in the United States because “the native Mexicans” were “quite liable to succumb to the persuasive tactics of Mormon missionaries.” Mormonism would expand even faster in Mexico and create “fresh difficulties in the way of bringing this great nation into line with the progress of the age.”<sup>53</sup> These authors were all suggesting that Mormonism was so contradictory to the unstoppable forces of progress that it was only a matter of time before it was crushed. At the same time, they worried that Mormonism could do irreparable damage to a country even so civilized as they imagined and wished Mexico to be. The contradiction reflects a fear that Mexico's progress and modernity was

---

52 “¡¡Permanente Infracción de Las Leyes de Reforma!!,” *El Tiempo*, January 27, 1900.

53 “Dangerous Visitors,” *The Two Republics*, January 8, 1886.

fragile. This fear, in turn, explains much of why the debate about which types of immigrants Mexico needed was so important and contentious for the Mexico City press.

Many members of the press argued that Mormons simply could not or would not become good Mexican citizens. *La Patria* reported that “the Mormons never serve the support of the people or government of the country in which they live.” While other immigrant groups and religions may become a part of the nation where they reside, “Mormons will always be and consider themselves simply Mormons. They will support, fight for and help their own sect, but they don’t care if the government or social order of the country where they live...is destroyed.” Between their refusal to become part of the Mexican nation and their “monstrous doctrine of polygamy,” “the Mormons cannot become good citizens.” *La Patria* argued that, because “their doctrines are entirely subversive to the moral and political order of any country,” they didn’t deserve “to obtain the right of citizenship.”<sup>54</sup>

*El Universal* came to a very similar conclusion, saying that “although they are industrious people, it is doubtful that they will be good citizens.” But they also thought that “the Mexican government will control them better than the Americans, since here neither sentimentality nor tardiness predominate the execution of laws...The holy Mormons might not be so blessed in Mexico.”<sup>55</sup> Not everyone agreed with the claim that Mexico would be better at “controlling” Mormons. *La Patria*, in fact, argued the

---

54 J.F.G., “Boletín.”

55 “Inmigración Mormónica En México.”

opposite. According to *La Patria*, by “allowing the polygamists to find asylum within their territory,” the US had shown weakness and regretted the mistake. Now,

They are trying to give the deathblow to the monster of polygamy and despite the might of their government still have not been able to...If, then, we permit the entrance into our country of these pernicious people, we will find ourselves in the same situation but having fewer resources to curb the excesses of Mormonism.<sup>56</sup>

If the United States couldn’t control the Mormons, Mexico, they feared, had no chance either.

*The Two Republics* claimed to know more about Mormons than the Mexicans did due to their more intimate knowledge of US politics. They warned the Mexican government that “these gentry are smooth-tongued, plausible talkers, and would persuade the Mexicans that they have been misrepresented and persecuted in the United States.” They particularly emphasized that Mormons would never become law-abiding Mexicans. Not only were they liable to declare independence—the eternal fear lurking behind all American colonization schemes—they would “trample upon the laws and defy the authorities” of Mexico.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout this entire discussion, little was said about the actions of the Díaz government. In fact, for years, the discussion in the press about how the Mexican government would respond to the Mormons seemed to be little more than speculation. Almost two years after the Mormons had settled in Chihuahua *El Nacional* claimed that, “If the current laws...are not enough to stop the evil, then even more severe methods will be adopted, and soon...this relic of Asiatic barbarism (polygamy), this stain on the good

---

56 J.F.G., “Boletín.”

57 “The Mormons Again,” *The Two Republics*, September 23, 1886.

name and reputation of America, will be barred from our soil.”<sup>58</sup> Earlier that year, *La Patria* had encouraged the government to adopt any methods necessary to stop Mormons from settling in Mexico and that moreover, “we should not offer them any advantages or flatter them in any way to make them emigrate to our territory.”<sup>59</sup> As late as 1890, *El Diario del Hogar* was dismayed that the federal government had as yet done nothing to stop the Mormon immigration.<sup>60</sup> None of these articles, or the many like them, ever suggest a knowledge that Díaz had already “flattered” and encouraged Mormon immigration, even going so far as firing an interim governor who opposed it.

The simple fact that the liberal newspapers were just as opposed to Mormon colonists as the conservative press is itself a suggestion that the Mexican government was actively working to keep their support of the colonies secret. The federal government granted funding to many of the liberal papers. By the end of the century, it went so far as to jail members of the press who spoke against Díaz too freely.<sup>61</sup> But the press’ lack of understanding of the government’s action is perhaps even more suggestive that the government intentionally kept its support of the colonies from the public. When the federal government had offered support and concessions to Albert Kimsey Owen for the socialist colony at Topolobampo, the press was immediately aware of it. Up to this point, Mormon colonization had been done through entirely private means. The government hadn’t offered any colonization contracts to the colonists that would have been made public. The government would give them moral support behind closed doors, and stay an

---

58 “Los Mormones,” November 11, 1886.

59 J.F.G., “Boletín.”

60 “Mas Mormones En Chihuahua,” *El Diario Del Hogar*, April 5, 1890.

61 Ruiz Castañeda et al., *El Periodismo En México*, 232.

expulsion order given by an acting government, but for the first few years, there was no public indication that they supported the colonists.

However, between the very end of 1889 and 1892, a gradual shift took place in the Mexico City press as liberal newspapers began to slow their opposition to Mormon immigration. Some papers even openly supported it. One of the first newspapers to do so was *El Siglo XIX*—at that time one of the longest-running and most respected papers in Mexico. *El Siglo* had previously said little about the prospect of Mormon colonization, only repeating a few brief reports. But in 1889 they openly disdained opponents of Mormon colonization by reprinting a positive report of the Mormon colonies from the Governor of Chihuahua. *El Siglo* then added a brief commentary in their typically sarcastic style

The reactionary [conservative] press will find it improbable that crimes in that colony don't happen every ten minutes without interruption. And yet, to the regret of *El Tiempo*, nothing like that happens. Those people have made themselves noteworthy for their love of work, open schools, making the land productive, submitting to the laws of the country, and not giving any reason for the authorities to complain. The cries of the conservative press are perfectly understood.<sup>62</sup>

*El Siglo* continued their highly dismissive attitude towards opponents of Mormon colonization through the next few years. In 1890 they wrote that

To pretend that the establishment of four Mormon colonies in our uncultivated lands, in the middle of a desert...to pretend that the a few hundred Negros imported for the work of our sugar plantations, to pretend that the appearance of 15 sons of the Celestial Empire in our rice fields, has created an era in which they dance the tango in our aristocratic salons, smoke opium in our ministries and kidnap the wives of our honorable fathers to create a Mormon harem is the height of improbability.<sup>63</sup>

---

62 "Los Mormones En El Estado de Chihuahua," *El Siglo XIX*, November 26, 1889.

63 "La Cuestion Mormona," *El Siglo XIX*, March 8, 1890.



This article addressed not only the “Mormon question,” but also the fears that many members of the press had about African American and Chinese immigration. Putting them all together shows how many members of the press—in Mexico as well as the United States—considered them all as part of the same problem: the immigration of the racially suspect and uncivilized peoples of the world. This is remarkably similar to the language used to describe Mormons in the United States as well.<sup>64</sup> In both the U.S and Mexico, the framing of Mormons as uncivilized shows how ideas such as “civilized” and “uncivilized” were malleable and not always strictly race-based concepts.

Throughout the 1890s, more and more members of the liberal press joined *El Siglo* in speaking well of Mormon immigration. *El Universal* reported in 1891 that the Mormon colonists “all prosper and are happy. They are gradually transforming the desert into a well-cultivated hacienda.”<sup>65</sup> When the Mormon Church announced that they would no longer practice polygamy, *El Universal* believed and applauded the decision—despite the fact that many people were suspicious of it—“because the Mormons are not crazy, and are far too practical of a people, as they have shown in all of their business.”<sup>66</sup> According to *El Nacional*, “it is well known that the Mormons are currently the most intelligent agriculturalist in the republic.”<sup>67</sup> *El Economista Mexicano* wrote “The Mormons are industrious men, useful for the country, because their business, always prosperous, bears very valuable economic elements, which is why their establishment in

---

<sup>64</sup> Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

<sup>65</sup> “Los Mormones En Chihuahua,” *El Universal*, January 13, 1891.

<sup>66</sup> “El Mormonismo Agonizante,” *El Universal*, October 22, 1890.

<sup>67</sup> “Los Mormones En Coyoacán,” *El Nacional*, April 24, 1897.

that state will be very beneficial.<sup>68</sup> *El Imparcial* described the rapid increase in land value in the Casas Grandes region and concluded “this is what the Mormons have done in Mexico. If all agriculturalists would follow the same push towards irrigating their lands and making them useful, our agriculture would rise to enviable heights.”<sup>69</sup>

A contributor for *The Two Republics* visited the Mormon Colonia Dublan, and could barely fit enough compliments in the article. He described the Mormons “pretty one and two-story buildings,” that were “well furnished including carpets and, with few exceptions, a harmonium” Their kitchens were “fairly resplendent with shining utensils.” Their vegetable gardens and window boxes of flowers were “luxuriant.” He complimented their cows and horses, and claimed that they had “the best American mules.” And, perhaps in an effort to deal with any lingering doubt that the Mormons weren’t properly civilized, he informed his readers that the Mormons’ living rooms and pantries were “replete with all those good things that civilized beings cannot do without.”<sup>70</sup> Just the decade before, the same newspaper had called Mormons “fanatics of the most extravagant type,” “a danger to the peace and progress of any community that gives them shelter,” and their religion “a resuscitated relic of barbarism.” The reporter who chronicled this settlement in 1900, however, conveyed one message: Mormons were civilized.<sup>71</sup>

---

68 “Colonias Mormonas En Hidalgo,” *El Economista Mexicano*, May 26, 1906.

69 “Lo Que Hacen Los Mormones Para Mejorar Sus Terrenos,” *El Imparcial*, May 28, 1909.

70 “The Dublan Colony,” *The Two Republics*, August 9, 1900.

