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# The Plaza Del Cerro in Chimayo: Settlement and Function

Donald James Usner

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

**Center for Regional Studies #104  
Spring 1994**

**THE PLAZA DEL CERRO IN CHAMAYO:  
SETTLEMENT AND FUNCTION**

**By  
Donald James Usner  
The University of New Mexico**

**Southwest  
Hispanic  
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**THE PLAZA DEL CERRO IN CHIMAYO:  
SETTLEMENT AND FUNCTION**

BY  
DONALD JAMES USNER  
B.A., UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ, 1981

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Geography

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
December, 1991

*The Plaza del Cerro in Chimayó, New Mexico:*

*Settlement and Function*

Donald James Usner

B.A. Biology and Environmental Studies, University of California,  
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M.A. Geography , University of New Mexico, 1991

The Plaza del Cerro is one of the best-preserved Spanish colonial structures in New Mexico. One of many defensive plazas built in New Mexico in the late 18th century, it was nearly abandoned by the 1950's but remains widely recognized as a valuable architectural artifact. Its cultural history, however, has remained poorly studied.

This thesis examines the Plaza from a cultural geography viewpoint, using documentary sources to trace the origins of the Plaza to a few families who had been in Chimayó since the early 1700's. Interviews with surviving residents of the Plaza are then used to describe the Plaza community in the early 20th century. The oral history shows that the Plaza was inhabited by closely related families and was characterized by a *patrón* type social system. The *patrones* were descendents of the people who founded the Plaza, suggesting that this type of social organization had very early origins in Chimayó.

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## Acknowledgments

This study involved people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Many people in Chimayó took the time to sit with me and answer endless questions--and often offered some biscochitos or tortillas in the process. Foremost among these are my mother, Stella Chávez Usner, and my grandmother, Benigna Ortega Chávez. The elderly people I talked with radiated the same warmth, the same time-worn connection to the place as the buildings of the Plaza. They have aged with the same quiet grace, and the time spent with them has been immensely rewarding.

I am indebted to my principal advisor on this project, Dr. Jerry Williams, for his continuing encouragement and guidance, and for his patience and skill in reading drafts of this thesis. Drs. William deBuys and Joseph Sanchez have also been instrumental in guiding this project to completion.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge my wife, Deborah, my best and most valuable ally. Without her support, this project would never have been completed.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the social geography of the Plaza del Cerro in Chimayó, one of the best-preserved examples of Spanish Colonial architecture in New Mexico. The human and cultural resources of Chimayó make such a reconstruction possible, for there are still people in Chimayó who lived at the Plaza in the early 20th century when it was an active center of village life. The social and economic patterns presented here are based primarily on interviews with these people.

The paper is divided into two major sections. The first part, a prelude to the oral history of the Plaza, focuses on the settlement of the Chimayó area. This includes the settlement history, the identities of the original settlers, and the location of the Plaza with regard to natural features and land ownership. It traces the Plaza's long history as a residential complex of related families. The second part uses interview data to describe how the Plaza functioned as a community in this century. It elaborates on the livelihoods of Plaza residents, ownership of the buildings and the land in and around the Plaza, and the relationship between land ownership and economic and social organization. This historical geography exposes the rich and complex social fabric of the living Plaza.

### **Methods**

As would be expected of a place which has been in existence since the Spanish Colonial Period, there is a substantial amount of literature relating to the Chimayó area. Primary historical documents available through the State

Archives in Santa Fé and in the Special Collections of Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico were used to clarify the origins and development of the Plaza community through the 19th Century. The Borrego-Ortega Papers, a collection of family documents stored in the State Archives, were especially relevant and useful for studying Plaza history. Significantly, a number of useful historic documents and one map that were not available in any public collection were also discovered during interviews in the course of this research.

The heart of this paper attempts to unravel the historic economic and social patterns of the Plaza using a previously untapped resource--the memories of long-time residents. Chimayó, like other Hispanic villages of northern New Mexico, offers ideal opportunities for such oral historical research.<sup>1</sup> The local culture is relatively homogeneous and has a long history of settlement. Oral traditions are strong among the local elders. The Plaza provided a central focus, narrowing the field of inquiry to a specific geographic locale and providing a unifying theme for the interviews.

Interview subjects were selected simply by identifying as many people as possible who had some first-hand knowledge of the Plaza between 1900 and the present<sup>2</sup> (see Appendix 1--Biographical Information on Informants). From this group, those who were most accessible and willing to talk were in-

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<sup>1</sup> Briggs, Charles L.. "Getting Both Sides of the Story: Oral History ," pp. 217 - 268 in *Land, Water and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> All the interviews that were recorded for this study are stored in the Oral History collection at the Center for Regional Studies in Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque and are available to interested researchers.

interviewed at their homes for periods varying from one to three hours. Although some people were interviewed more than once, due to time and cost constraints not everyone was contacted. Most informants were elderly (ages varied from 46 to 103 out of a total of 18 interviewees) and most of these were women.<sup>3</sup> It seems that in Chimayó women outlive men and this made it impossible to locate male sources who occupied the Plaza during the early 20th Century.<sup>4</sup> Thus my interviews and the primary data used here are biased towards a woman's perspective.

The people interviewed may have been an atypical sample for other reasons as well. Most of the informants were from successful families by Chimayó standards. The very poor people either didn't live to an old age or their families moved away from Chimayó long ago. This study concentrates on Plaza residents who managed to remain in the area and maintain a livelihood--a select subgroup of Plaza del Cerro society.

Similarly, many informants were near or distant relatives, many affiliated with the Ortega family. In fact, thirteen out of the eighteen people interviewed could claim to be descendents of the original Ortega in Chimayó, Gabriel. As a consequence, the oral history here is skewed toward representation of the Ortega family. This is almost inevitable in the Plaza area, where the Ortega family has long resided and can claim many descendents. It is also

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<sup>3</sup> Use of the word "informants" in this thesis is done with trepidation, as it seems to grossly impersonalize the whole interview process. It is a simple, generic reference that is convenient to use, but the reader is requested to keep in mind that these are foremost *people*, and very warm people at that.

<sup>4</sup> Only one man was located who exceeded 86 years of age, and he was too old and infirm to interview.

a consequence of the fact that the family is active in keeping records and genealogies. In any case, this oral history focuses on the extended Ortega family, and descendants may tend to portray the family in as favorable a light as possible.<sup>5</sup>

A standardized questionnaire was not used, but the same general topics and specific events were covered in each interview. The primary areas of concern of this oral history were: the identification of the residents of the Plaza as well as their occupations and relations to other residents; the village livelihood (i.e., the kinds of crops grown in Chimayó, trade relations with other villages and merchants, the locations of important resources, and sources of wage labor); and the social organization of the community. Informants were consistently steered to these subject areas, using a map of the Plaza as a reference. Informants were also referred to specific historic events--such as the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, deaths of key people, etc.--to encourage recall and to maintain the focus of the interviews.

In all interviews, it was very difficult to obtain from informants the precise dates for events.<sup>6</sup> The time period of recall data covered the Plaza from

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<sup>5</sup> The writer of this thesis is a descendent of Gabriel, and the relationship of the interviewer with informants was usually familial to some degree. This may have biased the sample slightly, because the people most willing to be interviewed-- and the people contacted first -- were those who knew the interviewer through family connections. Such familiarity may have had both beneficial and negative effects on the content of interviews. Since my family is from Chimayó, I was warmly welcomed by all the people and their level of trust was reflected in the information they shared. They were relaxed and candid in their comments. However, accounts of some events may have been edited or changed by informants who preferred to leave certain family "skeletons in the closet."

<sup>6</sup> Lang and Mercier stress the important fact that oral history's strength is not in manufacturing chronology and that interviewers should beware of interrupting the flow of narration to request

about 1905 to the present, with a focus on the period "when the Plaza was occupied." Some people recalled the early 1900's, while other, younger people clearly remembered the 1920's and 30's or even later. Thus, this oral history of the Plaza del Cerro is largely without a chronological time frame. It represents memories of the Plaza from a number of different perspectives.

In the first interview, a home-made map that proved to be the keystone of all interviews was offered by Amada Trujillo. Representing the Plaza in about 1916, the map includes the names of all the residents on the Plaza as well as the locations of roads, ditches, entrances to the Plaza and some interesting annotated comments (Map 9, p. 84). The map was indispensable and was used in every interview as a point of departure and constant reference.

### **Background on the Plaza del Cerro**

*Plaza* is a word used differently in northern New Mexico than in Mexico, where *plaza* refers to the central town square of a settlement. This fits with the Spanish concept of a plaza, and indeed, the plaza as a building form had its origins in the Roman colonization of Spain when grid-plan settlements were established to solidify control of the territory.<sup>7</sup> In Colonial New Mexico, the word retained ramifications as a defensive structure although *plazas* deviated in form from their Old World antecedents.<sup>8</sup>

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specific dates or times. (Lang, William L., and Laurie K. Mercier, 1984. "Getting it Down Right: Oral History's Reliability in Local History Research." *Oral History Review* 12, p. 97.)

<sup>7</sup> Harlan, Carol S. "Plaza/Placita Settlement in New Mexico and An Analysis of a Frontier Plaza Settlement." Unpublished paper, UNM, Department of Geography, 1982, p. 1

<sup>8</sup> Cobos, Rubén. *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish*. Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fé, 1983, pp. 135-136.

A formal definition of the plaza-type settlement was described in ordinances issued by King Philip II as a generic plan for establishing towns on the expanding frontier of the Empire. Embodied in a chapter of *Laws of the Indies*, the plan called for a central plaza area with houses built continuously around it for defensive purposes.<sup>9</sup> But on the isolated frontier of northern New Spain, the regulations were largely ignored and settlement usually proceeded in a haphazard fashion. The term *plaza* came to refer to any town and *placita* came to refer to a small town or village, whether or not it was organized into a grid pattern. A *plaza* often consisted of several related households grouped closely together, and a community was sometimes comprised of several *placitas*.<sup>10</sup> Very small settlements were referred to as *lugares* ("places").<sup>11</sup> It was not until the late 18th century that continuing attacks by Indians led some communities, including Chimayó, to consolidate into fortified plazas.

Today in the Santa Cruz valley, there are many places referred to as *plazas* or *placitas*, but only the Santa Cruz plaza and the Plaza del Cerro include the remnants of a fortified structure. When discussing the "plaza of Chimayó," or the "Plaza del Cerro" the local people are usually referring to the fortified plaza structure as well as the group of houses in its immediate vicinity. They do not clearly distinguish between the fortified Plaza and the nearby commu-

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<sup>9</sup> Stilgoe, John R. *The Common Landscape of America*. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1982, p 35.

<sup>10</sup> Harlan, p.2

<sup>11</sup> Simmons, Marc. "Settlement Patterns and Village Plans in Colonial New Mexico." *Journal of the West* 8(1969), p. 13.

nity, perhaps because at one time the fortified Plaza was the extent of settlement in the area.

Almost forgotten, overgrown with weeds and crumbling back into earth, the Plaza del Cerro still resonates with a peculiar sense of place, of belonging to the hills themselves. Yet, at a passing glance the Plaza del Cerro is simply one of several small *placitas* of Chimayó, a large area of settlement that stretches from La Puebla to the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains in the Santa Cruz valley.<sup>12</sup> The Plaza del Cerro is located near the eastern edge of Chimayó, nestled against the foothills at the head of the valley about 6 miles from Española (see Map 1).

