Rand, McNally & Co.'s business atlas map of New Mexico.
1897

1: Pedro Amendaris Land Grant

Two land grants, totalling nearly 490,000 acres, were confirmed in 1860, and patents issued in 1878. Today this ranch is mostly owned by Ted Turner, as an experimental bison range.

Quote: PEDRO ARMENDARIS, 1846.

Protests against the government granting to other persons lands already granted to him.

Don Pedro Armendaris was a prominent citizen of New Mexico, having been alcalde during a long period. In 1820 he made application to the Spanish government for a grant of land lying on the west bank of the Rio Grande, opposite his ranch known as "Valverde." The application was granted and the lands were allotted to him; several years later he was driven from the property by the Navajos. Don Pedro left New Mexico and became a citizen of Chihuahua. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Armendaris made a contract with two American citizens, Hugh N. Smith and Thomas Biggs, whereby, for services rendered in perfecting the title to his grants, Smith and Biggs became the owners of four thousand acres of the land grant, lying opposite the old Armendaris ranch of Valverde--the present town-site of San Marcial, in Socorro county. This grant was confirmed by Congress in 1860, surveyed in 1877, and patented in 1878.

The grants contained 490,000 acres, a large portion of which are situate on the west side of the Rio Grande.

Upon this property the government of the United States is now constructing one of the largest dams and reservoirs for irrigation purposes in the world, the Elephant Butte project. The lands granted to Armendaris are now the property of the Victorio Land and Cattle Company. [Twitchell, Ralph Emerson]

Overview: Fray Cristóbal

Named for a member of the Oñate entrada, the Paraje de Fray Cristóbal remained important throughout the period in which the Camino Real was in use. Oñate's men facetiously remarked that the outline of the ridge of the mountain near present Elephant Butte Reservoir looked like the profile of Fray Cristóbal, saying he was "feisimo" (politely, not very good looking). It was described as a general area rather than a particular point but can be defined by its proximity to both the Rio Grande and the Jornada del Muerto. In the nineteenth century, Fray Cristóbal became Fra Cristobal, as a modern local spelling and pronunciation without a y in Fray and without an accent in Cristóbal. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]
2: White Oaks District

1897

Quote: By 1885 White Oaks had assumed the semblance of a a real town. Streets and cross streets had been surveyed and laid out. Store buildings and dwellings were all in line. The early-day boom-town atmosphere, featuring saloons, wide-open gambling, and guns and Bowie knives dangling from belts, had practically disappeared. The majority of the citizens were law-abiding, progressive people, unafraid and confident of the future.

...For those who drank water [as opposed to whiskey], there were wells. A few residents had their own, dug down to water level at thirty-five to forty feet below the surface. The water was “hard,” impregnated with alkaline salts. The public was dependent for its drinking water on a water wagon, a cylindrical wooden tank hauled by a span of horses. Delivery was made to a barrel standing in the yard of each dwelling. The price was fifty cents, later reduced to twenty-five cents, a barrel, forty gallons.

In later years a number of the better houses, those with pitched roofs of sheet iron or shingles, had cisterns for catching rain water, soft water used only for drinking and bathing. To soften the well water, we used the root and core of the amole cactus [agave parryi], abundant in the vicinity. We shredded it, pounded it, and stirred it into the water. This native Mexican stunt later became the basis which produced Amole soap.

...We certainly did not live a life of luxury, but we ate surprisingly well. In addition to the bread from our weekly baking we used a great deal of cornbread, cornmeal mush, and oatmeal, along with hot cakes drenched in molasses or syrup. Our coffee was the well-known Arbuckle’s roasted, purchased in one-pound packages at a dollar. We ground it at home in a grinder fastened to the kitchen wall.

Fresh vegetables, in season, came from one local farmer, a Frenchman of peculiar character. He spoke but little English and his prices were sometimes confusing: One bunch of onions, ten cents, two for a quarter.

Tom Osborn, a long-range cross-country peddler, provided our main supply of oranges, apples, watermelons, and so forth, and our potatoes, onions, and turnips on occasion. Back and forth he traveled with his team and covered wagon-- from Las Vegas 175 miles north; from Tularosa 45 miles south; from Hondo and Ruidoso 60 miles east. He was one of the most popular and welcome tradesmen in our midst. Two, three, or more times each year, he came in loaded and went out empty with his profits, leaving us happy with the much-appreciated luxuries he had provided.

Sugar came in hundred-pound sacks, flour and beans in fifty-pound sacks, rice, salt, and other commodities in smaller sacks. We got our salted mackerel in wooden tubs. Codfish came in slabs, bacon in sides ham and shoulders as the Lord made them. Canned goods-- corn, tomatoes, peas, condensed milk when it became available-- were often purchased in case lots and shipped in with other freight. [Parker, Morris B.]

Overview: White Oaks

The discovery of a rich vein of gold in 1879 drew prospectors, speculators, miners, and settlers to this remote area by the hundreds. Within three years, the dusty streets had been planted with trees, Starr’s Opera House was open for business, as well as a school, a town hall, a newspaper office, and the ubiquitous saloons.

Billy the Kid menaced the prosperous merchants and ranchers of White Oaks, and while the town’s posse failed to track him down, outrage over his destructive and murderous activities led to Governor Wallace issuing a reward for bringing the Kid to justice.

Several major discoveries did not keep the mines from running out within thirty years, and although the residents of White Oaks lobbied hard for a railroad, Charles Eddy decided instead to route his line through Carrizozo. Before long, White Oaks began to decline, and today only about a dozen residents remain.