71 The perceptions of Mormons were gradually changing in the United States as well at the end of the nineteenth century. Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*; Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

Like *The Two Republics*, the shift in the way that *La Patria* spoke of Mormon immigration was stark. After a few years of writing with horror about Mormonism, *La Patria*—the most explicitly anti-clerical paper of Mexico City—was at least willing by 1891 to confess that they would rather have “ten thousand Mormons than five sisters of charity and two and a half Catholic missionaries,” because “the Mormons work and produce.”<sup>72</sup> It was hardly a glowing endorsement, especially considering how much *La Patria* hated Catholic missionaries. And late as 1897 they published an article that read, in its entirety: “Numerous Mormon families have just arrived in Chihuahua in join the American colonies in that state. Chinese and Mormons....¡fooo!”<sup>73</sup> But by 1900, *La Patria* wrote glowingly of Mormons and Mormonism. Not only did they insist that the Mormon colonists had never practiced polygamy in Mexico, they wrote that the colony founders brought “*brazos*, capital, businesses, and, especially, morality.” And if the Mormon ethic was immoral, then *La Patria* encouraged the Catholic press to “inform yourself, *sacristanes* friends, of the Mormon immorality and take as a model.”<sup>74</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the paper frequently used the language of “morality” and “fanaticism” when talking about Mormons, but in opposite ways than the conservative press did. In the hands of *La Patria*, both words seemed to serve as a way of fighting back against the conservative rallying cry that Mormons were a threat to public morality and to insist that Catholicism did not dictate morality. For *La Patria*, the Catholics were the backward fanatics while the Mormons were the hard-working moral citizens. Few of the colonists

---

72 “Noticia Mormónica,” *La Patria*, December 2, 1891.

73 “Mormones En México,” *La Patria*, April 9, 1897.

74 “El Mormonismo,” *La Patria*, February 20, 1900.

were actually citizens, but similar to the way that the Topolobampo colonists had claimed a type of cultural citizenship to justify their presence in Mexico, the Mexico City press claimed citizenship for the Mormon colonists.

The liberal press had successfully shifted much of the language about Mormons from the idea that they were in opposition to progress and civilization to the idea that “they are hard working and progressive.”<sup>75</sup> The language that the liberal press used to describe Mormons was the language they used to describe their desired immigrants: those that would bring capital, modernity, technology, and progress.

By 1894, the Díaz administration openly supported Mormon immigration to Mexico and offered colonization contracts to small groups of Mormon settlers. According to *The Two Republics*, “The Mexican government is so well pleased with its experience with the peaceable Mormons that it has granted very liberal concessions for the new colonies now under arrangement.”<sup>76</sup> The colonists were offered \$50 cash per person and \$40 off of duties on their imports per person per year for five years. This concession would have been invaluable to the colonists in 1885, many of whom spent every penny they had—or even sold their goods—because of duties on the goods they brought with them.

This shift in policy was likely caused by two main factors. The first was that by 1888, the Díaz government had successfully consolidated national power.<sup>77</sup> The second

---

75 M., “El Mormonismo Y La Conquista Pacifica,” *La Patria*, March 9, 1900.

76 Farmer P. Gaston, “Mormon Colonization: The Scheme for Settling in Mexico without Polygamy,” *The Two Republics*, March 3, 1894.

77 William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 17.

was the fact that the Mormon colonies were proving to be a success. Díaz had gained control of colonization from the legislature in 1883, but still didn't have any colonies that he could point to as evidence of success. The Mexico City press was well aware that Topolobampo was struggling in 1890, and other colonies were similarly disappointing. *El Tiempo* may have been the government's most outspoken critic but they were hardly alone when they claimed "The government has committed many grave errors—and not only in the eyes of the adversaries of the government, but in the eyes of any impartial judge—in relation to colonization."<sup>78</sup> The Díaz government needed a success story, and despite the controversy surrounding them, the Mormon colonies were proving successful. In this way, the Mormons did more than advance their own agenda; they served as representatives for Díaz's fragile plan for his country.

While some may have supported both Díaz and the Mormons, others were not convinced. Even as much of the liberal press began to unify in support of Mormons, at least one liberal paper resisted the pro-Mormon propaganda completely. *El Diario del Hogar* noted that it might come as a shock to their readers to see a respected member of the liberal press oppose Mormon immigration, but they were still worried that they posed a threat the sanctity of families in Mexico. In a more expected vein, *El Tiempo* published a series of screeds against Mormons in Mexico, signed by "S.S.Q.B.S.M." The series, as a whole, is a wild read in which the author accuses the Mormons of everything from

---

78 "Política."

being the cause of “several mysterious deaths” and “supposed suicides” to being “the principal reason that the pueblos of the frontier are in such shameful backwardness.”<sup>79</sup>

The author(s) claimed that “There is no Mormon that doesn’t rob whenever he can...they are constantly committing crimes and it is not an exaggeration to say that perhaps there is no Mexican that has done commercial dealings with them that have not been more or less scammed.”<sup>80</sup> They even claimed that the Mormons had faked their agricultural success by importing goods from California. After a fair where the Mormons displayed their agricultural goods, S.S.Q.B.S.M. wrote, “the Mormons of Colonia Juarez didn’t grow even one grain of that cereal; and there were boxes of pears, grapes and other fruits brought in express from California. They didn’t even take the precaution of removing the fruit from the boxes in which they were packed or erase the labels to disguise the deception.”<sup>81</sup>

The author(s) completely rejected the very idea that the Mormons could be good for Mexico. “The Yankees detest the Mormons and the American press unanimously declares them shameful to a civilized nation...and yet Mexico expects the Mormons to bring civilization and progress!!”<sup>82</sup> Moreover, they argued that the success of Mormons had nothing to do with their supposed abilities as agriculturalists and industrialists—“they know nothing about the arts that could increase the material progress of our nation.” Rather, the Mormons grew wealthy while “Mexicans are becoming impoverished” for three reasons. First, he argued that the one virtue that the Mormons did

---

79 S.S.Q.B.S.M., “El Mormonismo En Chihuahua.”

80 S.S.Q.B.S.M., “Datos Sobre El Mormonismo En Mejico,” *El Tiempo*, April 20, 1900.

81 S.S.Q.B.S.M., “La Inmigración Mormónica En Chihuahua,” *El Tiempo*, December 12, 1900.

82 Ibid.

have was “the one virtue of being cheap and selfish to the extreme that they don’t spend a single cent, and all the money that arrives in their hands one way or another doesn’t return to public circulation.” Second, the Mormon Church gave the colonists “substantial funding” and organized their labor and wealth—“this communism encourages much of their progress.” And third, “the great protection that the government has given them, including the privilege of importing goods without paying taxes, with which they have done copious business, to the ruin of the local businessmen.”<sup>83</sup> All together, the series of articles emphasized that Mormons could bring nothing to Mexico but the destruction of Mexicans. Such arguments were similar to those launched against Mormons in the United States.<sup>84</sup>

The liberal press, for the most part, ignored this type of outrage, but there was one issue that they could not ignore: polygamy. Polygamy was explicitly a violation of Mexican federal law, and permitting and encouraging (or simply ignoring) a polygamous sect suggested a double standard. The idea that there was a double standard for foreigners and Mexicans was a common concern during the Porfiriato, which was a time that Mexico was called “mother of foreigners, step mother of Mexicans.”<sup>85</sup> It was a particularly potent concern when it came to Mormon immigrants. For example, in 1886, *El Nacional*, frustrated that the federal government had yet to stop Mormon “barbarism,” pointed to a Colonel Andrade, a Mexican citizen who had recently been sentenced to six years in prison and fined 500 pesos for bigamy. The paper then asked “if a Mexican is

---

83 S.S.Q.B.S.M., “El Mormonismo En Chihuahua.”

84 Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Gordon, *The Mormon Question*.

85 Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 14.

punished accordingly...why can the Mormons live in our territory without also being subject to the strict observance of the laws? What privilege to they have to establish themselves in Mexican territory, without being subject in every way to the institutions and laws of the Republic?"<sup>86</sup> Thus, in order to justify their support of Mormon colonies, it was critical for the federal government and liberal press to claim that Mormons were not breaking any laws.

There were two tactics that members of the liberal press used to argue that there was no double standard. The first was to simply deny that the Mormon colonists were practicing polygamy at all. *El Imparcial* wrote that "the Mormon colonists in Mexico are not polygamists; if they profess the principle of polygamy in agreement with their creed, they do not practice it among us." The author argued that if the country were to ban people based on their religion, "we couldn't allow any Muslim into the country...Nor could we permit Chinese immigration...because in the Celestial Empire, infanticide is tolerated."<sup>87</sup> This argument would not have gained much support among conservatives who would have happily banned both Chinese and Muslim immigration. In fact *La Voz de México* said, "we are not only against the Mormon colonization...but we also disapprove of colonization with blacks, Chinese...and finally, Japanese," all of whom may be good workers, but none of whom they wanted in Mexico.<sup>88</sup> Regardless, the liberal press often insisted that the Mexican government couldn't ban Mormons on the basis of their religion, despite having wanted to do so only ten years earlier. They often insisted

---

86 "Los Mormones," November 11, 1886.

87 "Lo Que Hacen Los Mormones Para Mejorar Sus Terrenos."

88 "Una Equivicación," *La Voz de Mexico*, January 29, 1891.



that the Mormons were law-abiding, non-polygamous immigrants, and were therefore welcome in Mexico.<sup>89</sup> Complicating things was the fact that some Mormons were, in fact, law abiding and non-polygamous. Most of those who had settled in Mexico, however, were not.<sup>90</sup>

The denial that Mormons were practicing polygamy at all was the tactic that the Mormons themselves preferred. In their occasional interviews with the Mexico City press they, too, insisted that polygamy wasn't practiced in the colonies. In fact, *El Siglo XIX* printed an interview with one such colonist, in which he insisted that the Mormons had no intention of practicing polygamy in Mexico. He said that it would be impossible, since Mexican laws ban polygamy and the Mormon religion required them to follow the laws of the country in which they live. The colonist who gave this interview was William Derby Johnson—the man whose story opened this chapter as he and his four wives fled to Mexico so that they could continue living together as a polygamous family.<sup>91</sup>

*The Two Republics* was a great friend to Mormon leaders who wanted to convince Mexicans that they weren't practicing polygamy. The paper underwent its shift in its opinion of Mormonism during the fall of 1890. In September they wrote “that section of mormondom which threatens to invade Mexico is composed of fanatics who are wedded to an institution which is no less odious here than in the United States.”<sup>92</sup> But only few months after that, the paper had a friendly interview with a Mormon Elder, and reported

---

89 “¿Quienes Son Esos Hombres?” *El Imparcial*, May 6, 1910.

90 F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1987).

91 “Las Colonias de Mormones,” *El Siglo XIX*, February 11, 1891.