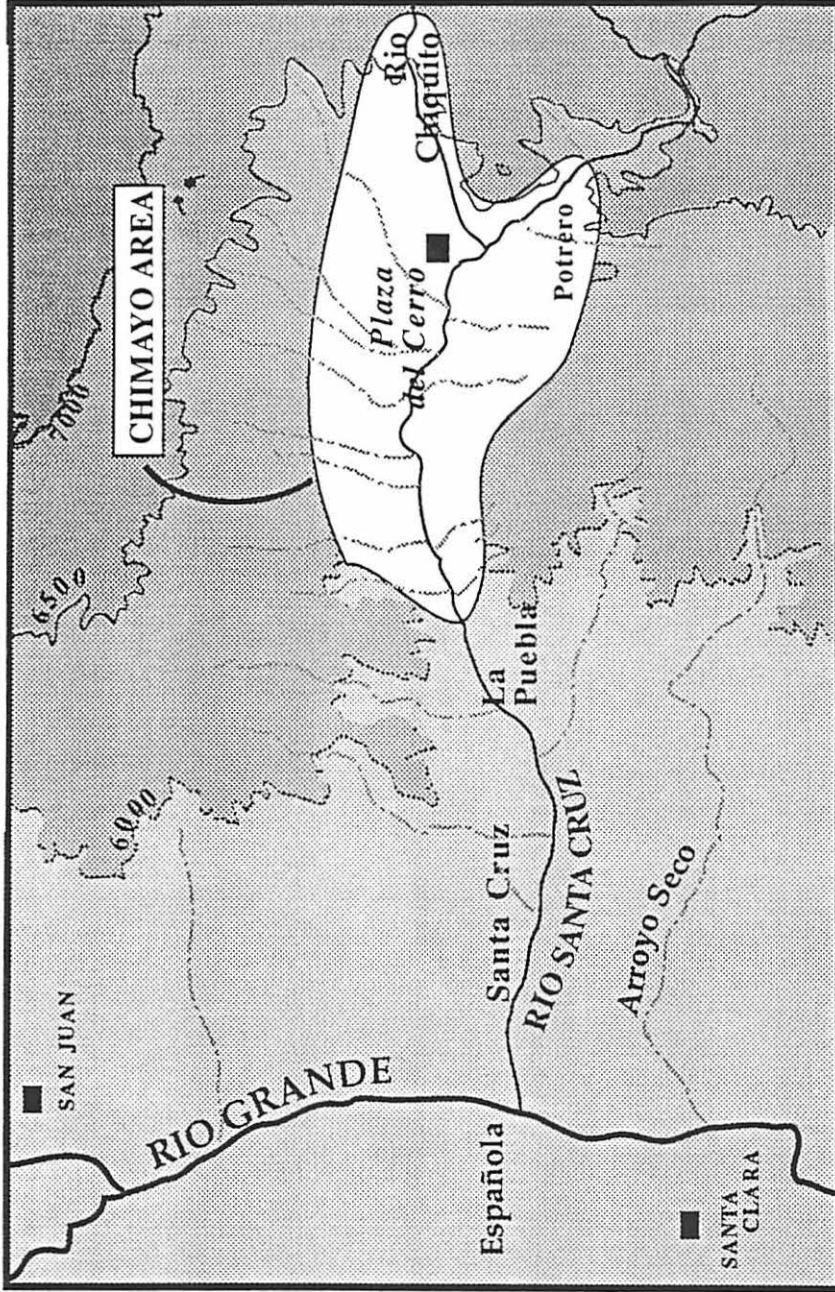
The antiquity of the Plaza del Cerro is apparent upon closer inspection. Though some of its adobe buildings are inhabited and well-maintained, most are abandoned and in various states of decay. They form a nearly contiguous, off-square rectangle measuring 600 ft. on its longest side--a settlement form not used since New Mexico was a colony of Spain. There are openings on the east and west sides where a dirt road cuts through the Plaza, and smaller alleyways in the north and south walls. The northeast, northwest, and southwest corners are all open now, where buildings once sealed the Plaza from a hostile world.

This plaza is unique because it shows the plan of a fortified colonial plaza and is the best surviving example of this architecture in the state. It is re-

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<sup>12</sup> This definition given by elder informants in the area corresponds to the US Postal Service boundaries for Chimayó. See: Wiegler, Marta. *Hispanic Villages of Northern New Mexico : A Reprint of Volume II of the Tewa Basin Study, with Supplementary Materials*. Santa Fé, Lightning Tree Press, 1979, p. 92.





Map 1: Chimayó and the Santa Cruz Valley

markably intact for its age and has remained outside of the modernization trends that altered other northern New Mexico plazas in this century.<sup>13</sup> The result is a plaza that is little changed in many respects from its 18th century form. Equally important, however, is the evidence of diverse architectural styles--dating from the 18th century up until the end of the 1920's--that were incorporated into the Plaza in renovations and repairs over the decades.<sup>14</sup>

The Plaza was originally built as an enclosed square with no large windows open to the outside. The two narrow alleys on the south and north sides each allowed the passage of one horse at a time into the Plaza.<sup>15</sup> The interior of the Plaza was communal garden land which was irrigated by the Ortega ditch. Adobe watchtowers (*torreones*) may once have been positioned at four corners of the Plaza, but only the one outside the south wall remains. The upper story of this *torreon* is gone but the bottom portion has been preserved inside a barn since the early 20th century. This is the best-preserved *torreon* in New Mexico.

Many of the flat-roofed room blocks of the original Plaza were modified with pitched tin roofs when the railroad to Española made these materials available.<sup>16</sup> However, room blocks on the southwestern side of the Plaza and some on the north and east retain flat roofs and also reflect the 18th century

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<sup>13</sup> Boyd, E., *Historic Preservation: A Plan for New Mexico*. New Mexico State Planning Office, Santa Fé, 1971, p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Larcombe, Samuel. Nomination form for Plaza del Cerro (Site No. 75) National Register of Historic Places. On file, Historic Preservation Division, Santa Fé, New Mexico, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Boyd, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> Boyd, p. 80.

in ceiling detail and tiny window openings. The general store still stands with its storefront façade though it closed in the 1940's. The south wall of this building has few windows except for small openings high up on the wall. Among other architectural details preserved in the Plaza are *raja* ceilings (ceilings made of rough, hand-made lath), hand-adzed beams and lintels, adobe floors, early plastering techniques, some excellent corner fireplaces, and Greek revival door and window trim.<sup>17</sup> One building has a *soterrano*, a small storage cellar with a wooden lid and leather hinges.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most significant buildings on the Plaza is the *Oratorio* on the west side. This private chapel was originally built sometime between 1821 and 1837.<sup>19</sup> Dedicated to San Buenaventura, the patron saint of the Plaza, the *Oratorio* was maintained by the community as a place of worship. The *retablos* behind the altar are believed to have been painted by José Rafael Aragon, the same artist who did the paintings in the famous Santuario church in nearby Potrero.<sup>20</sup> This tiny room, with its ceiling *araña* (primitive chandelier), whitewashed walls, and simple woodwork and artistry is a classic example of the many private chapels that were constructed in northern New Mexico in the 19th century, most of which have fallen into ruin.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Larcombe, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Boyd, p. 85

<sup>19</sup> Jaramillo, Victor Dan. "La Casa del Patron." Unpublished manuscript loaned by the author, no date, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Jaramillo, p. 9

<sup>21</sup> Jaramillo, p. 2

Because of its historic significance, the Plaza del Cerro was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in July of 1972. It could be repaired using simple materials, and offers an extraordinary opportunity to preserve an important relic of Hispanic settlement. Detailed recommendations for preservation of the Plaza were developed by E. Boyd for the State Planning Office.<sup>22</sup> She suggested stabilization of deteriorating buildings and offered specific guidelines for preservation of important architectural and historical features. National Historic Place designation affords the Plaza some protection from alteration. Any changes to be made to buildings or grounds must be approved by the State Historic Preservation Division in Santa Fé. The Division has no funds for restoration, however, and a limited ability to enforce its rules.

### **Problems with Preservation**

Responsibility for preserving the Plaza thus falls into the hands of the local community. Some of the buildings on the Plaza are inhabited and subject to periodic maintenance and remodeling. Others are abandoned and are falling into ruin. Over the years many buildings on the Plaza have passed into the hands of people with no familial connection to Chimayó, and some have expressed interest in commercial development. There is no assurance that any of the landowners, old or new, will adhere to Boyd's careful guidelines.

In 1970 concerned residents joined to form the Chimayó Historical Sites Committee. Plaza property owners were encouraged to join the organization

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<sup>22</sup> Boyd, 1971.

and to restore their properties and then give them to a Corporation to be formed by Chimayó citizens owning property on the Plaza in exchange for stock in the Corporation. Mr. Robert McKinney, publisher of the *Santa Fé New Mexican*, offered to buy and restore some buildings and donate them to the corporation. The restored buildings were to be used for purposes designated by the stockholders and might include a "museum, a community center, a library, shops, etc.."23 The project foundered because of a lack of strong local support.

Arturo Jaramillo, founder of the famous Rancho de Chimayó restaurant, restored some buildings on the west side of the Plaza. These were soon vandalized and fell into disrepair. The owner of the largest weaving enterprise in Chimayó, David Ortega, renovated an old family house on the north side which his son transformed into an art gallery and is now rented as a dwelling. Ortega also continues to maintain the Oratorio, which had been in the care of his aunt until her death. A few rooms on the south end of the west side of the Plaza have been carefully renovated by their owner. Little other restoration work has been done until recently, when the general store building was purchased, cleaned out and partially repaired.24

In 1986, the Plaza del Cerro suddenly came into the media limelight when Robert Redford proposed to film a Hollywood production of *The Milagro*

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23 Memorandum, 1970, on file in the State Preservation Division Office (HPD)

24 The Historic Preservation Division in Santa Fé raised some concerns about the work on this important building, and its outward appearance has changed slightly in the renovation process.

*Beanfield War* there.<sup>25</sup> The Historic Preservation Division of the state government was contacted by the production company and had a chance to review all plans for the filming. However, some local residents did not want the Plaza to be a movie location and the resistance from some residents points out the problems faced with preservation plans for the Plaza.

A leader in opposition to the film was Harold Martínez, who owns three rooms on the Plaza. Martínez said that residents "wanted to keep it quiet on the Plaza."<sup>26</sup> While most Chimayó residents agreed to the filming after reassurances that the Plaza would not be permanently altered--and after a handsome offer of cash--Mr. Martínez and a few others refused to budge. They pointed out that most Chimayó supporters of the movie did not live on the Plaza. A major objection was disruption of their daily lives as well as alteration of the Plaza. Mr. Martínez produced bumper stickers which read, *Plaza del Cerro, I Love You the Way You Are*.

But other Chimayó residents believe that the motive for resistance to the movie was rooted in a stubborn refusal to allow any change in the Plaza, including restoration as an historic site. They point to a long-held suspicion of "outsiders" and projects that are intended to benefit the community. According to some, it was these same sentiments that defeated plans for a Plaza Corporation to oversee restoration and development.

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<sup>25</sup> *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 5 June 1986

<sup>26</sup> *Santa Fé New Mexican*, no date, on file Historic Preservation Division

Some landowners have expressed an interest in restoring Plaza buildings and the prospects for preserving the Plaza del Cerro seem to be improving. Yet, the debate brings up fundamental questions regarding preservation. The distinction between preservation and development is not clearly defined and some kinds of "preservation"--such as restoration projects designed to exploit the Plaza solely for commercial purposes--might not be in the best interest of the local community. From this vantage, the fears of Mr. Martínez and others are justified. Thus far, external interests seem more intent on preserving the Plaza than local people, and there is a possibility that in the future all of the Plaza will belong to outside interests. Development as a tourist attraction or artist center would certainly change the character of the Plaza and could diminish its cultural and historical value.