Today’s visitors can explore the past at the Cedarvale Cemetery, the White Oaks Schoolhouse Museum, the Miner’s Home Museum, and the No Scum Allowed Saloon. [Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library]

Links:
White Oaks New Mexico -- http://whiteoaksnewmexico.com

3: Eddy

1889

Quote: Eddy County was organized in 1889, the year before I moved there. Charles B. Eddy was the manager and part owner of the Eddy-Bissel Live Stock Company. He took the initiative in the organization of the county and in selecting the county seat, and in its developments. He also took the initiative in building the railroad, and the canal, dams, and reservoirs for irrigation from the Pecos River. He lived in a little rock house across the river in what is known as the La Huerta addition to Eddy, now Carlsbad. The only two places contesting for the county seat was Seven Rivers and Eddy. Eddy had no inhabitants at the time, but through the influence of
C.B. Eddy, it was voted the county seat.

In laying out the town of Eddy and in fixing up their titles to the lots, they put a clause in each deed to the lots sold, by which any man who sold intoxicating liquor of any kind, or permitted it to be sold on the lot, forfeited his title, which reverted back to the land company. They left the clause out of the title to one lot and that is why, legally, there is only one place in the original town of Eddy where liquor can be sold today.

They started working in 1889, building a railroad from Pecos to Eddy, called the Pecos Valley Railway and nicknamed "The Pea Vine." They finished the railroad in 1890; Eddy was the terminal until 1896. They also started the building of the dams, reservoirs, and canals for the present Carlsbad irrigation project, which was then called the Pecos Irrigation and Improvement Company Project.

A majority of the first county officers elected were crooks and criminals, and especially the sheriff, and that element controlled the politics in the county. They established a town south on the road to Pecos, about a mile from Eddy, called Phoenix, and one a mile north of Eddy, on the road to Roswell, called the Lone Wolf. These towns were inhabited by gamblers, prostitutes, and saloon men. Phoenix, particularly, was a rendezvous for outlaws and they carried on their vocations there. The two towns together had a population of about fifteen hundred people.

To give you an idea of the kind of place Phoenix was, I will quote S.I. Roberts, a merchant who lived in Eddy. "Phoenix had a population of about nine hundred people. Their chief industry was gambling, liquor, and wild women resorts. It was a hell of a town, a mecca for all the underworld of the Southwest." [Harkey, Dee]

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**Overview: Carlsbad**

The township of Eddy, later Carlsbad, was part of the great vision of rancher Charles B. Eddy, to stimulate growth in southeastern New Mexico through large diversion projects off the Pecos River. Eddy foresaw that large irrigation projects would spur the growth of the area. He platted out a town, planted trees, and sold lots off his Rancho Halagueno for $50 - $400 each.

The town boomed, especially after the arrival of the railroad. Floods in 1893 slowed the runaway growth, and residents renamed the town Carlsbad. The discovery of Carlsbad Caverns in 1901 led to the growth of a tourist industry.

During the twentieth century, Carlsbad became a global leader in potash production, and although that has declined, petroleum development in the area also supports the economy. The Carlsbad Museum is closed Sundays, and has free admission.

**Images:**

![The first permanent building in Eddy, originally the Eddy National Bank and Pecos Valley Railroad and Improvement Company](image)

**Links:**


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**4: Roswell**

1879

James Miller had tried to settle in Roswell in 1878, during the fever pitch of the Lincoln County War, but found it too violent for a family man and returned to Colorado. A year later, his brother once again convinced him to return, and he spent the rest of his life in Roswell.

*Quote:* (1880) When we got to Roswell about September 1, 1879, we found what my brother had written about the change in ownership was true, and what was more to the point, it augured well for the future of what was that whole section. It seems that Marion Turner had found out the houses belonging to Van Smith were on vacant land (land upon which the filing had not been fully completed under the homestead act. ed), and had promptly tried to take advantage of this discovery by filing the 160 acres on which they stood. Shortly afterwards, Colonel Wildy had come from Mississippi and bought Turner's claim, along with the improvements of Van Smith. Colonel Wildy bought up in all about 480 acres, most of which is now in the corporate limits of Roswell.

When Colonel Wildy gave it all to his daughter and her husband, Captain Lea took charge of things; a change for the better certainly took place at once. Captain Lea had no patience with lawlessness, especially mob
violence, such as the Lincoln County War had created. As a result, Roswell was being more and more each year transformed into a safe and peaceful abiding place for the Lea family and their friends who might be drawn thither by the opportunities of the undeveloped Pecos Valley. Let me add that as long as Captain Lea held the reins, there were no murders committed in Roswell.

Under the improved state of affairs at Roswell and vicinity, there was no question in my mind about the desirability of settling in that locality. In fact, the country was filling up rather rapidly with settlers, as was shown by the way in which the wealth of water in the three Berrendos, and the two Spring Rivers, North and South, was being appropriated by irrigation ditches. This activity really began in 1878, when the Mexican colony I have mentioned, began to make a canal for the use of the water from North Spring River.

About the same time a Mormon colony started to take out a ditch from the south side of the Spring River. At this juncture, John Chisum, monarch of the Pecos Valley, perceiving his throne to be tottering, took steps to keep intruders out by trying to monopolize the water from Spring River. He got John Chisum, Bot Gilbert, and my brother Bill to join with him and make a ditch on the north side of the river. This ditch, together with the Mormon ditch, would practically control all the water rights and relieve Chisum from being bothered with homesteaders.

--James Miller, Sheep Ranching on the Chisum Cattle Range [Shinkle, James D.]

Overview: Roswell

Although the area where Roswell was to grow was inhabited and claimed between 1869-1871, the discovery of a major aquifer in 1890 contributed to a major growth spurt, which only gained momentum when the railroad was built through town in 1893.

Roswell remains an economic center for surrounding farms and ranches, and serves the booming petroleum industry of eastern New Mexico.