92 *The Two Republics*, September 25, 1890.

that “plural marriages are not practiced among the Chihuahua Mormons, and they live in all respects in conformity with the laws of the land.”<sup>93</sup> The following year *The Two Republics* wrote another article after an interview with a Mormon leader:

They are not polygamists, and even if they were, one of the main tenets of the Mormon faith is obedience to the laws, where these are plainly declared. They come down here because they have not room enough where they are, it being one of the rules of the body that every head of a family shall possess a piece of land of his own. They need more room and the only outlet is the south.<sup>94</sup>

Whether from pressure from the Díaz government, or simply from the conviction that the Mormon leaders were telling the truth, the *The Two Republics* went from one of the harshest opponents to one of the strongest supporters of Mormon immigration among the Mexico City press.

The second tactic that the liberal press used was to argue that polygamy wasn't actually illegal the way that the Mormons practiced it.<sup>95</sup> *El Universal* explained that if Mormon men married more than one woman, only the marriage that took place in front of a civil judge was legal. Only that woman was legitimately his wife. If he lived with other women it would certainly be considered adultery, but that was a crime that could only be prosecuted by request of the wounded spouse. A Mormon man would only be guilty of criminal polygamy if he tried to *legally* marry more than one wife.<sup>96</sup>

*El Siglo XIX*, with its common sarcasm, made a similar point in a debate with *La Voz de México*.

---

93 “The Mormon Colony,” *The Two Republics*, January 4, 1891.

94 “Latter Day Saints: Elder Stewart Talks about the Mormons,” *The Two Republics*, March 4, 1892.

95 For more on the legal debates surrounding polygamy in the United States, see: Gordon, *The Mormon Question*.

96 “El Mormonismo En México,” *El Universal*, March 11, 1900.

*La Voz* [*de México*], jealous defender of the Constitution of 1857(!), fears that this colonization is a direct attack on our political code. As the “*Vocecillo*” refers to polygamy, we will point out to our brother that the Constitution of 1857 doesn’t proscribe behaviors within the home. The Civil Code is the only thing that intervenes in that issue. But the Constitution, dear friend?...No *hija*, no; polygamy, very conscientiously practiced by the biblical patriarchs, that moral book of texts of Catholics, is outlawed in the Civil Code, not in the Constitution that you raise with such spirit.<sup>97</sup>

The article is dripping with sarcasm and condescension. The terms that the author uses to describe *La Voz de México* are intentionally belittling—“*Vocecillo*,” or “The Little Voice,” and *hija*, or daughter—were used as mocking terms of endearment. And when *El Siglo* referred to the *La Voz* as a “jealous defender of the Constitution of 1857(!),” they were ridiculing the fact that a conservative paper would turn to the constitution for support, since the Constitution of 1857 was considered a Liberal success against Catholicism. And finally, they even took a jab at the supposed hypocrisy of Catholics opposing polygamy when the “biblical patriarchs” were polygamists. But ultimately, *El Siglo*’s writer argued that since Mormons—or anyone—couldn’t legally contract a second marriage, Mormons didn’t actually have more than one wife. Instead, a Mormon man “has a concubine, and there is no government in the civilized world that punishes concubinage.”<sup>98</sup> In the United States, this arrangement—labeling plural wives as “concubines” and therefore legal—failed to soothe anyone.

*El Tiempo* did finally admit in 1900 that “plural marriage practiced by an individual is not opposed to the letter of the law, such that it is actually concubinage.” However, they went on to quickly add that even the liberal press “will have to agree with

---

97 *El Siglo XIX*, January 13, 1891. The ellipsis is in the original.

98 Ibid.

us that such a fact is profoundly immoral, given the social ideas of Mexicans, the same among Catholics as freethinkers.” More importantly, they argued that many aspects of Mormonism *were*, in fact, illegal. “The Mormons possess real estate in common and levy capital taxes for religious association, and practice the ceremonies of their worship in public, such as baptism, for example, that they can only administer on the banks of a river under the open sky. These are prohibited things, punished under the laws of the reform.” *El Tiempo* argued that Mormons shouldn’t receive an exception to these laws, which should be “applied as rigorously as they are applied to the nation’s Catholics,” “even if they do raise a good crop of cereals and grow leafy and well-formed squash.” They argued that “the foreign Mormons can’t enjoy privileges that are denied to Mexican Catholics; and since it is the essence of their religion that they possess goods in common and practice their religion publicly, their establishment in our territory is incompatible with national legislation.” Authors were clear in their demands: “Repeal it, or deny them the right to settle in the country.”<sup>99</sup>

*El Tiempo* was right: the Mormons did hold goods and lands in common, practice religion openly and require a what *could* be considered a “capital tax” to be a part of both the Church and the colony—all of which were technically illegal. But the liberal press never was willing to admit that the Mormon immigrants received benefits that Mexicans didn’t have. As *El Tiempo* argued, the federal and state governments did nothing to curb this illegal behavior. Just as the government was willing to overlook violations of the law for the colony at Topolobampo in the expectation that it would bring capital,

---

99 “Incompatibilidad de Mormonismo Con Las Leyes Mejicanas,” *El Tiempo*, March 24, 1900.

development and “progress” to Mexico, they extended the same benefits to Mormons. Foreigners, it seems, had their own set of laws under Díaz’s regime. Even so, they attempted to be part of the community at large and actively engaged in events that might help others see them as Mexican as well as Mormon.

#### **MORMONS IN THE DESERT WITH MEXICANS**

In 1896, the Mormon colonists presented a display of their best produce at the Coyoacan Exhibition—a national fair in Mexico City. As President Díaz made the rounds of the various displays, he was evidently impressed by the Mormon exhibit. According to the Mormon press, “President Diaz expressed his pleasure, remarking that the work was more like that of thrift and energy for 50 years than of a few years of arduous toil since the colonization first began.” The article also expressed hope that “this official recognition of what the Mormons are doing in his nation” would encourage Mexicans “to cultivate the acquaintance of the Mormons and profit by their example.” Not only did Mormonism teach them “to be good citizens,” but they were the best possible citizens because of their “heaven-given genius of redeeming the earth of its barrenness to the production of that which sustains and blesses.”<sup>100</sup>

The Coyoacan Exhibition was one of many similar fairs that Mormon colonists attended. At another fair in the city of Chihuahua, Díaz reportedly lingered again over their exhibit, heaped praise on the colonists, and recalled their successful exhibit in Coyoacan. He even asked kindly after the Mormon colonists that he had met in Mexico

---

<sup>100</sup> Originally published in the *Salt Lake City News*. Reprinted “Mormon Colonization in Mexico,” *The Two Republics*, July 16, 1896.

City. The Mormons themselves hosted similar exhibitions in Colonia Juarez. They invited the president, who responded that he was pleased and honored by the invitation, and sent the governor of Chihuahua in his stead. The governor and other Mexican officials gave speeches during opening and closing ceremonies, heaping praise on the Mormon colonists. The colonists in turn printed and reprinted the words of praise as evidence of their good standing in Mexico and the great benefit they brought to the nation.

These exhibitions and the way that the Mormons reported on them reveal two important aspects of the identity and networks of relationships that the Mormon colonists developed in Mexico. First, the fairs provided an opportunity for the Mormons to prove and to perform their *Mexicanidad* despite the fact that the press seemed to think it was beyond them. They emphasized that their own progress was progress for Mexico and, in the process, that they were in fact Mexican. They valued the approval of Mexican officials and used the opportunity to display the fact that they belonged in Mexico. Second, the way that the Mormons reported on the exhibitions also emphasized their own superiority over and distance from Mexicans. They emphasized that their success was the fruit of their hard work and their “heaven-given genius of redeeming the earth of its barrenness” and that Mexicans should learn a lesson from the Mormon colonists. Sometimes the colonists described this distinction in religious terms, implying that their success was due to God and the Mormon faith. At other times, particularly during the Revolution, the Mormons most often described Mexican behavior in terms of inherently

Mexican racial traits, and described themselves primarily by their own sense of whiteness.

Historian George Ryskamp has argued that the Mormons in Mexico developed a “transnational migrant identity” that was simultaneously Mormon, Anglo-American and Mexican.<sup>101</sup> Ryskamp examined the Mexican Civil Registration, where the colonists registered the birth of their children. The act of registering the birth of their children was an act of conforming to Mexican identity, as was claiming Mexican citizenship on behalf of their children, as many of the colonists did. The colonists were careful to hide the truth of their relationships from officials of the Civil Registration—men registering their children might report that their children were born out of wedlock, provide incorrect information or otherwise do what they could to prevent documented evidence of polygamous marriages. Ryskamp suggests that the Mormons did so out of concern that they might again be forced out of their new homes. This seems likely, but the practice was also probably part of a larger effort on the part of Mormon colonists to portray themselves as law-abiding Mexican citizens. The fact that they gave interviews to the press in which they insisted that they were good Mexicans who did not practice polygamy was another aspect of this.

One of the Mormons’ greatest allies in their effort to deny that they practiced polygamy was *The Two Republics*. The paper once gave an article about the colonies the lengthy title: “A Thrifty Farming People: The Colonia Juarez Fair Was an Immense

---

101 George Ryskamp, “Mormon Colonists in the Mexican Civil Registration,” in *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, ed. Jason Dormady and Jared M. Tamez (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

Success: THEY OBEY THE LAW.” The noticeably prominent subtitle that shouted in all capital letters that the colonists obeyed the law shows how important that fact was to establish. It meant not only that they weren't practicing polygamy but that didn't receive special extralegal benefits due to their status as foreign colonists. This was critical to maintaining the slow public shift towards goodwill that they had been earning in the previous years.

Another way that the Mormons portrayed their worthiness as Mexicans was by emphasizing their ability to “make the desert bloom.” Even in the early years of Mormon settlement, when the whole of the Mexico City press was united against them, most journalists recognized their ability to “make the desert bloom,” and thought that they had the potential to do the same in Chihuahua, since they had done so well in Utah. *El Nacional* wrote, “The Mormons will be able to, with their incessant industry, ‘make the desert smile,’” even though the paper still considered the colonies a “nascent cancer.”<sup>102</sup> Even the eternal opponent of Mormon immigration, *El Tiempo*, was willing to concede that the colonists had turned “arid regions of Chihuahua...into an oasis.” But, they quickly added, even if the Mormons did “convert the arid deserts of the north of Mexico into beautiful gardens,” Mexico was “not a nation of children” to be distracted with promises of gardens.<sup>103</sup> The idea that Mormons could make the desert blossom only increased as the press spoke more positively of Mormon immigrants. *El Imparcial*, for example, wrote that “When the Mormons established themselves in Chihuahua, they

---

102 “Los Mormones,” *El Nacional*, November 11, 1886.