The people who knew the Plaza when it was fully inhabited express sadness in watching it decline into ruin, but they find it equally disturbing to imagine the Plaza falling into the hands of insensitive development. The purpose of this paper is not to solve this difficult dilemma regarding preservation of the Plaza del Cerro. Rather, it is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the Plaza as a living community. For even if fully restored, the Plaza would remain but a shell of lifeless buildings without a record of how it was inhabited.

## PART I - SETTLEMENT OF THE SANTA CRUZ VALLEY AND CHIMAYO

### Physical Environment

The Santa Cruz valley is located in the Rio Grande rift zone of the southern Rocky Mountains physiographic province.<sup>1</sup> The most significant natural features of this area are the Rio Grande and lower Chama valleys, which merge in the Española basin, and the mountain ranges of the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez on the east and west, respectively. The most important characteristic of the region from a settlement viewpoint is its topographic, climatic and ecological diversity. The perennial streams of the Chama and Rio Grande and their tributaries have deposited large quantities of sediment in this basin, which has created a fertile system of riverine floodplains. The Santa Cruz river is one of the larger, westward-flowing perennial tributaries in the region. This and other tributaries of the northern Rio Grande region form valleys which interfinger with moist uplands rich in plant and animal resources. The upland resources were of great importance to both prehistoric and historic people.<sup>2</sup>

The Santa Cruz valley extends from the western foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains to the Rio Grande at Española, a distance of about six miles. A verdant oasis in a rugged expanse of arid land, the Santa Cruz River carves this valley as it flows from the headwaters of three tributary streams in the

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, Jerry L. *New Mexico in Maps*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1986, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Cordell, Linda S. "Northern and Central Rio Grande." In: *Dynamics of Southwestern Prehistory*. Linda S. Cordell and George J. Gumerman, eds.. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, p. 298.



Sangre de Cristo Mountains: the Rio Medio, the Rio Frijoles and the Rio Quemado. These join and emerge from a steep-walled canyon into the river floodplain at Chimayó.

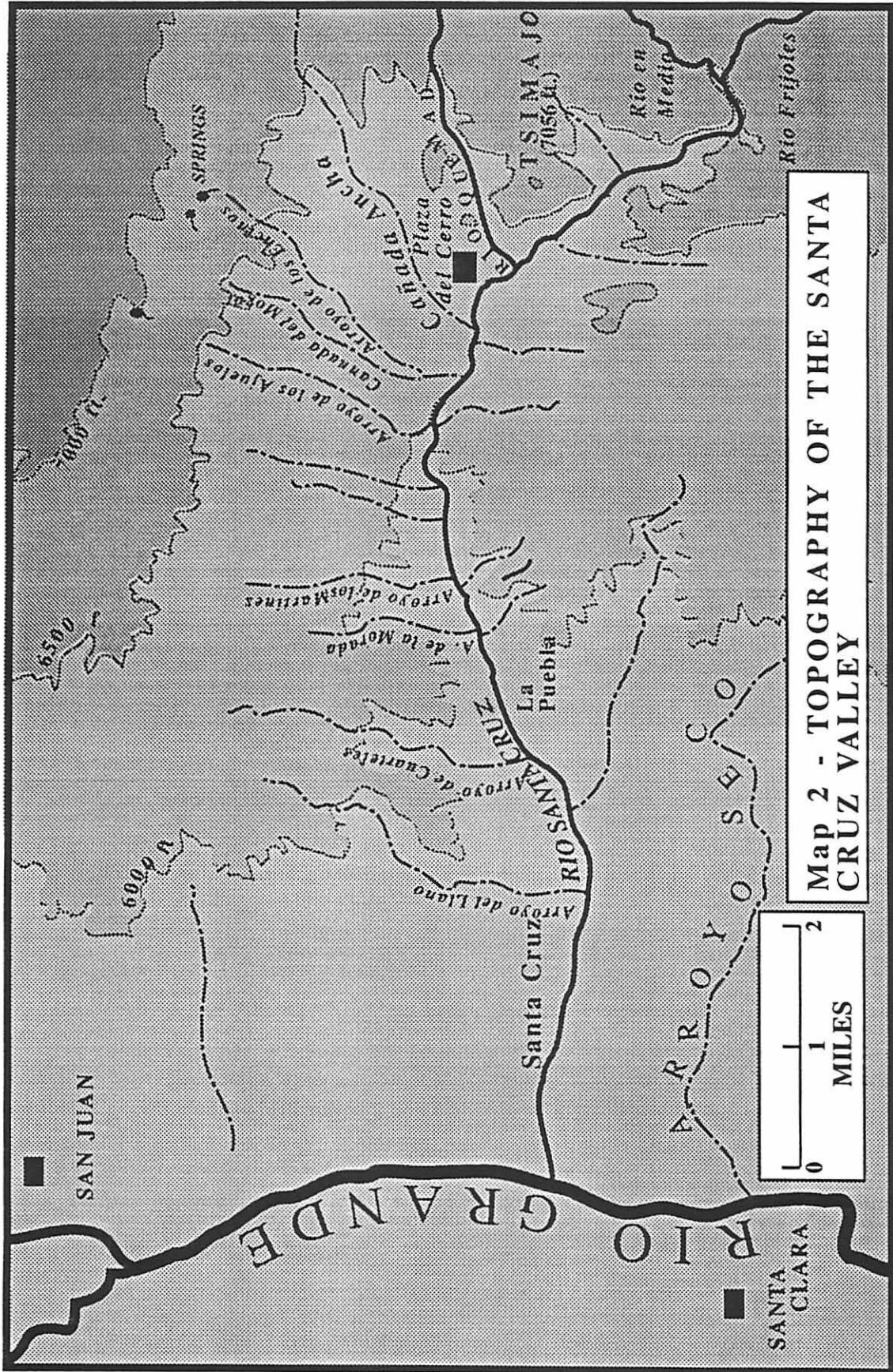
The foothills of the Sangre de Cristo range rise steeply at the head of the valley. The imposing summit of Tsimajó, at just over 2133 m (7000 ft.), towers over the head of the valley and is a notable landmark among the foothills (Map 2). Ancient Precambrian granitic rocks underlie Tsimajó and the forested flanks of the higher mountains; these encourage rapid runoff and produce poor soils away from the river floodplain.

The Santa Cruz River merges with the Rio Grande in the Española Basin, the northernmost of a series of basins in New Mexico that comprise the Rio Grande rift.<sup>3</sup> Two arms of eroded, sandy rock formations border the north and south sides of the valley, confining it to a width of about two miles at its eastern end and a much smaller width to the west. These dissected badlands, or *barrancas*, are accumulations of sand, gravel, and mud as well as small amounts of volcanic ash and small lava flows of much more recent origin than the granitic rocks. Some strata in this formation contain fossils of extinct mammalian megafauna.<sup>4</sup> The rocks are soft, barely consolidated and erode easily into sculpted and spectacular badlands forms.

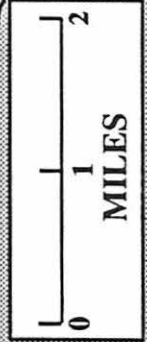
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<sup>3</sup> Kelley, Vincent C.. Geomorphology of the Española basin. *In*: Ingersoll, Raymond V., editor, *Guidebook of Santa Fé Country* . New Mexico Geological Society Guidebook, 30th Field Conference, 1979, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> Kues, Barry S., and Spencer G. Lucas. "Summary of the Paleontology of the Santa Fé Group (Mio-Pliocene), North-central New Mexico." *In*: Ingersoll, Raymond V., editor, *Guidebook of Santa Fé Country* . New Mexico Geological Society Guidebook, 30th Field Conference, 1979., p.239



Map 2 - TOPOGRAPHY OF THE SANTA CRUZ VALLEY



■ SAN JUAN  
■ SANTA CLARA

Numerous arroyos slope down from the orange and buff-colored barrancas to join the Santa Cruz River along its length, cutting directly through irrigated and settled land on their way. Most of these flood channels slope down from the north. The largest of these, the *Cañada Ancha*, sweeps down from the northeast and was long a travel route to Truchas, the northern mountain villages, the Mora area, and to Taos. The arroyos do not carry perennial water flow, but some are headed by perennial springs which flow out on the northern side of the valley and disappear into sand. The soils of the badlands form unconsolidated, coarse sediments.<sup>5</sup> Though these soils are an important source of sandy sediments, they are not arable. Arable soils are restricted to the valley floor and, to a lesser extent, to the level tops of the ridges bordering the valley. In the valley, 63% of the soils are loam, 27% are loamy fine sand, and 10% are clay loams.<sup>6</sup> The steep slopes and poor soils along with a lack of vegetation make the uplands in the immediate vicinity of the Chimayó area particularly susceptible to erosion.

The climate of the region is a semi-arid continental type with an increase in precipitation corresponding to increased elevation, from 26 cm. (10.1 in.) at Española to over 100 cm. (40 in.) annually in the mountains.<sup>7</sup> Most of this comes in the form of summer rainfall. Precipitation varies widely year to year, however. Schaafsma noted variation from 15 cm. (6 in.) below average

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<sup>5</sup> Maker, H.J., H.E. Dergne, V. G. Link, and J.U. Anderson. "Soils of New Mexico." *Agricultural Experiment Station, Research Report* 285. Las Cruces, 1974, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> New Mexico State Engineer's Office, *Upper Rio Grande Hydrographic Survey Report, Vol. 1, Santa Cruz River Section*, 1964, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu, Cyril E. Everard, and Jerold G. Widdison. *The Climate of New Mexico*. State Planning Office, Santa Fé, 1969.

to 20 cm. (8 in.) above average in over 70 years of observations.<sup>8</sup> The growing season in Chimayó at the valley's head averages between 140-160 days.<sup>9</sup> The mean is 163 days in Española at the mouth of the valley.<sup>10</sup> The growing season also varies from year to year. Records over 33 years show a range from 120 to 193 days, making it possible to grow a wide range of crops. Killing frosts frequently destroy orchard crops in the valley.

The increase in precipitation from the Rio Grande to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains creates a series of altitudinally-zoned vegetation types from grasslands through piñon-juniper, ponderosa pine and other coniferous associations before reaching the alpine zones above timberline. Ponderosa pine grows to a lower elevation limit of about 2100 m (7,000 ft.) in the hills east of the Santa Cruz valley and reaches down major stream canyons to an elevation of about 1980 m. (6500 ft.).<sup>11</sup> Biella and Chapman identified twelve distinct vegetation communities in a transect from the Rio Grande to the top of the Jemez mountains<sup>12</sup> and the plant associations on the western slopes of the Sangre de Cristo show a similar diversity. These diverse life-zones have provided settlers with resources for a wide range of non-agricultural

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<sup>8</sup> Schaafsma, Curtis. "Archaeological Survey in Conjunction with Proposed Soil Conservation Service Water Control Features Near Chimayó, New Mexico." *School of American Research, Contract Archeology Program Report # 108*. Santa Fé, 1979, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Tuan et al 1969, Fig 38

<sup>10</sup> Cordell, Linda S. 1979. *A Cultural Resources Overview of the Middle Rio Grande valley, New Mexico*. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Fig. 3C.