Images:

Abandoned farm near Roswell

Links:

5: Seven Rivers

1870-1940

This passage illustrates the boom and bust that cattle ranching brought to the Pecos River Valley, from herds of cattle stretching over 20 miles, to an abandoned cemetery, in the course of one man's adulthood.

Quote: (1880) The settlement of Seven Rivers, established in the 1870's, a mile or so upstream from its confluence with the Pecos, and 3 or 4 miles from the present town of Lakewood, was once an important trading point, vying with Lincoln and White Oaks in population and commercial supremacy. Here, trail outfits moving north from Texas could buy supplies. An abandoned cemetery lying not far from the base of Seven Rivers hills is about all that now marks its site.

About the first of April, as green grass began to shoot forth from winter-swept plains, managers of the great cattle companies bestirred themselves from lethargy. Friendly meetings were held and plans for the coming summer roundup work formulated. A "Caporal," head roundup boss, was elected to superintend working this vast range, over which the million cattle belonging to the Pecos Valley ranch owners might have strayed during the receding fall and winter. Division roundup captains were appointed. Chuck wagons were put in order. Saddle horses of the different companies gathered up from convenient pastures in which they had grazed since the fall before. Cowhands, those not enjoying winter jobs, their sole possessions generally being a pony, saddle, bridie, camp bed and a few clothes, were engaged, roundup cooks placed in charge of chuck wagons, and horse rustlers, often a boy of 14 or 16 years, delegated to handle the remuda-- for every rider must have a dozen or so ponies in his mount and presently, one by one, roundup crews started from their respective home ranches, to move off for the spring hunt. Word had been sent to the "little fellows"-- smaller owners of cattle-- of the time and place of the wagons' departure, who with his mount and possibly accompanied by a "neighbor," joined some outfit with which he worked as long as he found it to advantage to do so, in gathering his cattle.
The range over which the Pecos River roundup wagons coursed in the 80’s and 90’s was broad. It extended from Fort Sumner to the line of Texas, perhaps to the frontier town of Pecos City on the Texas Pacific—recently built— a distance of 250 miles. A writer of those days, who followed the dogies form April to December, thus describes his labors:

"I seem to recall to mind one roundup on both sides of the Pecos from Seven Rivers to the Berrendos just north of Roswell, where there had been a great drift of cattle from as far north as the Canadian. Our outfit was on the west side of the river and was one of the 22 wagons on that work which took about 30 days to complete.

Cattle were largely on out-waters, that is, on surface waters, holes and lakes, and the drive would have to go out each morning 20 miles or more to get round the cattle."

The Pecos Valley ranchmen not only had their many thousands of longhorns to gather, but were also engaged in "cleaning" their ranges of Canadian River stock which had drifted in on them from the far away Tascosa country, the LE’s, the LX’s, Turkey Tracks, and some bearing Goodnight’s brand.

Twenty-two roundup wagons and their crews! Two hundred and fifty cowboys, their different remudas numbering not less than 3,000 saddle horses. Rodeo supreme! Amidst clouds of dust, work went on with undending lack of variety, until the well-managed scheme had drawn within its almost inescapable meshes most of the cattle of the Pecos Valley. [Thompson, Albert W.]

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**Overview: Seven Rivers**

This unexpectedly lush area of eastern New Mexico lay between the Mescalero Apache and Comanche territories. While the Spanish knew about the rich grasslands and abundant game as early as 1722, Europeans did not move into the area until the 1840s, when El Paso ranchers began to send their herds there.

After the Civil War, the Seven Rivers area became a stop on the Goodnight-Loving cattle trail, and two trading posts and a saloon were established to serve the trail drivers in 1867. Anglo ranchers moved to the area in greater numbers, but the community was soon plunged into the Lincoln County war. Seven Rivers was friendly to Texas rancher John Chisum, and took sides with Billy the Kid and the Regulators against the Murphy-Dolan contingent. Many lost their lives in the fighting, including postmaster Bob Beckwith.

The end of the Lincoln County war did not end the lawlessness of Seven Rivers. Gangs continued to murder and rob, using Seven Rivers as their base, while Eddy residents, who were not allowed to drink, gamble, or indulge in other vices within Eddy, frequented Seven Rivers instead. The town built a school in 1890, and three years later constructed a dam, which formed Lake McMillian. Despite these improvements, residents eventually deserted the area for Eddy (Carlsbad). The post office was closed in 1895, the last lawman was murdered in 1898, and by 1910, the community had been entirely abandoned.

Today visitors can enjoy the waters of Brantley Lake State Park near Seven Rivers.

After [Stanley, F. W]

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**6: Lake Valley**

1881

*Quote:* (1881) I left Tennessee in in 1880 and came to New Mexico in 1881 arriving at Old Town for my first stop in Grant county. Senor Peña was running the store there at the time. I will never forget the fact that he served buttermilk with our meal, and I thought that it was the best milk that I ever drink. I settled in the Perche and Mimbres district living on the Membres most of the time.

I was living on the Membres when a Mr Hayes was killed over near Lake Valley in Sierras County by the Indians. Mr Moore my nearest neighbor wished to go over to his place at Lake Valley and wanted me to go with him after Mr. Hayes was killed. We were nearing Mule Springs when I noticed a track. I said "Look there are tracks".

Mr Moore replied "Oh they probably belong to some Mexican."

I soon cried "LOOK! Look the large tracks of the Indian". Moore said "Let’s go. Jesus Christ is that fellow in this part of the country?" He began to kick and spur his horse and we were really leaving that part of the country. In all of the recent raids there was an unusually large track and when this track was seen it was generally known that some cruelty and destruction had been done in the vicinity and everyone had a horror of meeting the warrior and wanted to get away from the place that he was likely to be round around. We soon caught up with a Chink and told him that the Indians were behind us and he said "Me no see Indians" but he soon had his horse in a run also when we told him of the large track.