103 “Colonia de Mormones En Coahuila,” *El Tiempo*, March 28, 1910.



found dry, virgin lands. Now [in 1909] they have transformed them into lands useful for agriculture, covered them with abundant water, without danger of droughts and disasters.”<sup>104</sup>

In many ways, the Mexican press was using tropes that Mormons had been encouraging and creating for decades. Jared Farmer has argued that the idea that Mormons could make the desert bloom was, in part, a false memory. Provo, Utah was actually founded right on a lake. Utah may be largely covered in deserts, but the Mormons settling in what is now known as the Mormon Corridor of Utah were settling in a region that had consistent access to irrigation.<sup>105</sup> And the Provo area was also not an empty, barren wasteland, untrod by human foot, as the Mormons and the press in both the United States and Mexico described. Mormons rewrote their own history until they themselves believed that they had colonized an empty desert wasteland, conquered untamed lands and made the desert bloom.

A similar process happened in the Casas Grandes River Valley. Even though the region where the Mormons settled is technically a desert grassland, the valley’s rich soil is well irrigated by the Casas Grandes River.<sup>106</sup> The colonists increased the potential of the river by creating extensive irrigation canals. According to Thomas Cottam Romney, however, the Mormons built “modern towns and villages from the once barren

---

104 “Lo Que Hacen Los Mormones Para Mejorar Sus Terrenos,” *El Imparcial*, May 28, 1909.

105 Jared Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

106 Janet Bennion, *Desert Patriarchy: Mormon and Mennonite Communities in the Chihuahua Valley* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

wastelands of Mexico.”<sup>107</sup> Nelle Spillsbury Hatch's book about Colonia Juarez has a chapter title “How the Desert Shall Blossom,” in which she discusses the struggles that the colonists had scratching a living from the desert lands.<sup>108</sup> Colonia Juarez was situated on a tributary of the Casas Grandes rather than the river itself, and so it was in fact more difficult there to establish large-scale agriculture than in Dublan or Díaz. But that allowed Juarez to become an important site for the cultural and industrial products of the colonies—particularly canning the agricultural wealth of colonies on the Casas Grandes River.

Estelle Webb Thomas recalled that when the family arrived at Colonia Dublan, they had never seen “such tall corn, such rich wheat and alfalfa fields, nor such quantities of fruit and vegetables.” It was this wealth of produce that allowed Colonia Juarez to create such successful canning operations and sell the produce of the colonies across Mexico and the United States.<sup>109</sup> However, Mormons had already developed an identity as a group that brought civilization to desert wastelands. This self-identification worked similarly well in the context of northern Mexico, which many Mexican elites saw as an underpopulated, uncivilized place. Thus, the identity that the Mormons had constructed for themselves fit perfectly into the expectations of the Mexican federal government, each reinforcing the other.

---

107 Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2005), 55.

108 Nelle Spillsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954).

109 Estelle Webb Thomas, *Uncertain Sanctuary: A Story of Mormon Pioneering in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: Westwater Press, 1980), 15.

One noticeable way that the colonists continued to frame themselves as good “civilizers” for Mexico was by arguing that they would be a good influence on the region’s transient labor population. *El Economista Mexicano* said that the Mormon colonists hoped to hire Yaqui workers “as peons...by offering very advantageous propositions.” They added:

It should be noted, of course, it will be a great benefit to bring Yaquis to our agricultural colonies as laborers - say the Mormons - and the Indians, once established among us, will become attached and undoubtedly take affection for the land on which they live...and so we will have constant workers in our work; which does not happen now, unfortunately, because of...the characteristics of the laborers in this country, who make a pattern of frequently moving to different employers and places.<sup>110</sup>

According to *El Economista*, the Mormons made the argument that their efforts to hire the Yaqui would make them into a stable, reliable workforce. As I discussed in chapter two, this was a critical aspect of what the federal government sought in bringing American colonists to Mexico—the possibility of settling the transient, mostly Indian, rural workforce. Mormons portrayed themselves as agents of civilization in Mexico, just as they had done in Utah.<sup>111</sup> In other words, as the perfect addition to Mexico.

The colonists displayed their suitability as colonists in Mexico in smaller ways, too. They named all of their colonies after prominent Mexicans; even Colonia Oaxaca was so named because Oaxaca was President Diaz's home state.<sup>112</sup> Many gave their children Spanish names and claimed Mexican citizenship for them. The colonists also made efforts to occasionally perform Mexican cultural practices. For example, some

---

110 “Colonización: Los Yaquis Y Los Mormones,” *El Economista Mexicano*, August 16, 1902.

111 W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

112 Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 115.

colonists recalled going to Casas Grandes or La Ascención to join celebrations on Independence Day and Cinco de Mayo. While they would enjoy the parade and the national anthem, Nellie Harvey recalled that only “some of us could read [the lyrics to the anthem] and say the words but most of us couldn’t...We didn’t have much to do with [Mexicans].”<sup>113</sup> Nellie’s recollection suggests something of a half-hearted performance of *Mexicanidad*. They would attend the Cinco de Mayo parade, but even years after living in Mexico, didn’t know enough Spanish to read the lyrics to the national anthem. Another colonist recalled that, even though they flew the Mexican flag, they “didn’t get the Mexican traits.” She stated “we always felt American, but we lived in the Mexican territory.”<sup>114</sup>

This somewhat half-hearted effort at performing *Mexicanidad* was a common theme in the oral histories with the colonists. Many of them never picked up more than a little Spanish. And in colonies where there were fewer Mexicans, there were even fewer efforts to engage with Mexican identity. Mary Sherratt remembered celebrating Cinco de Mayo in Colonia Juarez, where there was a larger Mexican presence, but “we didn’t up in Chuichupa. There were no Mexicans up in our settlement up in Chuichupa at all.”<sup>115</sup> This wasn’t completely true, since even in Chuichupa the Mormons would occasionally hire Mexican workers. But with fewer Mexicans around—and no Mexican officials or elites—it seems there was no cause to perform *Mexicanidad*.

---

113 Charles Harvey and Nellie Harvey, interview by John Abraham, July 3, 1972, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

114 Effie Redd Jameson, interview by Gary Shumway, August 18, 1977, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

115 Mary Diantha Cox Sherratt, interview by Stevan Martin Hales, April 23, 1982, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Mormon colonists emphasized their relationships with national and state elites while letting their relationships with other Mexicans fade from collective memory. The stories of President Díaz applauding their success at national fairs and federal officials such as Pacheco helping them remain in Chihuahua are prominent parts of Mormon history of the colonies. But the stories that are much less frequently told are the ones about the networks that the Mormons created and relied on locally within Chihuahua, whether with local officials or with Mexican workers. For example, in 1892, there was a riot in La Ascension, in which the rioters killed a local official.<sup>116</sup> William Derby Johnson wrote in his diary, “Last night heard of the revolution in Ascension as a result of the election of our friend Aucheta to the Presidency of Ascension. The Church party do not like it, got up a revolution and killed Aucheta.”<sup>117</sup> William’s diary described Aucheta as “our friend.” Even if he was using that term loosely, Aucheta was an important supporter of Mormon colonization. Brandon Morgan has shown that the colonists were much more dependent on local Mexicans than Mormon popular history suggests.<sup>118</sup> And yet the colonists’ relationship with Aucheta and other Mexicans in La Ascension and Casas Grandes is often glossed over or completely ignored in printed and oral histories of the colonies.

---

116 For more information on the riot, see José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

117 “William Derby Johnson Diary” n.d., L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

118 Brandon Morgan, “Colonia Díaz and the Railroad That Almost Was: The Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific, 1887-96,” in *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, ed. Jared M. Tamez and Jason Dormady (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

The Governor of Chihuahua also reported common and cordial relationships between Mexicans and the colonists. In his report to the federal government about the colony he wrote:

When it happens that Casas Grandes or Ascension invite them to a dance, they come with their family, retire early, and do not cause the slightest disorder. Nevertheless, these relations are of courtesy and commerce, because basically we do not love them, perhaps because of their sect or a question of race. This kind of colony will not suit us, but the two existing in Chihuahua, as colonies, have had good success.<sup>119</sup>

Very little is written about dances at Casas Grandes or Ascension in Mormon sources, and yet the Governor seemed to think they were frequent enough and important enough to belong in a report to the federal government. Colonist and historian Thomas Cottam Romney, however, stated that the colonists only accepted these invitations rarely, and for the purpose of maintaining good relationships. Their attendance at the dances, however, doesn't seem to have done much to help them fit into the community. The Governor's report suggests that the residents of La Ascension and Casas Grandes were aware that the Mormons wanted to keep the relationships more business than social. It's worth considering, then, the possibility that if the Mormons had been more dedicated to becoming a part of local Mexican society, these relationships may have looked more like the networks that the Socialists or Confederates developed in their respective colonies.

The oral histories are sometimes contradictory about how integrated the Mormon colonies were local society. Ara Call's recollections were remarkably common when he stated that "during those early days, the Mormon colonists were somewhat like a little bit

---

119 "Los Mormones En El Estado de Chihuahua," *El Siglo XIX*, November 26, 1889.

of USA in Mexico.” They celebrated American Independence Day, read the news in English, and spoke English and home and in school. At the same time, however, he noted that “around us there were many native Mexicans that we associated with. Generally, we had one or two or three or more working for us on our farm.”<sup>120</sup> Most of the Mexicans that the colonists discussed in their oral histories were limited to federal officials, or unnamed workers or soldiers. Like many Mexican immigrants to the United States—or indeed, many immigrant groups across the world—Mormon colonists seem to have held a dual identity.<sup>121</sup>

In the spring of 1887, a group of Mexicans who had joined the Mormon Church in Mexico City traveled the thousand miles between the nation’s capital and Colonia Juarez. The Mormon Church had bought some 12,000 acres for these Mexican members, and invited them to join the colony. The Mexican colonists themselves, it seems, expected to receive land to work and live in communion with their religious brethren. But by the end of the year, every single one of them had returned to Mexico City. Almost nothing is written about this episode. According to Historian LaMond Tullis, “The record is silent on how many arrived or what resources or expectations they had. Were children born en route? Did whole families journey together? Were the travelers young or old, skilled or

---

<sup>120</sup> Ara O. Call, interview by Jessie Embry, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>121</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

unskilled? What sacrifices, hardships, and privations did they experience? We do not know.”<sup>122</sup>

The relationships that developed between these Mexican Mormons and their immigrant Mormon neighbors is difficult to tease out of the records that do exist, which is true of their relationships with all other Mexicans who were not part of the political progressive elite. Tullis interviewed the granddaughter of one colonist, who claimed that the Mexican Mormons who joined Colonia Juarez were poor because they were ‘living in a manner not in accord with the Mormon idea of industry and thrift.’ So they were brought to Juarez, ‘but instead of imitating the ways of their white brothers they wanted to be fed without the labor of getting food. A large majority of these folks left the Church and returned to their old homes and ways of living.’”<sup>123</sup> This blatant racism undoubtedly shaped these relationships. But the fact that so little is written about the episode with the Mexican Mormon colonists is equally telling: Mexicans are not a part of the story of the Mormon colonies.