<sup>11</sup> Local residents report a former presence of ponderosa pine in the Chimayó valley at an elevation of around 1890 m. [6200 ft.], but whether or not this was native growth is questionable.

<sup>12</sup> Biella, Jan V., and Richard C. Chapman. *Anthropological Investigations in Cochiti Reservoir, New Mexico, Volume 4: Adaptive Change in the Northern Rio Grande Valley*. Office of Contract Archeology, Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1979.

activities, including hunting, plant-gathering, grazing, wood-cutting, and others.

Elevation of the valley floor changes from about 1800 m (5800 ft.) at the Rio Grande to 1900 m (6200 ft.) at upper Chimayó (Map 2). The density of ground cover is generally greater on the tops of level ridges and at higher elevations than along hill slopes. The Santa Cruz River is bordered by a narrow band of riparian vegetation--cottonwood, alder, and willow--and stretching from this strand of trees and up to the base of the jagged badlands are the agricultural fields of the valley. These follow not only the river, but also extend out from a maze of ditches that sew the patches of fields together. A total of eighteen ditches serve the Santa Cruz valley.<sup>13</sup> Two of these--the Martínez Arriba Ditch and the Ortega Ditch--serve the Plaza del Cerro area. A third ditch, the District Ditch, flows through the Plaza but does not provide it with irrigation water (see Agricultural Functions, in Part II, below, for a discussion of the District Ditch).

No research has been done to determine past vegetation patterns in the valley. Although the climate of the region has remained relatively stable for the past several thousand years, it is quite possible that the vegetation has changed due to human activity since prehistoric occupation. Complete removal of piñon-juniper woodland has been documented for the Chaco Canyon area<sup>14</sup> and a similar reduction of woodland noted at Mesa Verde.<sup>15</sup> In

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<sup>13</sup> New Mexico State Engineer's Office, *Upper Rio Grande Hydrographic Survey Report*, Vol. 1, Santa Cruz River Section, 1964, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Betancourt, Julio L., and Thomas R. Van Devender. "Holocene Vegetation in Chaco Canyon." *Science* 214 (1981):656-658.

the Taos area, Woosley suggests that the vast sagebrush plains between the mountains and the Rio Grande may be a recent human artifact associated with grazing.<sup>16</sup> Changes of a similar magnitude could have taken place historically and prehistorically in the Santa Cruz valley, so that the original Native American and later Hispanic settlers may have faced a somewhat different environment than is evidenced today. Photographs from the early part of the century, as well as surveyor's notes, suggest that the dense cover of domestic and riparian trees was largely absent from the Chimayó area until fairly recently. The piñon-juniper and grassland communities covered a more extensive area and the riparian vegetation was more closely restricted to natural watercourses.

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<sup>15</sup> Wycoff, Don G. "Secondary Forest Succession Following Abandonment of Mesa Verde." *The Kiva* 42, Vols. 3-4 (1977), pp. 215-229.

<sup>16</sup> Woosley, Anne I.. "Puebloan Prehistory of the Northern Rio Grande: Settlement, Population, Subsistence." *The Kiva* Vol. 51, No. 3( 1986), p. 145.

## Prehistoric Settlement

True settlement, or a sedentary lifestyle involving permanent habitations, didn't begin in the northern Rio Grande region until AD 600-900. However, there are traces of Archaic occupation of the area. Archaic culture people wandered in a hunting and gathering existence from the high mountains to the valley floor. Archaic evidence has been reportedly scarce in and around the valley until recently, when intensive surveys have turned up evidence of substantial Archaic presence.<sup>1</sup> These finds reveal that the scarcity of Archaic sites is a reflection more of inadequate survey than of an absence of sites.

No systematic survey of prehistoric settlement in the Santa Cruz valley has been completed to date, but there is ample evidence that, like the rest of the region, it has been settled for at least 1000 years. However, the valley was abandoned--or at least there were no permanently-inhabited structures there--well before the Spanish arrived. The reasons for the abandonment of this and other areas present one of the most significant puzzles of southwestern archaeology.

The only recorded visitations of Santa Cruz valley archaeological sites since the the early part of this century have been surveys in conjunction with road construction and other public development. Most of these projects provide only a general overview of surface materials at archaeological sites encountered by chance.

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<sup>1</sup> Woosley, Anne I.. "Puebloan Prehistory of the Northern Rio Grande: Settlement, Population, Subsistence." *The Kiva* Vol. 51, No. 3( 1986):143- 164.; Mayer-Oakes, William J. *Cultural Resource Survey and Inventory, Santa Cruz Reservoir, New Mexico, Vol. II: Archaeological Resources*. Ms. on file, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fé, no date.

A few of the larger prehistoric sites of the Santa Cruz valley were visited by Adolf Bandelier, who describes "well-defined ruins on the mountain sides" in the vicinity of Chimayó as well as ruins of historic and prehistoric pueblos in Cañada de Santa Cruz.<sup>2</sup> Edgar Hewett conducted an archaeological reconnaissance in the area in 1908.<sup>3</sup> J. P. Harrington discussed some ancestral Tewa sites in the valley in his ethnological study of the Tewa.<sup>4</sup> In the 1930's, H. P. Mera studied ceramics from seven of the larger pueblo ruins in the Santa Cruz watershed as part of his long-term research into northern Rio Grande ceramic chronologies.<sup>5</sup> Mera concluded that over time, prehistoric settlements moved from less defensible to more defensible positions as a response to increased raiding. Stephen deBorhegyi visited some prehistoric sites in the Chimayó area and argued that the settlement change proceeded from defensible hilltops to lower sites near the valley floor.

A total of thirty-three archaeological sites in the Santa Cruz valley are recorded in Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) files at the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe.<sup>6</sup> Of the thirty-three sites, nineteen include a component of pottery sherds and are confirmed or potential pueblo

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<sup>2</sup> Mayer-Oakes, n.d.:12

<sup>3</sup> Mayer-Oakes n.d.:13

<sup>4</sup> Harrington, John Peabody. "The Ethnogeography of the Tewa Indians." In: *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Smithsonian Institute, 1907-1908*. Washington, DC, 1916, pp. 253-258.

<sup>5</sup> Mera, H. P. "A Survey of the Biscuitware Area in Northern New Mexico." Technical Series Bulletin Number 6, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fé, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Archaeological Resources Management, Site Files and Records, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico (hereafter referred to as ARM site files).



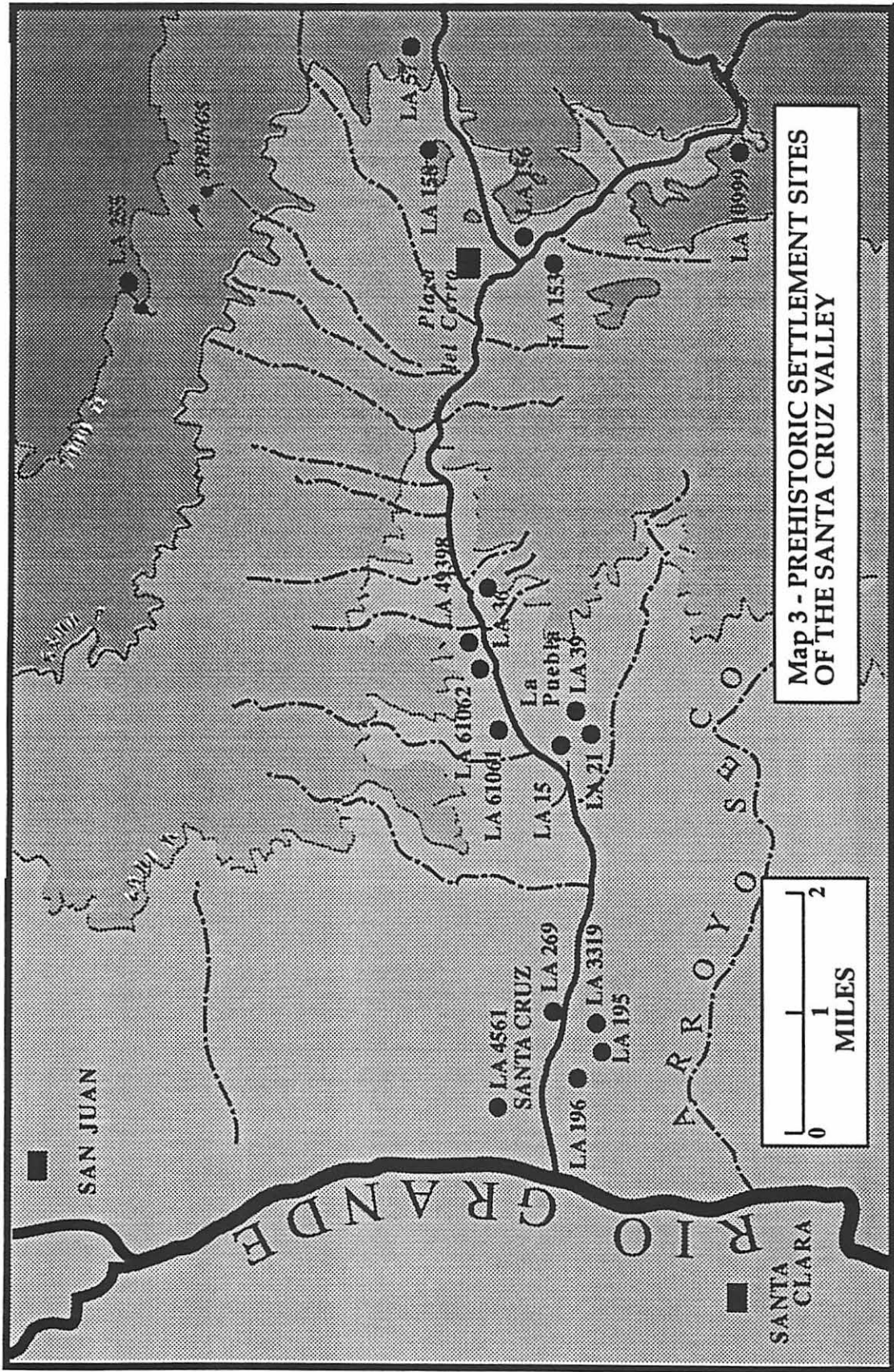
sites. (Eighteen of these are shown on Map 3.) This probably represents only a fraction of the actual sites in the valley because the valley has never been systematically surveyed. The only excavation notes for the valley consist of a one-day partial clearing of small above-ground dwellings at LA 3319, near Santa Cruz.<sup>7</sup> Peckham found three surface rooms and a kiva at this small site, which had been partially destroyed by highway construction.

Significantly, none of the prehistoric sites recorded to date is in the near vicinity of the Plaza del Cerro. There are some small sites on hilltops within a one-mile radius of the Plaza, but none on the valley floor. Some valley floor sites would have been susceptible to destruction by floods along the river, but any site in the Plaza area should have left some traces. The fact that none have been found suggests that the Plaza was not built on or near the site of any prehistoric Pueblo.

Of the sites listed by ARM in the vicinity of the Plaza del Cerro, LA's 156 and 153 are the nearest. The ARM descriptions, although ambiguous, must refer to the two well-known sites north and west of the Santuario. Both are small sites on low hills above the Santa Cruz river floodplain and are about a half-mile from the Plaza. Neither has been investigated in detail. LA 153 is described as a small site on a ridge east of the Santuario and is poorly located on ARM maps. It is shown south of Santuario and noted to include pottery sherds of Chaco Black-On-White 2 and Kwahe'e Black-On-White pottery.