We went on home and near night a follow came by and told us the Indians were near and we were to go the Brown place. We went over to the place and spent the night and the next morning returned home to find that the Indians had taken a large stone and threw threw the door and had gone into the house and taken all of the best blankets and we had a long handled frying pan which they took and left us a short handled one. They took our violin and laid it tin the floor with the bow across the center.

The Indians were never as bad as they were pictured, but I will admit there was times that none of us wished to see them Nana, Geronimo or any of the others, but as a rule the uprising started over some mistreatment that the Indians received.

---Louis S. Goforth, transcript from May 27, 1938 interview. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]
Overview: Lake Valley

Quote: Lake Valley was first settled by ranchers, but the discovery of promising silver-bearing deposits enticed workers and speculators to the area, but danger from the Chiricahua Apaches prevented much serious development until 1881. Despite the president of the Sierra Grande Silver company being killed by Nana's warriors, the discovery of rich, pure silver in the Bridal Chamber Mine made Lake Valley irresistible. A railroad spur was put in to haul out the rich ore more effectively.

The Bridal Chamber hit its peak within a year, and profits quickly dwindled, although mining operations continued until silver prices crashed in 1893. For a while Lake Valley became the center of cattle rustling operations in southern New Mexico. The population continued to dwindle through the 1930s, when the railroad closed, and everyone left the valley save a few dozen people.

The last resident of Lake Valley, a former miner named Pedro Martinez, moved to Deming with his wife in 1994. Today the abandoned town is managed as a historic site by the BLM. Visitors can take a self-guided tour around the desolate streets, and visit the historic schoolhouse, which serves as the Lake Valley museum.

Images:

Links:
A Brief History of Lake Valley -- http://americanfrontiers.net/lakevalley/

7: Fort Bayard

1885

Quote: (1885) The Apaches soon stopped their raids for a few months and weren't seen any more of until October when they were heard of in the Cliff country. Some soldiers were sent under Overton, from Fort Bayard, to stop the driving off of the cattle and horses, and as always before there wasn't anything done but loafing. Overton said it was only the word of children and old women that the cattle were being driven off and would not move from camp.

...The women of the district were all as brave as the men they took the Indians as something to be expected. There was one woman that was a woman from the mountain country that met the stage and said to Al Lauderbaugh on one morning "Al, I reckon that you are going into town." and handed him a ten dollar bill. She told him to buy her three little children a hat a piece. The Indian signs and post offices were all around, but Mrs Bush didn't seem to be the least worried, her husband was up in the hill hunting the cattle.

Mr Lauderbaugh was fired upon his return trip with the hats, but luckily he escaped uninjured. The Indians fired upon him at Little Dry and all the way across the mesa, he for many years wore as a watch charm a bullet he took out of the stage after the fight was ever.

It wasn't uncommon then to hear each day of some one being killed, their cattle driven off, and their cabin burned, but the end came with the killing at Soldier Hill, about one mile south of the Old Meadow Ranch on Big Dry. J.

McKinney, was serving as guide for Lieutenant Cabel, told how they were ambushed there. When they were crossing Catons Plato, so called from the many catons, they found the bodies, being Clark and Kinney. These men had been hauling ore concentrates. The men were killed and their ore sacks ripped open and the contents scattered all over the ground. They followed the Indians on and at the eight miles from Mogollan Creek where two men named Lillian and Pryer had started a ranch they found their bodies and also the Indians which they fired upon, killing nine of the Apache. The soldiers were low on supplies and decided to return to Alma for supplies.

While at Alma a courier came through with a message and we started on going south with ten additional Navajo scouts and camped at the Siggins ranch the first night out. The next morning when starting out met a Navajo, was in sight. The courier went on back to Fort Bayard and the men started around Soldier Hill the men singing "Good-by My Lover Good-by" when we were fired upon. My horse was killed. The doctor was killed and several others, and several injured. Every since this kill has been called Soldiers Hill. The Navajo scouts appeared soon after the fight was over.

This fight seemed to be all the Indians were waiting for to return to the San Carlos reservation. They returned
to the reservation to be fed by the people and rest after causing the settlers so much trouble.

--W. Weatherby, Incidents of the Early '80's. Transcript of interview July 1938. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]

**Overview:** Fort Bayard

General Carlton established Fort Bayard to protect miners, settlers, and travelers from the Apache threat. The first troops to be stationed there were Company B of the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry, and the "buffalo soldiers" continued to be important, operating from the fort against the Apache.

After Geronimo's surrender in 1886, the fort was being prepared for abandonment, but around 1899 found new life as a tuberculosis sanitarium. Today Fort Bayard continues to operate as a state-run health care facility.

**Quote:** I have established only one new post on the Apache frontier, and that is located near the head of the Mimbres River, about one hundred and fifty miles west of the Rio Grande River. This post, with Fort Cummings at Cooke's Spring, Fort Selden on the Rio Grande, and Fort Stanton on the Bonito River between the Rio Grande and the Pecos, form a line of posts covering the southern frontier of New Mexico from the Apache Indians.