Many colonists were also suspicious of Mexicans. Wasel Washburn said, “even though we were in Mexico and the Spanish people were around quite a bit, it seemed like we had a fear of them.”<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Athelia Moffett Johnson, growing up in Dublan, recalled that all the children in the colony were strictly required to be home before sundown, a rule that she explained by noting that “there were Mexicans living all around

---

122 F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1987), 62.

123 Ibid., 63.

124 Wasel Black Washburn, interview by Jessie Embry, November 3, 1983, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.



among us. We weren't really frightened of the Mexicans, but it was just a precautionary thing. Father wanted to make sure that the children were all safely home."<sup>125</sup> When asked about Mexicans, Nellie Harvey said "I had a much kinder feeling toward them than many people did. My mother was very careful to have us respect them as other people and to respect their rights." Nevertheless, she noted that she didn't "mingle with them as much as some of the other young people did," and never learned much Spanish.<sup>126</sup>

Nevertheless, Mexicans were essential to the work that Mormons did, and provided an important source of hired labor. Antone Romney recalled that that even though Colonia Juarez was "a nice little Mormon community, there were Mexican people there [that] would come in to work for these people."<sup>127</sup> John Redd spoke of the experience of helping build the family house when he was young. His dad hired a Danish bricklayer, Breinholt, who also served as an overseer of the Mexican workers that they hired. None of the men they employed were Mormon—in fact Breinholt, the bricklayer, would spit tobacco juice at John and his siblings while they helped carry bricks. One day, one of the Mexican workers stole Breinholt's watch. Breinholt "picked up a big 2x4 and went to the Mexican who was working for us and holding the club over him told him he'd better get the watch or he'd be killed." Once Breinholt got his watch back, he "slapped [the worker] in the face, paid him off, and fired him."<sup>128</sup> While John Redd's

---

125 Athelia Moffett Johnson, interview by Mike Cushman, September 5, 1971, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

126 Harvey and Harvey, interview.

127 Antone K. Romney, interview by Key Alta Haynes, February 21, 1974, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

128 John W. Redd, "History of J.W. Redd" n.d., Redd Family Papers; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

experience was particularly striking, the fact that his family relied on Mexican workers to build their house was common. The colonists hired Mexicans for agricultural work, taking care of livestock, construction, and even housework. Mexican labor was essential to the colonies, even as the colonists recalled thoroughly “American” colonies, and mentioned that they never learned Spanish, rarely mention any Mexicans by name, and point out the value of keeping an isolated, Mormon community.

### **IDENTITY AND NETWORKS IN THE REVOLUTION**

The Mexican Revolution began in 1910, and in its early months Mormons expected that they would be spared from its effects. They even continued to make plans for establishing more colonies.<sup>129</sup> By 1912, however, it was increasingly evident that would not be the case. Various revolutionary groups and federal troops sought food, water and horses from the colonists, sometimes completely emptying their stores and livestock corrals. The Mormons did their best to walk a delicate line of neutrality. Women often spent hours cooking for Pancho Villa's soldiers, hoping that if they provided good food, the soldiers wouldn't take everything they owned, which they often found to be a successful method. Rinda Bentley Sudweeks recalled her mother spent a day “making biscuits and giving [Villa's soldiers] biscuits, molasses and milk. She was trying to keep them from taking the hay.” The soldiers left with full bellies and the Bentley family kept their hay.<sup>130</sup> Many Mormons recalled that Villa took what he needed politely and demanded that his soldiers treat the colonists with respect. While the

---

129 “Colonia de Mormones En Coahuila.”

130 Rinda Bentley Sudweeks, interview by Jessie Embry, June 8, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Mormons often resented having to give over so many of their belongings, they often sympathized with Pancho Villa's cause. Lula Millet, for example, explained that “Pancho Villa was not really a bad man; he was merely trying to do what he thought was right. A lot of these killings and robberies that were laid at his feet were not his. They were bandits. He was more of a friend to the Mormon people.”<sup>131</sup>

While Villa's troops and the federal army made life difficult, and often anxious, for the Mormons, neither group were the ones that finally pushed the colonists from Mexico. Revolutionary General José Inez Salazar was far less polite in his demands from the Mormon colonists than Villa. In July of 1912, Salazar demanded that the colonists turn over their weapons. The colonists feared that, without weapons, they would be completely at the mercy of bandits as well as the rebels. The only option, they decided, was to make a show of giving up their weapons by producing a collection of small and out-dated firearms and then flee the country.

Volumes have already been dedicated to the history of the Mormon Exodus from Mexico.<sup>132</sup> However, it's worth considering here the ways that the Revolution and the Exodus are a window into the relationships and identities that the Mormon colonists constructed in Mexico. Most noticeably, the revolution sharpened the Mormon

---

<sup>131</sup> Lula Moffett Millet, interview by Mike Cushman, August 11, 1971, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>132</sup> Karl Young's 1967 work is devoted strictly to stories of the Exodus Karl E. Young, *The Long Hot Summer of 1912: Episodes in the Flight of the Mormon Colonists from Mexico* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1967); However, nearly all histories of the colonies written by Mormons devote multiple chapters to the experience of the Exodus. See, for example: Annie Richardson Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz* (Salt Lake, Utah: Publishers Press, 1972); Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*; Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954); Karl E. Young, *Ordeal in Mexico: Tales of Danger and Hardship Collected from Mormon Colonists* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co, 1968).

understanding of themselves as inherently different from Mexicans. This is evident in many of the oral histories, and memoirs and popular histories, but is perhaps most striking in Thomas Cottam Romney's understanding of why the Exodus took place. Romney was both a colonist and a trained historian. He argued that the revolution, and the rebels' demand for firearms was merely “the match that touched off the powder.” Mexicans and the Mormon colonists were simply too different peoples. He argued that

The ultimate, therefore more fundamental causes [of the Exodus], were to be found in the contrasting natures, traditions, habits, and ideals of the colonists and their neighbors; in the envy and covetousness of the natives developed over a long period of years and resulting from the material and social progress of the colonists as expressed in thriving settlements, well-cultivated orchards and farms, and convenient and comfortable homes and in their up-to-date educational system maintained by the colonists for the education of their children.

Romney concluded that “a large measure of blame must be attached to the natives living adjacent to the Mormon colonies for the leading part they took in driving the colonists from Mexican territory.”<sup>133</sup> Importantly, Romney's interpretation isn't simply based on the idea that Mexicans resented their economic success, but also that they had “contrasting natures.” It reflects the interpretation cited earlier from a colonist who argued that the Mexican Mormons were too lazy to learn from the superior influence of the Anglo Mormons.

Many colonists similarly explained the behavior of the revolutionaries as based on traits that were inherent to Mexicans. For example, Irvin R. Jackson was only seven at the time of the Exodus, but remembered Mexicans as being “really bloodthirsty” in the most literal sense. He recalled that the soldiers would take a cow “and prop or hold her up and

---

<sup>133</sup> Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 148.

cut her throat. The blood would run into buckets and the blood was passed around for the soldiers to drink.” To this day, he said, Mexicans “don’t mind drinking a little bit of hot blood that way.”<sup>134</sup> Despite Irvin’s memories, there is not—to the best of my knowledge—any regular practice of drinking fresh blood in Mexico. (Although various parts of Mexico, like much of the world, do have dishes that involve animal blood in the preparation of the meal.) It is possible that he watched revolutionary soldiers do this, but it seems likely that this was part of a child’s memory of frightening and apparently savage people. Rinda Bentley Sudweeks said that the revolutionary soldiers “would take things because it is more or less a Mexican’s nature and it was war time too.”<sup>135</sup> Memories such as these were fairly common among the colonists—describing the behavior of the soldiers as attributes that were inherently Mexican.

While Mormons often understood the behavior of the revolutionaries in terms of Mexican traits, they also understood their own treatment at the hands of the revolutionaries as being based on their racial and national identity – in short their otherness. Antone Romney recalled that “the Mexicans got bolder as the revolution came on and wanted the white people to leave.”<sup>136</sup> Douglas Galbraith explained that Pancho Villa’s “mischief” involved him being “tough with the white people, taking their properties, their horses, guns, and whatever they had.”<sup>137</sup> Glen Haynie explained that

---

134 Irvin R. Jackson, interview by Tillman S. Boxwell, October 9, 1978, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

135 Sudweeks, interview.

136 Romney, interview.

137 Douglas Galbraith and Florence Galbraith, interview by Kim Stewart, John Abraham, and Betty Mitson, June 30, 1971, MSS 6727, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

when the colonists arrived in Texas, the US government gave tents to “all the white people that came out” of Mexico.<sup>138</sup> And Harvey Done described how, after the Exodus, Mexicans moved into the homes of the “whites.” Even though some of the houses were returned to their Mormon owners, he said, Colonia Juarez was from that point on “a mixed group. Before that it was all whites.”<sup>139</sup>

It is striking that the predominant way that the colonists described themselves was not by their religion—despite the fact that the colony had been built around that religion—but by their sense of their own race. Even identifying the colonists as Americans was far less common than their tendency to call themselves “whites.” W. Paul Reeve has argued that Mormons struggled around the turn of the century to reclaim their whiteness, which may have also played into the colonists understanding of themselves as white. But it’s also clear that in this case, they constructed their whiteness in contrast to the “mischief” of Mexicans.