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<sup>7</sup> Peckham, Stewart. "Highway Salvage Archaeology, Number LA 3319, a Fragmentary Site near Española, New Mexico." Unpublished report, on file under LA 3319 in ARM files, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fé, 1956.



Using the median dates given for these pottery types, this site could have been occupied from around AD 600-1100.<sup>8, 9</sup>

LA 156 is described as occurring on "hillock east of the Santuario road," but is shown south of the Santuario on the map. It too, includes only early pottery types (Red Mesa Black-On-White, Chaco Black-On-White and Kwahe'e Black-On-White) that would date the site to AD 600-1100.

LA 158, located on a hilltop just E-NE of Rio Chiquito, is within 1.5 miles of the Plaza del Cerro. Early archaeologists referred to it by the name used by Nambé informants, "Wiyo." This large ruin is also located on a high spot and overlooks the small irrigable valley at Rio Chiquito. A longer sequence of pottery types has been found at this site--from Santa Fé Black-On-White through Biscuitware A. The median date for the pottery types at this site indicates that it was occupied from about 1240 AD to 1400 AD.

LA 57 is a large site on a ridge above Córdova and is about 2 miles from the Plaza del Cerro. It has been known historically as Pueblo Quemado (Burned Pueblo). Highway 76 between Chimayó and Truchas cuts directly through this site. Pottery types (Wiyo Black-On-White through Biscuitware A) suggest that this site was occupied from about AD 1350-1400.

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<sup>8</sup> Ceramic dating is not altogether reliable as a means of dating. The dates for the pottery type are not precise or entirely reliable, since, as Cordell points out (1989), typing of pottery varies with the individual doing the survey and the dates generally accepted for each type are somewhat questionable. A complete and systematic excavation has not been done on any Santa Cruz valley site to confirm chronological sequences. But ceramic dating is the only means presently available for these sites.

<sup>9</sup> In determining dates, I used the median date for the pottery type as given by Reed (1949), Mera (1934), Miller (1949), Wendorf and Reed (1954), and Lang (1982). There is considerable overlap in the dates for these ceramics, especially the early Black-on-white types, but using the median date should give a general idea of trends.

Although a considerable distance from the Plaza, LA 255 is one of the most intriguing ruins in the upper Santa Cruz valley area. LA 255 was described by Mera as occupying "the top of an outlying butte of the badlands on the north side of Santa Cruz valley." He mentions the presence of a small spring nearby, Ojito del Zorro. Though located near to the Santuario on ARM's maps, LA 255 must actually be the site marked "Pueblo Ruins" on USGS maps. This large, well-known, clearly defensible site matches Mera's description but is unrecorded on ARM maps.

There is a small spring near LA 255, which could have provided water for the Pueblo inhabitants, but they would have had to rely on rainfall to irrigate their crops, presumably located on top of the hills and mesas. This site includes Wiyo Black-On-White and Biscuitware A sherds, indicating that it was inhabited from around AD 1350 to 1400.

A similar analysis of sites throughout the Santa Cruz valley can be made, taking the mean date for pottery types and arriving at a rough estimate of occupation dates.<sup>10</sup> Such an analysis shows an initial settlement of the Santa Cruz valley sometime between AD 700 and 950 and an increase in the number of occupied sites in the valley until about 1350-1400. At this point the number of sites drops dramatically and remains low into the Hispanic era. The major occupation in the Santa Cruz valley probably peaked between AD 1300-1400.

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<sup>10</sup> Usner, Don J. "Prehistoric Settlement of the Santa Cruz Valley." Unpublished paper, Anthropology Department, UNM. May, 1990.

There are few historic (1542 to Present) Pueblo sites in the Santa Cruz valley. Occupation of at least one of these sites, LA 36 (Tsarawi) is known to have been by Tano Indians from the Galisteo Basin following the Pueblo Revolt.<sup>11</sup> The other sites where historic pottery is found, LA 269 and 4559, are in the vicinity of the original Santa Cruz church and probably also represent occupation of the valley after the Revolt. Thus, the original inhabitants of the valley, thought to be ancestral to the Tewa, no longer maintained settlements in the valley after AD 1350-1400.

### Summary

Prehistoric sites near the Plaza del Cerro date from very early periods of Pueblo settlement. The nearest sites to the Plaza were abandoned by AD 1100. Higher-elevation sites that are slightly farther away were abandoned a little later, by AD 1400. The most recently occupied sites of the Santa Cruz valley are all far from the Plaza, mostly nearer the Rio Grande. It does not appear that the floodplain near the Plaza del Cerro was occupied at the beginning of the Hispanic settlement era.

An abandonment of large sites doesn't mean that people were not in the valley, however. The valley may have been used as an agricultural area for aggregating populations in the Rio Grande nearby (San Juan and Santa Clara Pueblos).<sup>12</sup> If the abandonment of the Santa Cruz valley was just such a short distance move to the Rio Grande, temporarily occupied dwellings might be expected in the valley. Of particular interest are the recent finds of LA 61061

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<sup>11</sup> Harrington, 1916, p.255

<sup>12</sup> Cordell, Linda S. *Prehistory of the Southwest* . Academic Press, 1984, p. 325.

and LA 61062.<sup>13</sup> These two sites are partially buried in debris from gravel slopes at the base of cliffs above the Santa Cruz river floodplain. Both contain potsherds and evidence of above-ground architecture, and LA 61062 includes some historic glazeware. These might reveal an occupation of small sites that were perhaps used seasonally. A thorough survey of the valley might reveal other, similar sites that would shed light on the question of the abandonment or utilization of the Santa Cruz valley after AD 1400.

The historic record also indicates that seasonal use of fields in the Santa Cruz valley may have continued into historic times. Early land transactions and reports sometimes mention Pueblo fields and ditches in the valley when Pueblo inhabitants were known to number few, if any.<sup>14</sup> Some of these ditches are in the Plaza del Cerro area (see Historic Settlement, below).

For any kind of study of prehistoric settlement, a much more extensive data base, based on a thorough survey of the valley and its tributary streams, would need to be established. However, it is unlikely that such a survey will take place. Many sites have been destroyed or damaged by agricultural activities and much of the land is private. For the foreseeable future, the prehistoric settlement of the valley will have to be inferred from the limited data available.

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<sup>13</sup> Gossett, Cye W., and William J. Gossett. *Cultural Resource Inventory of 27 Acres for a Proposed Gravel Quarry Near Chimayo, New Mexico*. Ms. on file, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fé, 1987.

<sup>14</sup> Borrego-Ortega Papers, 10 Sept. 1706. The papers are various documents from Chimayó dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, held in personal family collections. Also on file New Mexico State Archives.

## Historic Settlement

### Pre-1680 Settlement

Historic settlement of the Santa Cruz Valley, including ranchos in the Chimayó area, began soon after Juan de Oñate founded settlements at San Juan de los Caballeros (1598) and San Gabriel (1600). Oñate was the *encomendero* (collector of tribute) of the area and he apparently granted no *encomiendas* to other settlers in his brief reign as governor. However, a number of settlements were established along the Rio Grande south of San Gabriel and at the mouth of the Santa Cruz River. The Santa Cruz valley was soon dotted with scattered dwellings and was referred to as "La Cañada, the narrow valley that runs down from the Sierra to the Rio del Norte."<sup>1</sup> The second highest frequency of settlements recorded in documents from the early colonization (1598-1680) are in La Cañada district, with its center at Santa Cruz. A total of twenty-three habitations are listed at La Cañada, including three at Chimayó or in the "Chimayó district."<sup>2</sup>

Some 17th-century settlement structures in the province were heavily fortified and have often been referred to as "haciendas" or "fortress haciendas."<sup>3</sup> However, the term *hacienda* is deceiving when applied to New

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<sup>1</sup> deBorhegyi, Stephen F. "The Evolution of a Landscape." *Landscape* 1(1954), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Pratt, Boyd, and David Snow. *The North-central Regional Overview* , Vol. 1. (Santa Fé: Historic Preservation Division, 1988), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Cordell, Linda S. *A Cultural Resources Overview of the Middle Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico*. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1979, p. 60.

Mexico.<sup>4</sup> The *hacienda* developed as a manorial estate in the vast, semi-arid stretches of northern Mexico.<sup>5</sup> It was typically comprised of a central ranch house with a complex of buildings housing numerous clergy and staff, and it controlled a very large area of land. A derivative of the feudal estates of Spain, the *hacienda* emerged as the Crown began to use grants of land and power to encourage control of the sparse frontiers. The owners of the *haciendas* (*haciendados*) were also dispensers of justice and captains of small armies, echoing the nobility of feudal lords in Spain. The heyday of the *hacienda* in Mexico was in the late 1600's and early 1700's.<sup>6</sup>

The New Mexico settlements lacked the wealth and degree of control characteristic of the *haciendas* in Mexico. The narrow Rio Grande valley contrasted with the large, open spaces of northern Mexico, and settlements did not control much land or water. The opportunities for developing *haciendas* were further limited because of the firm control of native labor and land by the Franciscans, whose missions were economic and social units roughly analogous to but smaller than the *haciendas*.<sup>7</sup>

A review of historic documents confirms that the concept of New Mexican *haciendas* is little more than romantic myth. The term *hacienda* was little used in New Mexico prior to the Revolt of 1680. *Estancia* --a grant of land for grazing sheep or cattle--is the favored term. Of 92 recorded references to

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<sup>4</sup> Hacienda, which in Spain meant property of any kind, came to refer exclusively to land, the only measure of wealth in New Mexico and much of northern Mexico. (Stilgoe, 1982, p. 36)

<sup>5</sup> Chevalier, François. *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda*. Translated by Alvin Eustis. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1963, p. vi.

<sup>6</sup> Chevalier, p. 314

<sup>7</sup> Pratt and Snow, p. 55; Chevalier, p. 237



Colonial habitations in New Mexico, forty-nine are called *estancias* and only eight are referred to as *haciendas*.<sup>8</sup> One of these *haciendas* --the "hacienda de Moraga"--was in the Chimayó area, though its exact location remains obscure.

After the abandonment of San Gabriel and the establishment of Santa Fé in 1610, an increased number of colonists began to arrive in New Mexico until the Pueblo Revolt (1680). There were 2000-3000 Spaniards in residence in New Mexico dispersed over a wide area in order to have easy access to their scattered fields.<sup>9</sup> Field systems were fragmented because the Indians had already settled the richest and best bottomlands on the Rio Grande. The Santa Cruz valley would have been an ideal settlement location under these circumstances, as it held no native populations and yet was fertile and irrigable. Possible deterrents to more extended settlement would have included a vulnerability to attack by nomadic Indians from the eastern foothills and mountains.

The exact number of settlers in the valley at this time is difficult to ascertain. The locations of the pre-1680 settlement sites in the Santa Cruz are also unclear in the surviving land records and none is listed in the Archaeological Resource Management records at the Laboratory of Anthropology. DeBorhegyi mapped some "haciendas" at the same location as prehistoric settlements.<sup>10</sup> If his maps are accurate, some buildings were apparently built on abandoned pueblo sites. Unfortunately, he gives no indication of how he located the sites. The best available evidence placing the sites of pre-Revolt

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<sup>8</sup> Pratt and Snow, p. 53

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>10</sup> deBorhegyi, Stephen F., 1954.

settlement comes from statements by Diego de Vargas and his officers after the reconquest of New Mexico. These documents indicate that settlers were well established in Chimayó and the Plaza del Cerro area before the Revolt (see Resettlement, below).