--Major General John Pope, Commanding Officer of the Military Division of Missouri

**Images:**

Panoramic photograph of Fort Bayard sanitorium, 1909

**Links:**

Fort Bayard -- http://fortbayard.org

**8: Silver City**

1887

**Quote:** (1887) We left Pecos Texas in February 1887, for Silver City New Mexico.

My Mother's father, A. F. Bell, and her mother and five brothers lived on a cattle ranch there. There were eight wagons in this immigrant train, some going to New Mexico and some to Arizona. Mr. Henderson, the man who had lost his family from smallpox, and his little four year old boy traveled with us in this train. He stopped at Lordsburg New Mexico. The trip from Pecos to El Paso Texas was an awfully hard one on us as my Mother felt so badly and it was such cold weather. We stopped in El Paso Texas for several days and camped where Washington Park is now located. I saw my first adobe houses in El Paso and we ate our first frijole beans.

The immigrant train split up at Lordsburg New Mexico, most of them going on into Arizona. My father was anxious to go to Arizona too but my mother was feeling so bad that she wanted to go to Silver City where her people were so that she could be near her mother. We stayed in Lordsburg until June and then started for Silver City by way of the Burro Mountains.

We children were anxious to see the place where Geronimo had killed Judge Gomez and his wife and had taken their five year old son away with them. The soldiers from Fort Bayard New Mexico and the Scouts went after Geronimo and his band of Indians. They trailed them to the line of Old Mexico where they met a band of squaws who told the soldiers and scouts that the little boy's brains had been dashed out against a tree.

Mr. Cravens, the man I afterwards married, was one of the Scouts who trailed Geronimo then. Mr. Cravens ran a livery stable in Silver City at that time and Judge Gomez and his wife and small son were on their way to Lordsburg, in a buggy rented from Mr. Cravens, when they were attacked by Geronimo and his band of Indians. They shot one of the horses to stop the buggy and took the other horse away with them. After I was married to Mr. Cravens we were down in Mexico in 1902 and we were told that the Gomez boy had not been killed, that he was the chief of a band of Indians. After we got to Silver City the people there told us such horrible things about what the Indians did to the white people around there.

...When we got to Silver City father took up a claim west of the town on the Gila river. We had some cattle and a small farm. Mother died in the fall of 1887. That was the first year of the Cattle Men's war in Grant County.

--Mrs. Florence Cravens. Carrizozo, N.M. Transcript of interview April 1938. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]
Overview: Silver City

Silver City was originally an Apache camp, but a strike by prospector John Bullard in 1870 led to a boom of American miners. During the 1870s, it was a wild and wooly town, with a high crime rate. By 1893, the community had grown enough to open the Normal School, which was later renamed to Western New Mexico University.

In 1895, a severe flash flood wiped out Main Street, turning it into a 55-foot ditch. Visitors today can walk through the historic downtown, visit Big Ditch Park, and tour the sights of the Silver City Museum.

Images:

[Image of New Mexico miners]

Links:
Silver City Museum -- http://www.silvercitymuseum.org

9: Las Cruces

1888

Quote: (1888) I was born in the family home where my father, W.C.P. Geck was born before me, and where my grandfather Geck lived a life time. I say a life time because he came to this country so very long ago. He came to America from Germany almost ninety year ago. Our house is one of the oldest houses in the town of Dona Ana; it is in good condition and occupied by my Aunt, Mrs. W.C. Weir.

Grandfather Geck was a trader and a merchant. In the early days, when a shipment of merchandise was ordered, the merchants never know when they were going to receive it, if at all, for the Indians would ambush the pack trains and wagons, murder the drivers, rob the caravan and burn the wagons. My grandfather told me many an exciting tale of the early days. I sometimes thought that he knew everything; that he was the wisest man in the whole world. No matter what I wished to know he could tell me something about it.

My parents craved new scenes. So they piled their household goods in the old covered wagon and headed for Las Cruces. That was in 1888. Las Cruces was a mere village. Then my parents left Las Cruces and went to La Union. The reason people moved up and down the valley in the old days was because the Rio Grande wouldn't let them remain in one place; it was like a mad dog at their heels. They would no sooner get settled then it would rise and flood them out.

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Charles C. Geck, Transcript of May 17, 1937 interview. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]

Overview: Las Cruces

10: Ruidoso

1876-1887

Quote: (1887) I met my husband, Frank Lesnett, in Chicago, Illinois, when I was sixteen years old. He was born in the State of Ohio. He joined the regular army at Fort Seldon Ohio, in 1870, for a period of five years and was sent to Fort Stanton, New Mexico, to serve his enlistment, fighting the Indians. He was discharged in 1875 at Fort Stanton.

He came back to Chicago Illinois, and we were married July 19, 1876. We lived in Chicago for awhile but Frank was never satisfied, for he loved the west and wanted to come back to Lincoln County New Mexico, so he left me in Chicago with my people and he came back to Ruidoso New Mexico, and bought a half interest in the Dowlin's Mill. This mill was owned by Paul and Will Dowlin at the time. Frank stayed here and sent for me and our baby son. I came by train from Chicago to La Junta Colorado, and from La Junta to Fort Stanton New Mexico on Raymond's stage coach, drawn by four horses.

Raymond and his bride, who was from St. Louis Missouri, were passengers on the stage with me. I do not
remember any of the places that we stopped except Jerry Hoeradle’s place, where we stayed all night and changed teams. We had a very pleasant trip, no scares from Indians or desperadoes, although I was very much afraid of the Indians. My husband had told me so much about them and how they would go on the war path, but at that time they were supposed to stay on the Mescalero Reservation.

My husband met me at Fort Stanton. He was driving two big bay horses to a Studebaker. The horses were named "Bill Johnson, and "Bill Dowlin". How happy I was when my husband met me and we drove up the beautiful canyon toward the White mountains. It was in May 1877. We went by way of the Pat Garrett Ranch, which was located on Little Creek, and on by Alto and down Gavelan Canyon to the Ruidoso. When we arrived at Dowlin’s Mill I saw some blood in the front yard. Frank told me that a man named Jerry Dalton had shot and killed Paul Dowlin the day before. Dalton left the country and was never heard of again.