If the Revolution sharpened the colonists’ sense of whiteness, it also brought out their sense of Americanness. Before the Revolution, many Mormons had mixed feelings about the United States. On the one hand, they still felt culturally American, and Mormons had long fought to justify their right to US citizenship. On the other hand, they felt that the United States had denied them their rights and unjustly persecuted them. However, through the Revolution, a strong sense of community and belonging in the United States developed. In some ways, this may have been gratitude that their US

---

138 Glen C. Haynie, interview by Leonard R. Grover, November 29, 1979, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

139 Ellen P. Moffett Done and Norman Moffett, interview by Mike Cushman, September 4, 1971, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

citizenship lent them a certain level of protection. They even appealed to the US consulate for support, which sent a stern letter to Mexican military leaders, reminding them that they had no right to bother Americans. A strongly worded letter wasn't much, but it was at least a show of moral support that the United States recognized the Mormons as US citizens. Of course, when the colonists came to Mexico, they had actually given up the right to claim support of their home government, but as I have discussed in previous chapters, the United States never stopped viewing the colonists as US citizens whom they needed to protect. In her life memories, Moneta Fillerup expressed how grateful she was for the support of the United States government during the Exodus. She wrote, "We were thankful to be in the United States and we knew we would receive help from the government. All Americans leaving Mexico at this time were assured of that."<sup>140</sup> Expressions such as these were common.

Even colonists who had claimed Mexican citizenship were happy to take refuge the United States, especially since Mexican citizens could be conscripted into the military. Anson Bowen Call was one such colonist with Mexican citizenship. His daughter Mildred was fourteen when the revolutionary violence reached the colonies. She recalled that "Papa had to leave because he had taken out Mexican citizenship. They told him that anybody that was a citizen had to take up arms and fight. So he left and was

---

<sup>140</sup> Moneta Johnson Fillerup, *My Treasure Trove of Memories*, ed. Dorothy Fillerup Boyer and Wanda Turley Smith, Rev. ed. (Mesa, Ariz.: Legend eXpress Publishing, 2004).

gone about six weeks and then came back.”<sup>141</sup> Despite his Mexican citizenship, Anson and his family were among those who took refuge in the United States.

The colonists' identification with the United States, however, wasn't simply one of convenience and safety. Even years later, some of them continued to express gratitude and patriotism for the support that they had received from the US government. Even fifty years after the Exodus, Douglas Galbraith still got emotional about the support that the United States gave the colonists, saying “I don’t know if I can say this next part without breaking down.” The tents and food that “Uncle Sam” had sent the colonists, he said, “made me definitely realized what a good country the United States is.”<sup>142</sup>

On the other hand, stories from the Revolution sometimes reveal glimpses of true friendships, or at least solid partnerships, between Mormons and Mexicans. Several of the oral histories mention that Mexicans helped them out quite a lot during the revolution, including protecting their houses and belongings from looting while they were gone. Other histories mention that it was Mexican friends who warned the Mormons when they were at risk from rebel forces. Throughout the Revolution, Anson Bown Call and his family left and returned to Mexico three times. When they were in the United States, the family left all of their belongings in Mexico, and had Mexicans—whose identities are never mentioned—stay in their houses. Anson's daughter Mildred recalled that “a man slept in Mama’s house but a man lived in Aunt Julia’s [Anson's fourth wife] house and

---

141 Mildred Call Hurst, interview by Jessie Embry, July 12, 1976, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

142 Galbraith and Galbraith, interview.



watched over and took care of things and everything was there when we got back.”<sup>143</sup>

The Call family was not the only family who had their homes and belongings guarded by Mexican friends while they sought safety in the United States. This seems like quite a favor to ask of a friend, or even something to expect of an employee. It's curious, then, that these people are never identified, named, or discussed any further than these brief stories.

Other Mormon families found Mexicans had moved into their houses without permission. When Nellie Done and her husband returned to Mexico, they found that “the Mexicans had taken possession of my home and property. Somebody had told them that if they just hang onto it, it would be theirs.” The Dones decided to move in with Nellie's parents while they waited for the Mexicans to be evicted from their house. Nellie's brother Harvey explained that “Casas Grandes authorities let them know that they...would have to vacate the homes.” It's noteworthy that the local authorities actually took an active role in removing squatters from Mormon homes. Yet none of the colonists explained which authorities they could rely on to take an active interest in their causes, and if this assistance required personal connections, or if the authorities in Casas Grandes were simply very attentive in their jobs.

These stories are just a brief glimpse into the relationships that supported the work of the Mormon colonists. When the Chihuahuan Governor Ahumada gave the opening address for the fair in Colonia Juarez, *The Two Republics* quoted at length from his speech, including his statement “all Mexico could learn a lesson of industry and success

---

143 Hurst, interview.

from the small body of refugees who began in a lowly way to till the soil only a dozen years ago, with but little hope of success and who had risen above their fellows with the waving banner of success in the front rank.”<sup>144</sup> Yet this representation ignores the fact that Mexicans had, in fact, done some of the work involved in creating the goods that the colony displayed at the fair. Mormons were engaged in a similar process of ignoring the contributions of Mexicans to their colonies. The colonists related to and valued the romanticized version of a progressive Mexico symbolized by Díaz and similar officials, while simultaneously framing themselves as above and apart from other Mexicans.<sup>145</sup> The sources used in this chapter add to the understanding that historians have recently developed about the identities that Mormon colonists created for themselves. The oral histories give a clearer shape to the Mexican aspect of the colonists’ identities and shows where their sense of *Mexicanidad* met its limitations.

---

144 “A Thrifty Farming People: The Colonia Juarez Fair Was an Immense Success: They Obey the Law: Brief Description of the Fair at Colonia Juarez,” *The Two Republics*, September 9, 1900.

145 Ryskamp makes a similar argument about the colonists identifying with an idealized Mexico. Ryskamp, “Mormon Colonists in the Mexican Civil Registration”; For more on the way that Americans often viewed Porfirio Díaz as the symbol of an idealized, progressive Mexico, see: Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014).

## Conclusion

In 1896, Los Mochis was little more than a collection of former Topolobampo colonists—maybe some 40 in total—who had begun working their own “plats” of land and fighting with the remaining few colonists at the bay about water rights. These colonists would have uniformly called the colony a failure. The Mexico City press—and one might suppose the Mexican federal government—agreed. It’s easy to consider the Topolobampo Colony an overwhelming failure—and from the view of the colonists who thought they would change the world, it undoubtedly was. The vast majority returned to the United States disappointed or convinced that they had been cheated, having lost a combined many thousands of dollars.

Today, however, Los Mochis has over a quarter million people. Throughout the twentieth century, a booming sugar industry developed around Los Mochis, dominated by Benjamin F. Johnston’s United Sugar Company. The industrialized agriculture drove urbanization, bringing rural Mexicans to the growing city to take part in the industrial-capitalist economy that developed around Johnston’s company.<sup>1</sup> The United Sugar Company helped build a large urban infrastructure, which in turn helped drive further foreign investment in the region. In other words, Los Mochis developed exactly as the Porfirian government hoped.

---

<sup>1</sup> Francisco Padilla Beltrán, *Los Empresarios Del Valle Del Fuerte Durante El Porfiriato*, Colección Veredas (Culiacán Rosales, Sinaloa: Colegio de Bachilleres del Estado de Sinaloa: Dirección de Investigación y Fomento de la Cultura Regional (DIFOCUR), 1996); Gill, *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*.

The capitalist development of Los Mochis all began with the socialist colony. It attracted Johnston's attention to the region and gave him the ability to use the social and economic networks that the colonists had spent years developing. With the help and support of the local elite, the irrigation canal that the colonists had built and even some of the fields that they had cleared, plowed and planted, Johnston developed large-scale industrialized agriculture in the region. Thus, when the history of the colony is viewed from a local perspective—as historian Mario Gill does—the colony seems more like one of the most successful colonization schemes of the nineteenth century in Mexico.

It is the Mormon colonies, however, that often receive the credit for being the most successful of the Porfirian-era colonization schemes.<sup>2</sup> They had the most successful and extensive irrigation, which produced enough agricultural wealth that the colonists could preserve it and ship it across Mexico and the United States. Mexicans came for miles to purchase their livestock.<sup>3</sup> Anthropologist Janet Bennion suggests that to this day there are “two worlds” in the Casas Grandes region, where most of the Mormon colonists settled: “desert lands...reflective of the local Hispanic/Indian settlement patterns of the last five hundred years; and lush farmlands, orchards and ordered homesteads with imported greenery from the United States reflective of the immigrant Protestant white colonists who were determined to transform the wilderness into a paradise.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970* (México, D.F: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1993); Hart, *Empire and Revolution*.

<sup>3</sup> “Los Mormones En El Estado de Chihuahua,” *El Siglo XIX*, November 26, 1889; William D. Farnsworth, interview by Mike Cushman, August 17, 1971, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Bennion, *Desert Patriarchy: Mormon and Mennonite Communities in the Chihuahua Valley* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 41.

From this perspective, it's easy to understand why the Mormon colonies have such a reputation. After all, the Mormon colonies are the only ones that continue to exist in any recognizable form. At the same time, the fact that Colonia Juarez continues to have two separate cultures suggests that—on the basis of Mexico's immigration goals—the Mormon colonies were not the success they hoped for. The Mormon colonists made public claims of *Mexicanidad*, but never considered themselves Mexicans. They kept polite relationships with the local elite, but only because they felt it was good politics to do so. They employed the local working class, but only in low-wage, temporary positions in homes and fields. The industrial work was done by the Mormons themselves. Federal and local officials hoped that the Mormon ability to “make the desert bloom” would teach Mexicans to do the same. Instead, there are “two worlds” in Casas Grandes. “Mormons will always be and consider themselves simply Mormons. They will support, fight for and help their own sect, but they don't care if the government or social order of the country where they live...is destroyed.” Between their refusal to become part of the Mexican nation and their “monstrous doctrine of polygamy,” “the Mormons cannot become good citizens.” *La Patria* argued that, because “their doctrines are entirely subversive to the moral and political order of any country,” they didn't deserve “to obtain the right of citizenship.”<sup>5</sup>

The Confederate colonists, in contrast, left almost no lasting mark in the Tuxpan region. The colonists that remained integrated either with the local population or with the next wave of American immigration that came with the oil boom. Some Mexican families

---

5 J.F.G., “Boletín.”

in Tuxpan still trace their ancestry back to Confederate heritage, but on the whole their impact on the region was minimal.