During the Pueblo Revolt on August 10, 1680, the Pueblos made a sweep of the countryside and evicted the Spanish from New Mexico. Most of the residents of La Cañada were spared in the Revolt because of advance warning of the impending attack. They gathered in the home of Luis de Quintana in La Cañada and on August 13 fled south to join the Governor in Santa Fé to retreat.<sup>11</sup> Among these were Luis Martín and Alonso Moraga, owners of ranchos in the Chimayó area.

In the Spaniards' absence, Tano Indians from the Pueblos of San Lázaro and San Cristóbal in the Galisteo Basin left their drought-stricken homeland and moved to lands in the Yunque-Yunque area of San Juan Pueblo.<sup>12</sup> A few years before the reconquest, they moved from Yunque into the Santa Cruz Valley.<sup>13</sup> Some of the Tanos apparently arrived from the Santa Fé plaza, which they had inhabited until the reconquest by Vargas in 1693.<sup>14</sup> There is some dispute and uncertainty as to the location of these Santa Cruz valley

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<sup>11</sup> Pratt and Snow, p. 199

<sup>12</sup> Twitchell, Ralph Emerson. *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*. Cedar Rapids, The Torch Press, 1914, Vol. 1, p. 244.

<sup>13</sup> Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 244. Espinosa, J. Manuel. *Crusaders of the Rio Grande*. Chicago, Institute of Jesuit History, 1942 p. 225; . There is some evidence that Tewas also inhabited the valley at the site of Tsarawi near La Puebla (Harrington, 1916, p. 255).

<sup>14</sup> Twitchell, Vol 1, p. 249 Dominguez, Antansio. *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776*. Translated and annotated by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chávez. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1956, fn., p. 214.

pueblo sites. Vargas, riding into the valley to inspect the pueblos during his reconquest in 1692, noted that the Tanos were using fields and ditches that the Spanish settlers had built. He briefly described the location of the two pueblos.

According to his description, the Tano pueblo of San Lázaro was built just across the river from the site of present-day Santa Cruz.<sup>15</sup> San Cristóbal was also located on the south side of the Santa Cruz River, north of the present town of La Puebla. This would place San Cristóbal near or at the location of the prehistoric site of Tsarawi (LA#36--see Prehistoric Settlement, above).<sup>16</sup> Vargas described four dwellings at San Cristóbal, where sixty-six children were baptized. At San Lázaro, he also mentioned four dwellings and the baptism of eighty-nine children. According to his notes, the two pueblos were separated by about a league (three miles), San Lázaro being west of San Cristóbal.<sup>17</sup>

### Post-Revolt Settlement

When Vargas returned to New Mexico with settlers in 1693, he met resistance from the pueblos, including San Lázaro and San Cristóbal. The Tanos

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<sup>15</sup> Jenkins, Myra Ellen, no date. "Settlement of the Jurisdiction of La Cañada." Unpublished paper on file in the State Engineers Office, Santa Fé, p. 2. During the adjudication of the Santa Cruz grant in the 1890's, claimants placed the location of San Lázaro on the north side of the Santa Cruz River near its junction with the Cañada Ancha. DeBorhegyi tentatively repeats this location in his settlement maps of the valley. However, this location was based on the testimony of only one witness and its reliability is questionable.

<sup>16</sup> San Cristóbal's location near La Puebla is confirmed by ethnographic evidence collected by J.P. Harrington in 1907, and a 1781 census also supports this location by mentioning "San Cristóbal de la Puebla" as one of ten plazas within the jurisdiction of the Santa Cruz Parish (Jenkins, n.d., p. 3).

<sup>17</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 2

left their Santa Cruz valley pueblos in early 1694 and gathered in the mountains northeast of Chimayó. They subsequently moved to join the Tewas in the revolt on San Ildefonso mesa. By fall of 1694, the natives had surrendered and returned to their Santa Cruz valley pueblos. Vargas assigned a priest, Father Obregón, to San Lázaro.<sup>18</sup>

In March of 1695, anticipating the arrival of more settlers from interior Mexico, Vargas issued a royal decree ordering the Tanos off of the lands they had settled in the Santa Cruz valley. He also announced plans to settle the Santa Cruz valley on March 18, 1695, describing the area to be settled as...

"those [lands] which extend to the pueblos established on the said farms, which are San Lázaro and San Cristóbal, and those which extend from the latter in the direction of the highway which goes to Picurís, to the cañada known as the hacienda of Moraga and the estancias of the Captains Luis Martín and Juan Ruíz in front of and at the place of Zimayo [sic], adjoining the mountain range."<sup>19</sup>

He gives no further information on the location of these landholdings. By this statement, Vargas was essentially designating all of the Santa Cruz valley as far as the *cerro* (hill) of Chimayó for settlement. He appeared to exclude, for the time being, settlement on the Tano pueblos lands, specifying that only lands up to and extending from their lands were to be settled.

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<sup>18</sup> Espinosa, p. 210

<sup>19</sup> Vargas' proclamation, translated in the Santa Cruz Land Grant Papers, Roll #50, Frame 884. Also translated, slightly differently, in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Vol. I, p. 243. The Land Grant Papers give the original Spanish wording, which makes them more reliable as a resource.

Vargas sent Luis Granillo, former alcade mayor of La Cañada, on an expedition to survey the valley and to find the Indians a new settlement site. Granillo was also ordered to determine which of the pre-revolt settlers returning with Vargas should be granted land in the valley.<sup>20</sup> Vargas ordered that the settlements be mapped, but no map has been found to date.

Granillo left Santa Fé on March 20, 1695 with two interpreters and delivered the order to the residents of San Lázaro to return to Yunque-Yunque and the residents of San Cristóbal to resettle at "the site of Zimayo."<sup>21</sup> Granillo informed the Tano settlers that he would guide them to their new settlement. The next day he left San Lázaro with Tano leaders and his translators, and

"at the distance of two long leagues [6 miles], having gone along the cañada and passed a small rivulet [un arroyo riachuelo pequeño] which comes down from the said mountain range and which borders with the hacienda of Captain Juan Ruíz [Cáceres], up the river, and having gone a little further (about 1/2 league) a ruin was found on the left, the said [Tano leaders] showed me the plain which is adjacent to the said ruin which is in a cañada wide and large enough for them to build their pueblo with sufficient land for irrigation from the arroyos and rivulets which come down from said mountain range, and I examined the intake of the ditch, which the Indians showed me and the said rivulet has water sufficient and permanent..."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Baxter, John O. "Irrigation in the Santa Cruz Area." Unpublished paper on file in the State Engineers Office, Santa Fé, no date, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> The governors of both pueblos protested the order to move since they had already dug their irrigation ditches and because Vargas had previously assured them that they would be able to harvest their fields before moving (Espinosa, p. 225) Vargas denied their request and suggested that the residents of San Lázaro, if they didn't want to return to Yunque-Yunque, accompany the people from San Cristóbal to settle the Chimayó area. (Jenkins, n.d., p. 8)

<sup>22</sup> Granillo, 21 March 1695, in SCLG Papers, Roll 50, Frame 955; Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 248

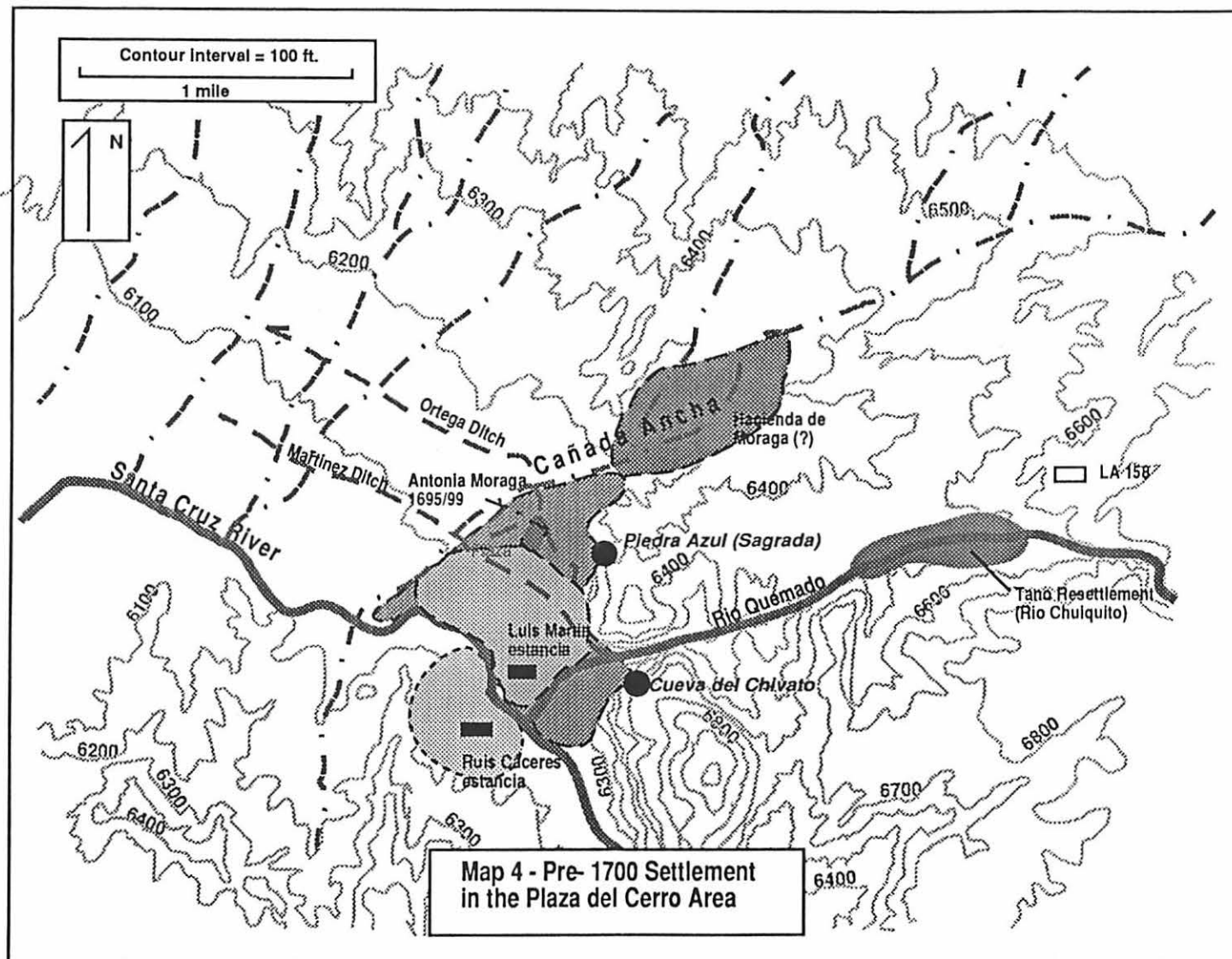
This description of the site for the Tanos seems to place it at the location of present-day Rio Chiquito, where a ruin (LA # 158--see Prehistoric Settlement, above) sits on a hill above a small, level plain beside the Rio Quemado. This location has permanent water, a small plain, and a ruin nearby on the "left" (i.e. north) side of the canyon. It is in the neighborhood of 2-1/2 leagues (7.5 miles) from San Lázaro. However, the location of the Tano grant is made less certain by the contemporary name for the canyon *above* Córdova, "Cañada de los Tanos."<sup>23</sup> The association of this name with Córdova suggests that the Tano settlement may have in fact been in the Córdova area. Córdova is also situated in a small valley near a ruin on the left (north) side of the river, but it is quite a bit more than 2-1/2 leagues from Santa Cruz. In any case, the Tano grant apparently extended down the canyon to the emergence of the Rio Quemado into the Santa Cruz valley at Chimayó, where it bordered the Ruíz property (Map 4).<sup>24</sup>

After designating the site for Tano settlement, Granillo travelled back down the valley to survey abandoned Spanish settlements. He noted the Martínez "estancia" "at the distance of half a league [1.5 miles] and on the boundary of the said farm of Captain Juan Ruíz, which he has at the said place of the said grant to the said Indians." He noted that the Martínez tract consisted of standing walls only where five families were already resettled in the

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Santa Fé National Forest maps. This canyon is also mentioned by informants (see John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90).