My new home was a four room log house, with a big fireplace in the front room, which we called the parlor. We used kerosene lamps and candles for lights. A man by the name of Johnnie Patton cooked for us. We boarded several of the men who worked in the mills and helped on the farms. We raised hogs and sold them to Fort Stanton. We raised our own feed to fatten the hogs and in the fall of the year the farm hands would butcher about a hundred hogs at a time. I would get some of the neighbor women to come and help render out the lard. We used a big iron pot and rendered up the lard out in the yard. I raised lots of turkeys and chickens and sold them at Fort Stanton.

...The Mescalero Indians from the Mescalero Reservation used to come to our place end trade. My husband had a small store and was post master at Ruidoso. I saw four buck Indians have a fight in front of our store one time. They pulled each other’s hair out and fought with quirts. They fought for about an hour. I was in the store and was afraid to go to our house, although the Indians never did bother us. I was awfully afraid of them, especially when I first came to the Ruidoso. I was always good to the Indians. I gave them doughnuts and cookies when they came to the Mill and it was not long until all the Indians were my friends. Geronomo used to come to our place quite often. Once he brought me a big wild turkey and another time he gave me a nice Indian basket. I gave the basket to Mrs. Hiram Dow and she still has it.

...In 1882 my husband bought out the interest of the Dowlin Brothers and he was sole owner of the Mill. We then moved into the two story building which still stands, with the old water wheel, about two miles from the town of Ruidoso. At that time we had a grist mill and a saw mill. All the surrounding country brought their grain to our mill to be ground. We used oxen to haul our logs for the saw mill.

In 1887 we sold our ranch and cattle on the Ruidoso to the Crees, who owned the "V V" outfit. We moved to Lincoln New Mexico, where we could have better schools for our children. We lived on the Ruidoso all during the Lincoln County War but my husband never took sides with either faction. I did give Billy the Kid several meals when he would come to our place, but my husband never knew anything about it, for he had warned me not to feed any of the men from either side, but I did it anyway as I felt so sorry for them when they said they were hungry.

Lincoln County was a wild country when I first came here and at first I used to get so homesick for my people in Chicago, but after I had been here a few years I liked it and never cared to go back to Chicago to live.

--Mrs. Annie E. Lesnitt, transcript of interview September 7, 1938. [WPA Federal Writers’ Project Collection.]

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Overview: Ruidoso

Paul Dowlin, post trader for Fort Stanton, moved his mill along the Ruidoso River, in order to minimize conflicts arising from his sale of liquor. He prospered in this new location, and a settlement grew up slowly around the businesses he established on his 760-acre homestead. Dowlin was murdered by a former employee in 1877, and the town of "Dowlin’s Mill" was later renamed Ruidoso.

Today, Ruidoso attracts visitors from New Mexico and Texas, with its lush, cool forests, skiing, arts, and horse racing. The new River Museum explores the indigenous and American history of the area, and also houses an eclectic collection of items from celebrities, the Titanic, and other curiosities.

Images:

Dowlns Mill, Ruidoso.

Links:
Ruidoso History --> http://ruidosohistory.com
Ruidoso River Museum --> http://ruidosorivermuseum.com
1878

Quote: (1878) Lincoln became an armed battle ground after the killing of Ollinger and Bell (the Kid's guards) when he made his escape from the Lincoln jail where he had been confined since his capture after the slaying of Brady and Hindman.

On the Sunday evening before the terrible days that ended the Lincoln County War Mother said: "Ella this is the week that will end all this bloodshed and fighting and, I thank God your father is away and won't be mixed up in the shooting, but I am afraid to stay here with you children unprotected."

So that night after supper she took us to stay with the Ellis family, in their house which was built with all the rooms in one long row. About ten o'clock we heard someone with spurs on, come clattering down the whole length of the house. The door where we sat opened and there was Billy the Kid! He was followed by fourteen men who took possession of the house.

We went back to our home but Mother was afraid to stay there after she thought our water supply would perhaps be cut off, so we went to Juan Patron's house and about midnight that house was taken over by some of the fighters. We then went to Montonna's store where we went to bed and when we got up the next morning about twenty men had taken possession there, but we stayed there from Sunday evening, until the next Friday morning. Mother got up and after we saw men fired on and one killed, she said 'I am going to take you children out of this danger.

So she took us two miles out of town where there were some tall poplar trees - they are still there - and about noon we saw heavy smoke. It was the McSween store that had been set afire by the Murphy men to burn out the McSween men (one of them was the Kid) who were surrounded, so they couldn't escape. When the fire was under way Mr. McSween calmly walked to the door as if surrendering and was shot down. Then, two others that followed were riddled with bullets. George Coe Henry Brown and Charlie Bowdre were among the crowd that escaped.

Billy the Kid was the last one left in the building. During the excitement of the roof crashing in, he rushed out with two pistols blazing. Bob Beckwith whose shot had killed McSween was killed by one flying bullet and two others were wounded. The Kid, with bullets whizzing all around him, made his escape.

After this battle that took place in July, 1878 everything quieted down, and my mother took us home. Mrs. McSween whose home was burned, stayed with us all night, and the next morning she asked me to go with her to see the ruins of her house. We found only the springs and other wires of her piano that was the pride of her life. She raked in the ashes where her bureau had stood and found her locket.

That was the most destructive battle of the Lincoln County War. We were terribly upset with all the fighting and killings. My sister Amelia had more than she could stand so my mother sent her to a ranch until things could settle down.

--Mrs. Ella Davidson, transcript from February 18 1938 interview. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]

Overview: Lincoln

Lincoln is a tiny, unincorporated community today, but from 1876-1879, it was the center of the Lincoln County War, and sometime home to notorious outlaw Billy the Kid.