Defining the successes and failures of the Mexico's immigration policy during the nineteenth century has recently proven contentious. José Angel Hernández has suggested that historians have seen immigration policy as a "failure" because they judge that Mexico not becoming "more like Europe" is itself a failure. "The failure of colonization in Mexico, for most historians," Hernández writes "is a failure to whiten the populace."<sup>6</sup> Hernández analyzes nineteenth-century colonization laws and the experiences of Mexican American repatriates to Mexico to argue that the goal of Mexico's immigration policy was based on strengthening federal control of Mexico and Mexicans. He claims that historians have worked under the assumption that Mexico's goals were about whitening and modernizing its population without sufficient support. If the federal government's goal was the "defense of la Raza," then the successful colonies were those that repatriated Mexican Americans.<sup>7</sup>

The analysis in this dissertation of Mexican newspapers—many of which were state-sponsored—and the experiences of white American colonists suggests that "Mexicanizing" was undoubtedly a key aspect of immigration policy. But it was also not the entirety. The Mexican state clearly preferred some colonists over others and often based their preferences on assumptions about race and nationality. Thus, colonies who seemed completely counter to Mexico's clearly expressed hopes for immigration were

---

<sup>6</sup> José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

still welcomed by the federal government and local elites—provided they had the racial and national markers that indicated they could develop Mexico’s resources.

Putting the three colonies that I discuss in this dissertation in context with each other has shown the how assumptions about race and nationality worked to the benefit of some colonists. More can be learned in future work by expanding the scope to include not only other American colonies but Chinese, Italian, French, Lebanese, and others. Moisés González Navarro’s massive, three-volume opus about immigrants in Mexico and Mexican emigrants began this work. But with twenty-five years of research since its publication, it is worth reconsidering the shared and differing experiences of immigrant groups in Mexico. Collected volumes that discuss various colonies, such as those edited by Delia Salazar and Ernesto Rodríguez Chavez, have similarly done much to show the diversity of experience, but more could still be done to consider them in a shared context. Doing so could help explain more about how each of these diverse colonies experienced Mexico, Mexicans and the Mexican state.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Delia Salazar Anaya, ed., *Xenofobia Y Xenofilia En La Historia de México Siglos XIX Y XX: Homenaje a Moisés González Navarro* (México, D.F: SEGOB□: INAH□: DGE Ediciones SA de CV, 2006); Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez, ed., *Extranjeros En México: Continuidades Y Nuevas Aproximaciones* (México: Centro de Estudios Migratorios, Instituto Nacional de Migración, SEGOB, DGE Ediciones, 2010).

## **Bibliography**

### **Archival Collections**

Albert Kimsey Owen Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

Annie Williams Border Papers, 1849-1893, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History,  
The University of Texas at Austin.

Collección Porfirio Díaz, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City.

David McKnight, III, Family Papers, 1857-1935, 1976-1978, 1992-1995, Dolph Briscoe  
Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Gideon Linsecum Collection, 1821-1933, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History,  
The University of Texas at Austin.

J.B. Willis Papers, 1874-1877, Southern Historical Collection, University of North  
Carolina at Chapel Hill.

John Henry Brown Family Papers, 1691-1951, Dolph Briscoe Center for American  
History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Lutterloh Family Papers, 1780-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North  
Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Redd Family Papers. MSS 678. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee  
Library, Brigham Young University.

Theodocius Joshua Scurlock Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem  
Library, College of William and Mary.



Topolobampo Collection, Special Collections Library, California State University,  
Fresno.

William Derby Johnson Diary. MSS 1506. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B.  
Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

### **Oral Histories**

Call, Ara O. Interview by Jessie Embry, 1976. L. Tom Perry Special Collections,  
Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Hall, Olive Done. Interview by Amy Bentley, February 8, 1984. L. Tom Perry Special  
Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Harvey, Charles, and Nellie Harvey. Interview by John Abraham, July 3, 1972. L. Tom  
Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Jackson, Irvin R. Interview by Tillman S. Boxwell, October 9, 1978. L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Jameson, Effie Redd. Interview by Gary Shumway, August 18, 1977. L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Johnson, Athelia Moffett. Interview by Mike Cushman, September 5, 1971. L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Romney, Antone K. Interview by Key Alta Haynes, February 21, 1974. L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Sherratt, Mary Diantha Cox. Interview by Stevan Martin Hales, April 23, 1982. L. Tom  
Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Washburn, Wasel Black. Interview by Jessie Embry, November 3, 1983. L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

### **Published Primary Sources**

Brown, John Henry. *Two Years in Mexico, or, the Emigrant's Friend*. Galveston, Texas:  
Printed at the "News" Book and Job Office, 1867

Burden, Georgie. *Mexico: A Confederate Haven*. Boulder: John E. Burden, 2004.

Drayton, John. Despatches from United States Consuls in Tuxpan, 1879-1906. Edited by  
United States National Archives. National Archives Microfilm Publications 306.  
Washington: National Archives, 1964.

Fillerup, Moneta Johnson. *My Treasure Trove of Memories*. Edited by Dorothy Fillerup  
Boyer and Wanda Turley Smith. Rev. ed. Mesa, Ariz.: Legend eXpress  
Publishing, 2004.

Lincecum, Jerry Bryan and Edward Hake Phillips. *Adventures of a Frontier Naturalist:  
the Life and Times of Dr. Gideon Lincecum*. College Station: Texas A&M  
University Press, 1994

Morris, Mary Lois Walker. *Before the Manifesto: The Life Writings of Mary Lois Walker  
Morris*. Edited by Melissa Lambert Milewski. Logan, Utah: Utah State University  
Press, 2007.

Thorndike, Rachel Sherman, ed. *The Sherman Letters: Correspondence between General  
and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894.

### **Newspapers**

*Daily Tombstone Epitaph*, Tombstone, AZ

*El Diario del Hogar*, Mexico City

*El Economista Mexicano*, Mexico City

*El Ferro-Carril*, Mexico City

*El Imparcial*, Mexico City

*El Monitor Republicano*, Mexico City

*El Partido Liberal*, Mexico City

*El Nacional*, Mexico City

*El Siglo XIX*, Mexico City

*El Tiempo*, Mexico City

*El Universal*, Mexico City

*La Patria*, Mexico City

*La Voz de México*, Mexico City

*Memphis Daily Avalanche*, Memphis, TN

*New Haven Evening Register*, New Haven, CT

*The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa*, Topolobampo, Sinaloa

*The Dallas Weekly Herald*, Dallas, TX

*The Evening News*, San Jose, CA

*The Mexican Financier*, Mexico City

*The Two Republics*, Mexico City

### **Secondary Sources**

- Aboites, Luis. *Norte Precario: Poblamiento Y Colonización En México, 1760-1940*. México, D.F: El Colegio de México, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social, 1995.
- Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa. *So far from Allah, so close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007.
- Argersinger, Peter H. *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics*. Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1995.
- Bartolomé, Miguel Alberto. *Gente de Costumbre Y Gente de Razón: Las Identidades étnicas En México*. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores : Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1997.
- Beezley, William H. *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.
- Bennion, Janet. *Desert Patriarchy: Mormon and Mennonite Communities in the Chihuahua Valley*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004.
- Berman, David R. *Radicalism in the Mountain West, 1890-1920: Socialists, Populists, Miners, and Wobblies*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007.
- Berninger, Dieter George. "Mexican Attitudes towards Immigration, 1821-1857." University of Wisconsin, 1972.
- Bowman, Sylvia E. *The Year 2000; a Critical Biography of Edward Bellamy*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1958.
- Bradley, Martha Sonntag. *ZCMI, America's First Department Store*. Salt Lake City, Utah: ZCMI, 1991.

- Bringhurst, Newell G. "Samuel Brannan and His Forgotten Final Years." *Southern California Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (1997): 139–60.
- Brooke, John L. *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Brown, John Henry. *History of Texas from 1685 to 1892*. Austin, Tex: Pemberton Press, 1970.
- Brown, Jonathan C. "Foreign and Native-Born Workers in Porfirian Mexico." *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (1993): 786–818.
- Bsumek, Erika Marie. *Indian-Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868-1940*. Culture America. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008.
- Buchenau, Jürgen. *Tools of Progress: A German Merchant Family in Mexico City, 1865-Present*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.
- Burden, Georgie. *Mexico: A Confederate Haven*. Boulder, CO: John E. Burden, 2004.
- Burgos, Adrian. *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Colorline*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Butler, Matthew. "Mormonism in Modern Mexico." In *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, edited by Jason Dormady and Jared M. Tamez. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015.
- Candelario, Ginetta E. B. *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

- Carlos, Manuel L. *Politics and Development in Rural Mexico; a Study of Socio-Economic Modernization*. Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development. New York: Praeger, 1974.
- Clarke, John Henrik, and Amy Jacques Garvey, eds. *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011.
- Cocks, Catherine. *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Confer, Clarissa W., Andrae M. Marak, and Laura Tuennerman, eds. *Transnational Indians in the North American West*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2015.
- Cox, James H. *The Red Land to the South: American Indian Writers and Indigenous Mexico*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. Rev. Ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003.
- Croucher, Sheila L. *The Other Side of the Fence: American Migrants in Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.
- De León, Arnoldo. *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

- Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.
- Dormady, Jason, and Jared M. Tamez, eds. *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015.
- Dunn, Roy Sylvan. "The KGC in Texas, 1860-1861." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (1967).
- Farmer, Jared. *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
- Figueroa Díaz, José María. *Los Gobernadores de Sinaloa, 1831-1996*. Sinaloa, 1996.
- Fillerup, Moneta Johnson. *My Treasure Trove of Memories*. Edited by Dorothy Fillerup Boyer and Wanda Turley Smith. Rev. ed. Mesa, Ariz.: Legend eXpress Publishing, 2004.
- Fink, Leon. *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- — —. *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

- French, William E. *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.
- Gámez García, Ernesto. *El Valle Del Fuerte*. Los Mochis, México, 1955.
- García Cantú, Gastón. *El Socialismo En México, Siglo XIX*. México: Ediciones Era, 1974.
- Gerteis, Joseph. *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Gill, Mario. *La Conquista Del Valle Del Fuerte*. México: Universidad de Occidente, 2003.
- — —. “Mochis, Fruto de Un Sueño Imperialista.” *Historia Mexicana* 5, no. 2 (October 1, 1955): 303–20.
- Godfrey, Matthew C. *Religion, Politics, and Sugar the Mormon Church, the Federal Government, and the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1907-1921*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2007. [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress\\_pubs/44](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_pubs/44).
- Gómez García, Ernesto. *El Valle Del Fuerte*. Los Mochis, México, 1955.
- Gonzalez, Gilbert G. *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- González Navarro, Moisés. *Los Extranjeros En México Y Los Mexicanos En El Extranjero, 1821-1970*. México, D.F: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1993.