<sup>24</sup> Jenkins concurs with this location and places Ruis' farm on the south side of the Santa Cruz river near the emergence of the Rio Quemado into the valley at Chimayó (Jenkins, n.d., p. 8). Curiously, no mention is made of the Juan Ruis property in any 18th century documents after Vargas and Granillo described it in their reconquest journals.



ruins. Their land and pastures lay to the north.<sup>25</sup> These settlers were Luis Martín, returning from El Paso, and his married children, including Francisco.<sup>26</sup>

Granillo then left the upper valley, failing to mention the Moraga hacienda even though Vargas had ordered him to survey it.<sup>27</sup> Proceeding about 3/4 league [2.25 miles], Granillo noted the Pueblo of San Lázaro and then reported "following the river on the right hand side" and finding the farm belonging to Miguel Lujan. Lujan's house was still standing and occupied by him and his family. This is Granillo's most puzzling statement, since it seems to locate San Lázaro Pueblo much farther upriver than its presumed location. He then went on to describe eight more ruined farms in the lower Santa Cruz valley, some of which were already re-occupied by settlers.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, there were at least twelve home sites in the Santa Cruz valley prior to the revolt, three of which were in the Chimayó area at the head of the valley. These three are the only settlements Granillo reported in the upper valley at that time. The presence of families in the ranchos indicates that the Chimayó area was resettled before Vargas made formal grants of land in the Santa Cruz valley. These three are difficult to locate with information from Vargas' and Granillo's journal alone. However, papers filed in various land

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<sup>25</sup> Granillo, 21 March 1695, in SCLG Papers, Roll 50, Frame 956; Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 249

<sup>26</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 10

<sup>27</sup> Vargas had first mentioned the Moraga hacienda on his way to Picurís in 1694 (Jenkins, n.d., p. 19. )

<sup>28</sup> Granillo, 21 March 1695, in Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 249



claims and transactions of formal resettlement clarify the picture somewhat (see Resettlement, below).

On April 19, 1695, Vargas formally proclaimed a new villa, *La Villa Nueva de Santa Cruz de Españoles Mexicanos del Rey Nuestro Carlos Segundo*, or Santa Cruz de la Cañada. The town was established on or near the site of San Lázaro pueblo, on the south side of the Santa Cruz river, on April 21, 1695.<sup>29</sup> In a ceremony with considerable fanfare and formality, the settlers were granted land in the valley and "possession of all the ores that might be found in the mountains of Chimayó."<sup>30</sup> On April 21, Vargas personally led the sixty families from Santa Fé and on the 22nd placed them in possession of the San Lázaro plaza. He placed Fray Antonio Moreno in charge of the pueblo chapel.<sup>31</sup>

Vargas confirmed the grant of land to the San Cristóbal pueblos and allowed them to stay through the season to harvest their crops. He planned to move forty-four newly-arrived families from Mexico to San Cristóbal when the Indians left.<sup>32</sup> However, there is no evidence that the Tanos ever moved to their new site.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Twitchell, Vol 1, pp. 254-257. Vargas in 1703 made an inspection of Santa Cruz, during which he noted that the Santa Cruz plaza had been relocated, apparently across the river to its north bank-- its present location (Jenkins, n.d., p. 23).

<sup>30</sup> Espinosa, p. 226

<sup>31</sup> Vargas, 22 April, 1695, in Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 259

<sup>32</sup> Vargas, 23 April, 1695, in Twitchell, Vol. 1, p. 261

<sup>33</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 12-13

There was considerable unrest among the Tano pueblos in the next year, and by March, 1696, Fray José Arbizu of San Cristóbal reported that his charges had fled the valley. The angry Tanos withdrew with their belongings to the mountains of Chimayó and awaited a chance to rebel. They left behind a pueblo which, according to Vargas, had a "partially-built church, well-constructed ditches and fine fields."<sup>34</sup> Espinosa states that the "Tano, Tiwa and Piro natives of San Lázaro and San Cristóbal" numbered about 500 in 1696 during this uprising; this is the only mention of natives other than the Tanos inhabiting the Pueblos.<sup>35</sup> The rebellious Tanos joined in a widespread Indian uprising in June of 1696, killing Fray Arbizu and a visiting padre. The Tewas had also abandoned their pueblos and joined the San Cristóbal on a steep *cerro* at the foot of the mountains--possibly the *cerro* of Chimayó--but by the end of the year the rebellion was crushed. The Tanos of San Cristóbal fled to live among the Zuñi and the Hopi. Some moved into nearby Tewa villages, and a few resettled in their Galisteo Basin homeland.<sup>36</sup> This was the end of Pueblo Indian occupation of the Santa Cruz valley and it left the entire valley to the Hispanic settlers, who continued to arrive in New Mexico from the interior provinces of Mexico.

Vargas' grant of land to the Hispanic settlers was of dubious legality because it violated many of the stipulations of Spanish law regarding the establishment of villas. The villa lay well within lands that should have been the province of nearby pueblos, who were to be granted land within an area ex-

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<sup>34</sup> Espinosa, p. 233

<sup>35</sup> Espinosa, p. 234

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 16

tending for one league from the center of the pueblo plaza. In fact, the plaza of Santa Cruz lay well within the boundaries of Santa Clara pueblo grant when it was patented by the US in 1864 (Map 5).<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the Santa Cruz grant was not a valid community grant. All of Vargas' land grants in the valley, including those in Chimayó, were to individual settlers and were sold and traded independently of each other. When the Santa Cruz Land Grant was finally adjudicated in 1900, it acknowledged this fact by granting only the irrigable lands of the valley on both sides of the river, as far west as the Santa Clara pueblo grant; it included no rights to nearby upland areas. For its eastern boundary, the grant ended at an arbitrary point--"a line running due north and south from the junction of the Rio Quemado and the Rio Santa Cruz." This boundary line would have just barely included the Plaza del Cerro. However, when the Santa Cruz Grant was surveyed and platted, its eastern boundary was inexplicably moved to the west of the described line--a change which eliminated the Plaza del Cerro by a narrow margin. The reasons for moving this boundary are not evident in the surveyor's notes. But the changed boundary to eliminate the Plaza del Cerro from the grant may have been deliberate.<sup>38</sup>

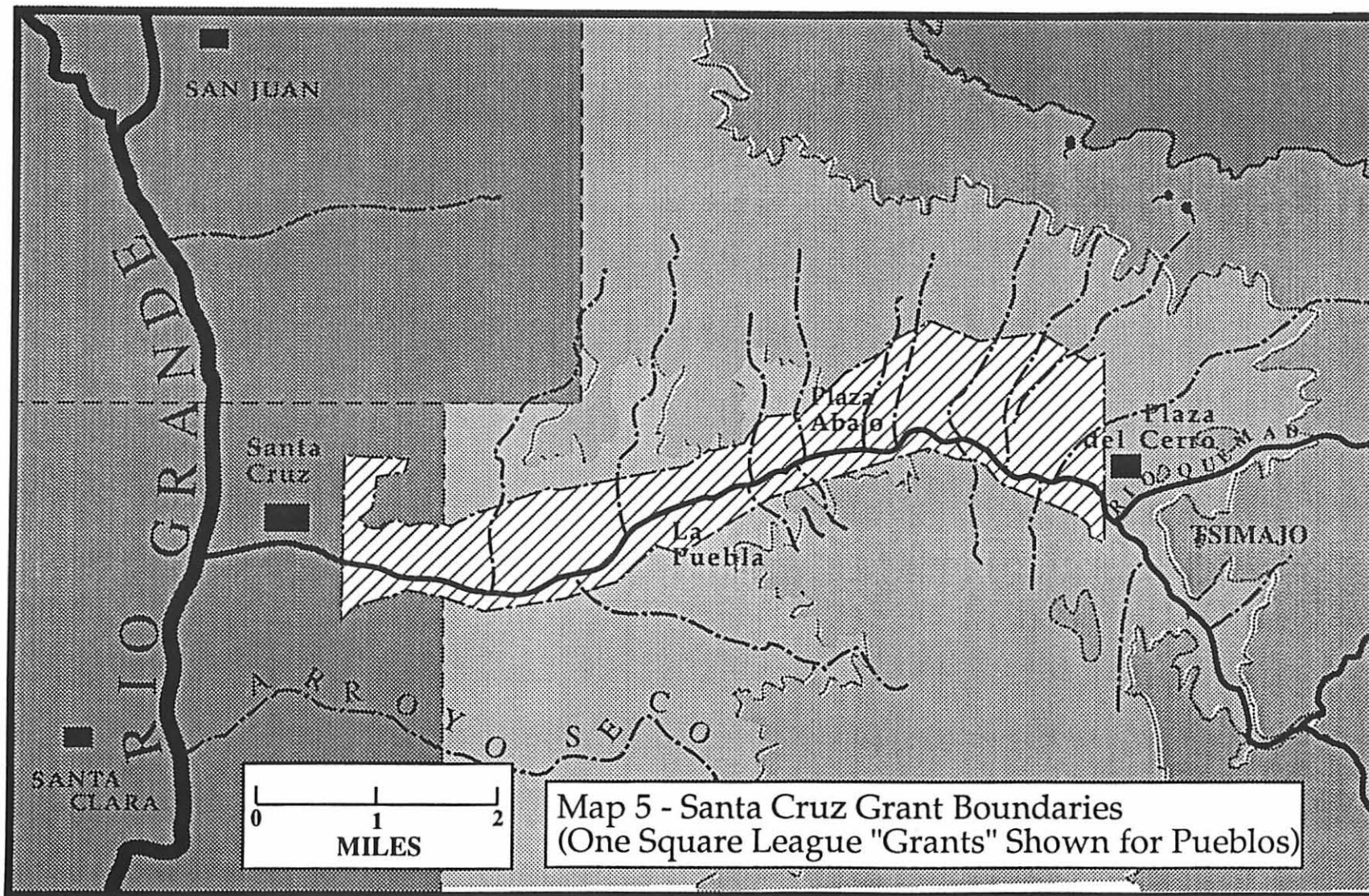
### Resettlement in the Chimayó Area

Vargas began to confirm grants of land in the Chimayó area before the establishment of the villa of Santa Cruz. On March 13, 1695, Vargas granted

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<sup>37</sup> Jenkins, Myra Ellen. "Spanish Land Grants in the Tewa Area." *New Mexico Historical Review* Vol. 47, No. 2 (1972), p.118.

<sup>38</sup> I cannot speculate on the reasons someone might have for eliminating the Plaza from the grant, but if there were any benefit to being excluded from the grant, this move is suspicious.