Most of historic Lincoln is part of New Mexico's Lincoln State Monument, offering the modern visitor a taste of life and death during the turbulent and bloody days of the 1870s.

Visitors to Lincoln also enjoy the annual pageant of "The Last Escape of Billy the Kid" during the first weekend of August. Re-enactments are scheduled on Friday and Saturday evening, and on Sunday afternoon, the weekend of the pageant.

Images:

Lincoln Annual Pageant: The Last Escape of Billy the Kid

Links:
New Mexico State Parks: Lincoln State Monument -- http://www.nmmonuments.org/inst.php?inst=7
**12: Fort Stanton**

1874

*Quote: (1874)* We lived in Fort Sumner New Mexico until 1874. Father had a blacksmith shop there too. His herd of cattle increased to about two hundred and seventy five head. In the early spring of 1874 he decided to move to Fort Stanton, New Mexico.

We loaded up in the two covered wagons, drawn by six oxen to a wagon, and started for Fort Stanton, which was a military post at that time.

We crossed the Pecos River at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, and had no trouble crossing the cattle. We grazed the cattle along and took our time and made the trip for Fort Stanton in about two weeks. We lived there for about three years. My brother, Adolpho, was born there and lived only a short time. He died and was buried there at Fort Stanton. My father was blacksmith for the fort.

My father rented a small piece of land from A. N. Blazer, who owned and ran the Blazer Mill, which was situated on the Mescalier Indian Reservation. I do not remember just when we moved to this place on the Indian Reservation. The place had a two roomed log house on it, where we lived. My father still had his cattle and he had them on Fernando Herrera's place...

Father set up a blacksmith shop, planted a garden and about twenty acres in corn. He made a good crop and when he gathered it in the fall he sent word for me to come home. I had been staying with my uncle, Pat Carrillo, who lived not very far away on the Reservation. When I got home my father said; "Son, here is my crop and my blacksmith shop, you can sell them. Take care of your mother, I am going away and you will not see me anymore." He left that day on horseback. He went by Dowlin's Mill and sold his cattle to Paul and Will Dowlin, took the money and left the country.

Soon after my father went away I went to work for the Murphy Dolan Company, punching cows. I was about seventeen years old. The head quarter ranch house was on the Carrizozo Flats, at what is now the Bar W ranch. After my father left my mother moved to the Solado flats, about one mile west of where the town of Capitan now stands.

When my father had been gone for about four years I got a letter from him one day. He was over on the Rio Grande river, at a place called Casa Colorado, about eighteen miles south of Belen, New Mexico. He wanted me to come over there to see him, so I saddled up my black pony and started. I took me two days to make the trip. When I arrived, I found my father in his blacksmith shop. he said; "Hello son, I am glad you came. I want you to have a black stallion I have here, and you can also have this blacksmith shop. I am leaving this time and you will never see me again." He turned and started walking toward the river. I never did see or hear of him from that day to this, nor ever found any body else that ever saw him after that day. My father was always a very queer man and brooded a lot.

"--Abram Miller, transcript of a September 30, 1938 interview. [WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.]

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**Overview: Fort Stanton**

The U.S military established Fort Stanton in 1855 to protect settlements along the Rio Bonito during the Apache wars. Later, it became the first tuberculosis hospital in the country. Today Fort Stanton is a New Mexico State Monument.

**13: La Mesilla**

1870

*What may be the first example of New Mexican Spanglish is quoted here, an example of the mingling of Anglo and Spanish cultures.*

*Quote: (1870)* There is a current story in Old Mesilla about a certain Yankee of the early days who had a habit of serenading dark-eyed senoritas. There is still considerable doubt as to how he mixed his drinks, but none whatever regarding the way he chili-con-carned his English and Spanish. For this gallant Yank's favorite ditty accompanied by the strum, strum, of an old guitar, went something like this:

Te quiero, te quiero because you are the dream angel of mi vida,  
Y mi amor that you control  
Makes my very timid soul  
Sing with highest joy, mi querida;  
Ah! when I see your star-lit eyes,  
Beaming with mucho "come hither,"  
Mi corazon muy furioso beats,  
And performs many romantic feats  
For you, for you only, mi querida.

"--Cruz Richards Alvarez, La Mesilla old timer. Transcript from WPA interview. [WPA Federal Writers' Project]
Overview: Mesilla

In 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the area west of the Río Grande occupied by present-day Mesilla as part of Mexico. (In local usage, it is more often called Mesilla or Old Mesilla.) Las Cruces and Doña Ana, on the east bank of the river, were in American territory. Anglo-Americans arrived to claim land in such force that many native Mexicans moved away.

Those who preferred to remain in the area but on Mexican soil crossed the river and settled on a small rise in the river valley. The settlement, known as Mesilla (little table), included about half the population of Doña Ana.

In 1853 the Mexican government issued the Mesilla Civil Colony Land Grant and the town was formed. In 1854 the Gadsden Purchase was negotiated, acquiring from Mexico a strip of land south of New Mexico and Arizona which stretched from Texas to California, which would later serve as the route for the Southern Pacific Railroad. The residents of Mesilla once again found themselves in the United States.

A few decades later, the town again changed hands briefly, when the Confederate Army came from Texas under the command of Lt. Col. John R. Baylor, who declared the town under the jurisdiction of the Confederacy, as part of the "Arizona Territory" and named himself governor. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]
New Mexico formally annexed; slavery issues had prevented formal annexation until this point.

1848

Mexico signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which cedes lands in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico to the United States (Statute 922 App I). The international boundary designated as the intersection of 32º N and the Rio Grande to intersection of Choctaw Creek with Red River.