- — —. “Mestizaje in Mexico During the National Period.” In *Race and Class in Latin America*, edited by Magnus Mörner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Gordon, Sarah Barringer. *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America*. Studies in Legal History. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills that Shaped the American Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan’s Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.
- Guidotti-Hernández, Nicole Marie. *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Guterl, Matthew Pratt. *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Hanna, Alfred J., and Kathryn Abbey Hanna. “The Immigration Movement of the Intervention and Empire as Seen through the Mexican Press.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (1947).
- Harmon, George D. *Confederate Migrations to Mexico*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1938.

- Hart, John M. *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Hatch, Nelle Spilsbury. *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954.
- Hayden, Dolores. "Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses." *Signs* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 1978): 274–90.
- Hernández, José Angel. "From Conquest to Colonization: Indios and Colonization Policies after Mexican Independence." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 26, no. 2 (2010): 291–322.
- — —. *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Hild, Matthew. *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.
- Hill, Lawrence F. *The Confederate Exodus to Latin America*. Austin, TX, 1936.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Jacoby, Karl. "Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895." In *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, edited by Samuel Truett and Elliott Young. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

- Johnson, Annie Richardson. *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*. Salt Lake, Utah: Publishers Press, 1972.
- Kaplan, Amy, and Donald E. Pease, eds. *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Kourí, Emilio. *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Kropp, Phoebe S. *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Lastras Ramírez, Juan Antonio. *Topolobampo: Albert Kimsey Owen, Un Socialista En México*. Ciudad de Los Mochis: Tall. Gráf. de Los Mochis “El Debate,” 1979.
- Latorre, Felipe A., and Dolores L. Latorre. *The Mexican Kickapoo Indians*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.
- Lincecum, Gideon. *Adventures of a Frontier Naturalist: The Life and Times of Dr. Gideon Lincecum*. Edited by Jerry Bryan Lincecum and Edward Hake Phillips. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1994.
- Lipow, Arthur. *Authoritarian Socialism in America: Edward Bellamy & the Nationalist Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Lloyd, Jane-Dale. *Cinco Ensayos Sobre Cultura Material de Rancheros Y Medieros Del Noroeste de Chihuahua, 1886-1910*. Pasado Del Presente. México, D.F: Universidad Iberoamericana, Departamento de Historia, 2001.
- — —. *El Distrito Galeana En Los Albores de La Revolución: Rancheros Y Mormones: Espacio Regional, Comercio Y Un Proceso de Desamortización Tardío*.

- Biblioteca Chihuahuense. Chihuahua, México: Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, Secretaría de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2011.
- — —. *El Proceso de Modernización Capitalista En El Noroeste de Chihuahua, 1880-1910*. México: Universidad Iberoamericana, Departamento de Historia, 1987.
- Love, Eric Tyrone Lowery. *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Martinez, Anne M. *Catholic Borderlands: Mapping Catholicism onto American Empire, 1905-1935*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.
- Matthews, Michael. *The Civilizing Machine: A Cultural History of Mexican Railroads, 1876-1910*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.
- Mawson, Stephanie. “The ‘Workingman’s Paradise’, White Supremacy and Utopianism: The New Australia Movement and Working-Class Racism.” *Labour History*, no. 101 (November 1, 2011): 91–104. doi:10.5263/labourhistory.101.0091.
- Mayberry, John F. “Historical Development of Pan-European Medical Training for English Speaking Students in the 16th to 19th Centuries.” *The Ulster Medical Journal* 84, no. 1 (January 2015): 42–44.
- May, Robert E. *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Mckiernan-González, John Raymond. *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- McNamara, Patrick J. *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, 1855-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

- Moore, Charles W. "Paradise at Topolobampo." *The Journal of Arizona History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 1–28.
- Morgan, Brandon. "Colonia Díaz and the Railroad That Almost Was: The Deming, Sierra Madre, and Pacific, 1887-96." In *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, edited by Jared M. Tamez and Jason Dormady. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015.
- Morris, Mary Lois Walker. *Before the Manifesto: The Life Writings of Mary Lois Walker Morris*. Edited by Melissa Lambert Milewski. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2007.
- Navarrete Maya, Laura, and Blanca Aguilar Plata, eds. *La Prensa En México: Momentos Y Figuras Relevantes (1810-1915)*. 1. ed. México, D.F: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998.
- Newman, Elizabeth Terese. *Biography of a Hacienda: Work and Revolution in Rural Mexico*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014.
- Nieto-Phillips, John M. *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.
- Nunn, W. C. *Escape from Reconstruction*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974.
- Ortega Noriega, Sergio. *Breve Historia de Sinaloa*. 1. ed. Sección de Obras de Historia. México: Colegio de México, Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas : Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999.

- — —. *El Edén Subvertido: La Colonización de Topolobampo, 1886-1896*. México, D.F.: Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1978.
- Ota Mishima, María Elena. *Destino México: Un Estudio de Las Migraciones Asiáticas a México, Siglos XIX Y XX*. 1. ed. México, D.F: El Colegio de México, 1997.
- Padilla Beltrán, Francisco. *Los Empresarios Del Valle Del Fuerte Durante El Porfiriato*. Colección Veredas. Culiacán Rosales, Sinaloa: Colegio de Bachilleres del Estado de Sinaloa : Dirección de Investigación y Fomento de la Cultura Regional (DIFOCUR), 1996.
- Palma Mora, Mónica. “Los Vecinos Del Norte: Aspectos de Su Inmigración En México En La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XX.” In *Extranjeros En México: Continuidades Y Nuevas Aproximaciones*, edited by Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez and María del Socorro Herrera Barreda. México: Centro de Estudios Migratorios, Instituto Nacional de Migración, SEGOB, DGE Ediciones, 2010.
- Pascoe, Peggy. *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Pletcher, David M. *Rails, Mines, and Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico, 1867-1911*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.
- Reeve, W. Paul. *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- — —. *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

- Reinhold, Frances L. "Exiles and Refugees in American History." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 203 (1939): 63–73.
- Reynolds, Ray. *Cat's Paw Utopia*. El Cajon, CA: Published by the author, 1972.
- Ricketts, Norma B. *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1996.
- Ríos Figueroa, Irene. *Colonia Morelos: Un Ejemplo de Etica Mormona Junto Al Rio Bavispe (1900-1912)*. Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico: El Colegio de Sonora, 2012.
- Rister, Carl Coke. "Carlota: A Confederate Colony in Mexico." *Journal of Southern History* XI, no. 1 (1945): 34–50.
- Robertson, Thomas A. *A Southwestern Utopia*. Los Angeles: W. Ritchie Press, 1964.
- Rodríguez Chávez, Ernesto, ed. *Extranjeros En México: Continuidades Y Nuevas Aproximaciones*. México: Centro de Estudios Migratorios, Instituto Nacional de Migración, SEGOB, DGE Ediciones, 2010.
- Rolle, Andrew F. *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965.
- Romney, Thomas Cottam. *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2005.
- Rosen, Hannah. *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*. Gender and American Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Rostas, Susanna. "Performing 'Mexicanidad'; Popular 'Indigenismo' in Mexico City." In *Encuentros Antropologicos: Politics, Identity and Mobility in Mexican Society*,

- edited by Valentina Napolitano and Xochitl Leyva Solano. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998.
- Ruiz Castañeda, María, Luis Reed Torres, Enrique Cordero y Torres, and Salvador Novo. *El Periodismo En México: 450 Años de Historia*. México: Editorial Tradición, 1974.
- Ruiz, Jason. *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014.
- Ryskamp, George. "Mormon Colonists in the Mexican Civil Registration." In *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, edited by Jason Dormady and Jared M. Tamez. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015.
- Salazar Anaya, Delia, ed. *Xenofobia Y Xenofilia En La Historia de México Siglos XIX Y XX: Homenaje a Moisés González Navarro*. México, D.F: SEGOB : INAH : DGE Ediciones SA de CV, 2006.
- Sanchez, George J. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Schell, William. *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911*. Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Books, 2001.
- Schwartz, Rosalie. *Across the Rio to Freedom: U.S. Negroes in Mexico*. Southwestern Studies ; Monograph No. 44. El Paso: Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1974.
- Scott, Reva. *Samuel Brannan and the Golden Fleece, a Biography*. New York: The Macmillan company, 1944.



- Sidbury, James. *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Simmons, Donald C. *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2001.
- Solberg, Carl E. *Immigration and Nationalism, Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970.
- Tenorio-Trillo, Mauricio. *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Thomas, Estelle Webb. *Uncertain Sanctuary: A Story of Mormon Pioneering in Mexico*. Salt Lake City: Westwater Press, 1980.
- Thrush, Coll-Peter. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place*. Weyerhaeuser Environmental Book. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.
- Toussaint Alcaraz, Florence. *Escenario de La Prensa En El Porfiriato*. 1. ed. México, D.F. : [Colima]: Fundación Manuel Buendía ; Universidad de Colima, 1989.
- Townsend, Camilla. *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma: An American Portrait*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2004.
- Truett, Samuel. *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Truett, Samuel, and Elliott Young, eds. *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*. American Encounters/global Interactions. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

- Tullis, F. LaMond. *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1987.
- Valadés, José C. *Topolobampo, La Metrópoli Socialista de Occidente*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1939.
- Vanderwood, Paul J. *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Vaughan, Mary K. *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997.
- Warner, John Harley, and Lawrence J. Rizzolo. "Anatomical Instruction and Training for Professionalism from the 19th to the 21st Centuries." *Clinical Anatomy* 19, no. 5 (July 2006): 403–14.
- Weir, Robert E. *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.
- Whetten, LaVon Brown. *Colonia Juarez: Commemorating 125 Years of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010.
- Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.
- Wright-Rios, Edward N. *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887-1934*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Wrobel, David M. *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

- Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Young, Karl E. *Ordeal in Mexico: Tales of Danger and Hardship Collected from Mormon Colonists*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co, 1968.
- — —. *The Long Hot Summer of 1912: Episodes in the Flight of the Mormon Colonists from Mexico*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1967.