1849

Simpson made a map previously shows town of Rito- Rito is a ruin by the time Whipple arrives because the upstream people took all the water. He traveled through Albuquerque to Pueblo de la Laguna and passed Covero (Cubero), Mount Taylor (named by Simpson in 1849 for Zachary Taylor), and Agua Fria, the last spring before the Continental Divide. Whipple used Sitgreaves' 1851 map as a reference also Walker's 1851 map.

1850

New territories admitted, including New Mexico (including modern Arizona), purchase of additional lands from Texas, boundaries adjusted. El Paso becomes part of Texas.

1852 Survey

1st international boundary commission established in accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Emory is the designated astronomer. The survey run into difficulties, which are resolved with the purchase of more land from Mexico.

Initial point on the Rio Grande (determined by Commissioners Condé and Bartlett according to the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo) proves to be in the wrong place. Surveyor AB Gray says 32º 22' is wrong, 31º 52' is right. Commissioners Emory and Salazar (astronomers from the first Boundary Commission) later determine the starting point of the line at 32º47'.

1852

New Mexico legislature passed a single act creating two new counties, redefining five of the original counties to extend across the limits of the territory, and eliminating all non-county area.

1853

Gadsden Purchase from Mexico resolves boundary issues, and give the U.S. the land necessary to build a southern transcontinental railroad. (GP Statute 1031 App II).

1855 Survey

US Commissioner: William H. Emory
Mexican Commissioner: José Salazar y Larregui

Emory and Salazar survey the entire Mexican-American border, including the new area included by the Gadsden Purchase.

The Americans made nearly a dozen monuments along the border to mark the sites, but many were destroyed by surrounding tribes, so the Mexicans rebuilt many and added some. Later surveys added over two hundred more, and rebuilt them as more permanent monuments.

1855 railroad surveys

The U.S. Government commissioned a number of surveys, spaced along parallels, to determine the best route for a transcontinental railroad.

Emory & Parke: 32nd parallel
Whipple & Ives: 35th parallel
Beckwith & Gunnison: 38th-39 parallel

1857 and 1858

Ives' Report upon the Colorado River of the West

1859

Marcy publishes The Prairie Traveler

1861

Colorado territory established; New Mexico's northern boundary reduced.

Residents of the Mesilla Valley declared their allegiance with the Confederacy and separated from the Union. They hoped the Confederacy would recognize them as the state of Arizona, which they imagined would reach to the Colorado River.

Civil War starts. Confederate troops gather at Fort Bliss and take Fort Fillmore. The plan is to seize New Mexico, and then march on to take the gold fields of Colorado or California. Indian raids on settlements step
up as U.S. Army soldiers turn their attention to other matters.

1862

Homestead Act: free 160 acres offered after 5 years cultivation. Later modified to offer 320 acres, and the Desert Lands Act offered 640 acres.

Henry H. Sibley, commander of a brigade of mounted regiments from Texas, marched from Fort Bliss near El Paso up the Rio Grande: taking Fort Fillmore, defeating Union troops at Fort Craig, taking Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and finally defeating the Union troops at Glorieta Pass, near Pecos. By this time, the Confederate troops were starving and without clothes or ammunition, so they retreated back to Fort Bliss.

1862-1871

Railroad Land grants: the Federal government gives away 128 million acres of land to the railroad companies, as an incentive to build railway lines all over the country. The railroad companies sold many of these parcels to homesteaders.

1863

Arizona Territory created by the United States from the western portion of New Mexico Territory and a part of present Nevada. Present New Mexico-Arizona boundary established.

1864-1866

"Long Walk"- Navajo and Mescalero Apache forcibly relocated to Bosque Redondo reservation; The Apache escaped, and the Navajo signed a treaty of nonaggression and returned to their homeland in 1868.

1864-1890

Indian Wars throughout the West. Destruction of the bison herds.

1867

Hayden, King, Wheeler, Powell Surveys map the west comprehensively, while cataloguing flora, fauna, and geology.

1868

Navajo chief Barboncito, along with numerous other leaders, sign a treaty with General William T. Sherman, agreeing to peace with the Americans in exchange for rights to return from Bosque Redondo to their new reservation: a small area within their traditional homeland.

1869

Fort Bliss renamed Fort Bliss.

Cochise and Apache guerrillas active 1871- 1879.

The war to save the buffalo 1874-1880.

1878-1879

Fort Bliss permanently established in current location.

1878

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) railroad crosses the Raton Pass into New Mexico, reaching Las Vegas, its first destination in New Mexico, in 1879.

1879

USGS established.

1880

The Southern transcontinental railroad traversed the region.

Geronimo & Chiricahua Apaches active in southern New Mexico and northern Mexico, 1880-1886.

1884

New boundary treaty: the boundary, where marked by the Rio Grande, adheres to the center of original channel as surveyed in 1852 even if the course of the river changes. Boundaries on international bridges at center point.

1886

Geronimo surrenders to General Crook in southern New Mexico. The remaining members of the Chiricahua and Mimbres bands are removed first to Florida, and finally to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

1889

US/Texas/ New Mexico/Mexico border resurveyed; discovered bancos or alluvial deposits changing land mass on either side of the border.

1891
Forest Reserve Law, designating forest preserves; forerunner of current National Forests.
1905

National Forest service created.
1906

Antiquities Act. Allows a president to protect areas of public land by executive order.

New treaty with Mexico on water rights for irrigation
1912

New Mexico becomes the forty-seventh state of the Union.
1916

National Park Service created.
1924

Gila Wilderness established.
1925

U.S. Supreme Court decision in New Mexico v. Colorado dismisses New Mexico's claims and establishes current boundaries between the states.

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