Felipe Moraga a tract of land lying east of the "ancestral family land." This description provides no landmarks with which to locate the tract, but prior to the Revolt the land had belonged to Alonso de Moraga. Moraga had died in El Paso and Felipe was his son. The land was subsequently revalidated to Antonia Moraga, Felipe's sister. The regrant described the property as extending "from the house of Felipe Moraga as far as the river," a description that would place the land west of Felipe's and south to the Santa Cruz river (Map 4). Antonia married Cristóbal Martín, son of Luis Martín, whose family Granillo had noted inhabiting their Chimayó estancia when he made his reconnaissance of the valley. This marriage formed a link between the two largest land-holding families in the early resettlement--a link that was not, however, to preclude future squabbles over land ownership.

In 1697, Vargas lost his post of governor through subterfuge and Pedro Rodríguez de Cubero took over the office. Cubero was grossly negligent in the granting and validation of lands. According to Vargas, it was Cubero's mismanagement that led to a dispersal of settlers in the Santa Cruz valley and the total abandonment of the Santa Cruz plaza. Cubero did make some important regrants in the Chimayó area, however, including one to Antonia Moraga in April of 1699 that gives some geographical evidence for its location. The document states: "The said site is bounded on the north by the camino real to Picurís, on the south by the old acequia madre, on the east as far as some caves, and on the west by an arroyo."<sup>39</sup> This is the first mention of a ditch in Chimayó. Since the ditch served both the Moraga and Martínez families,

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<sup>39</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 58

Jenkins believes that it must be the present Martínez Arriba ditch.<sup>40</sup> The road to Picurís followed the Cañada Ancha--the same route used into the early part of this century. The caves probably refer to the well-known *Cueva del Chivato* on the cerro of Chimayó east of town. Cubero's grant to Antonia seems to describe a different location than the previous grant to her, but nonetheless provides approximate reference points for early settlement in the Chimayó area (Map 6).

Cubero also made a grant of land in the Chimayó area to Francisco Martín. Francisco was a grandson of Luis Martín, the original settler noted by Granillo in 1695. Cubero approved a portion of Martín's request, granting a parcel bounded

"On the northern part by a dry arroyo, deep and narrow, which is four *varas* [one *vara* is approximately 32 inches] wide and in parts more, and on its border by the wide camino, travelled and presently used, which comes down from the Pueblo of Picurís; and on the west with two small hills, the last of which on the upper side adjoins the said camino real; and on the east by a bald hill which is to the left side of the road as it climbs to the woods where there is another dry arroyo."<sup>41</sup>

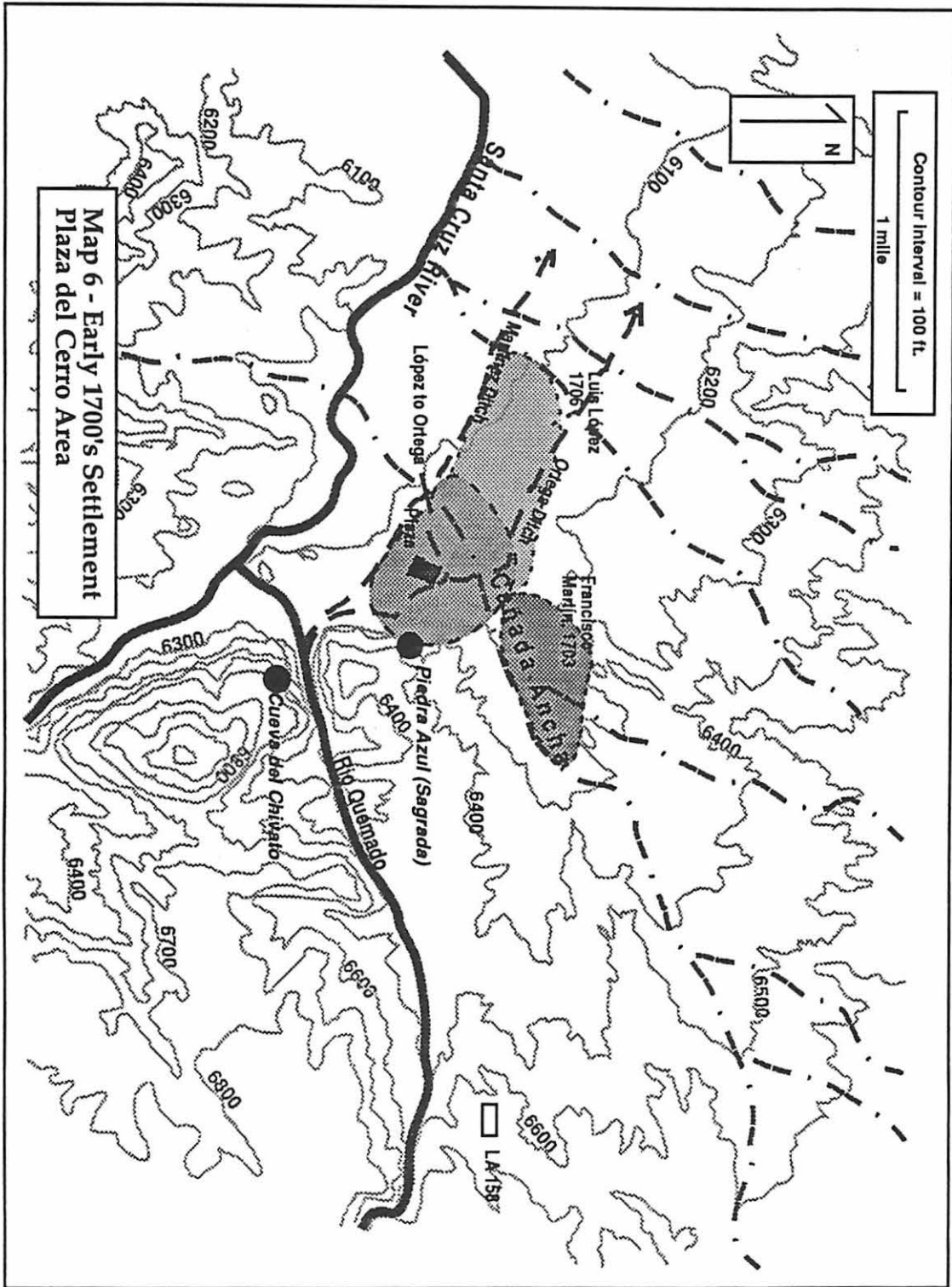
Since no southern boundary is given, lands already belonging to Francisco or others of the Martín clan probably lay in that direction (Map 6).

Additional clues to the location of the boundaries of these early land claims are evidenced in land disputes among descendents of the Moragas and Martínez that continued for thirty years, well into the 18th century. In 1711,

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<sup>40</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 58

<sup>41</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 59



Cristóbal Martín II, son of Cristóbal Martín and Antonia Moraga and great-grandson of Luis Martín, filed a trespass suit against Francisco Martín, his uncle. The suit stated that the original grant to Felipe Moraga had specified that Felipe not infringe upon the new Tano pueblo nearby, and further mentioned that the Tanos had never lived there.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that the Moraga lands extended some distance up the Cañada Ancha, as far as the boundary of the Tano resettlement site at Rio Chiquito.

There were other early settlers in the Chimayó area early in the 18th century. One of these whose land records survive is Luis López. López had escaped from New Mexico as a child during the revolt after his father had been killed at Santo Domingo, and he returned with Vargas. In 1706, as a "native of this province," he petitioned Governor Cuervo y Valdez for a grant of land

"... vacant and unsettled, above the Cañada de Chimayó, which has never been occupied nor planted, nor as I am informed has had any owner except the king (God guard him), which is bounded by an arroyo which separates the lands from Francisco Martín, and with an acequia [ditch] which the Tano Indians took out when they were living in San Cristóbal, which is on the south \_\_\_\_\_ [illegible in original] and another arroyo which comes down on the north side close to the road from Taos."<sup>43</sup>

The boundaries of López's land are also difficult to locate but the description indicates that the property was in the vicinity of the Plaza del Cerro. Later documentation confirms that the López land occupied "much of the north-

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<sup>42</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 60. The family name Moraga drops out of the records early in the 18th century and it appears that the Moraga holdings all passed into Martíns and other families.

<sup>43</sup> Borrego-Ortega Papers, 10 Sept. 1706. The papers are various documents from Chimayó dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, held in personal family collections. Also on file New Mexico State Archives.



eastern side of the cañada and encompassed at least part of the area which became the Plaza del Cerro."<sup>44</sup> López's mention of Tano agricultural fields in the area is significant because it suggests that the Tanos, though perhaps living in pueblos or at their new grant at Rio Chiquito, were utilizing an extensive land area for cultivation of crops.

The ditch López mentions was probably the Martínez Ditch, which appears as a south boundary on Luis López's land in subsequent documents. Further, Jenkins states that "There seems to be little doubt that López, shortly after receiving his grant in 1706, took out the acequia from the Rio Quemado now known as the Ortega acequia."<sup>45</sup> This is the acequia that supplies the Plaza del Cerro. It follows that López's land probably lay between the two ditches.

It is interesting to note that the Ortega Ditch runs along the north wall of the Plaza, as if the Plaza was built at its location to be near the ditch. In fact, the ditch is the only feature that suggests a reason for the location of the Plaza. It appears that the ditch is laid out to maximize the irrigable acreage in the upper valley. That is, the Ortega Ditch is taken from the Rio Chiquito as far up the canyon as feasible with hand tools and drops at a minimum grade around a contour of the hills so that it can be used to water as much land as possible. The Plaza is located near the upper limit of this irrigable land.

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<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 67

<sup>45</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 67-68

An intriguing landmark emerges in subsequent land transactions in the Chimayó area involving López's property. In a conveyance of land from Luis López to Gabriel Ortega in 1758, the following boundaries are given:

"On the east, the lands of the said seller and a revered stone [*pedra grada* ] which aligns with an acequia which runs to the south in a straight line; on the north bounded by lands of the same seller and an acequia which bounds with the two [ López and Ortega]; on the west by the lands of the said purchaser and on the south by the acequia madre."<sup>46</sup>

The Ortega ditch flows in a north-south line for some distance and is likely the acequia mentioned in the document. Hints to the location of the "revered stone" emerge in subsequent transactions that mention a prominent rock outcrop in the area. In 1766, a land division between Antonia López (Luis' daughter) and Isidro Medina describes a boundary by, "designating to them a blue stone which is on the edge of the cerro on the part east to west."<sup>47</sup> This blue stone is a landmark well-known to residents of the Plaza del Cerro area today, and it is likely the same as the "revered stone" mentioned in the conveyance to Gabriel Ortega. Its location can be mapped with confidence, giving another anchor point to the location of land parcels in the early 18th century (Map 6).

López's daughter, Antonia, had some of Luis's land donated to his adopted orphans, Concepción and Juan Antonio, when Luis died in 1772 at

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<sup>46</sup> Borrego-Ortega papers, 23 October 1758

<sup>47</sup> Borrego-Ortega papers, 18 April 1766

the age of 90 years.<sup>48</sup> The document making this transfer mentions lands belonging to "Grabiél" Ortega on its borders.<sup>49</sup> Antonia married Francisco de Mascareñas, who later abandoned her and her child. In 1776, Antonia's son, Juan Francisco Mascareñas, sold his farming lands at San Buenaventura de Chimayó, which he had acquired from Luis López for the price of his funeral, to Gabriel Ortega for 40 pesos.<sup>50</sup> In 1796, María Antonia Mascareñas, probably a descendent of Antonia López Mascareñas, sold some property to Pedro Ascención Ortega, Gabriel's son. This land lay between the Martínez and Ortega acequias. Gabriel also bought land from other people in the area, including a purchase from Felipe Romero of land adjoining Mascareñas' land.<sup>51</sup>

The above discussion shows that by the end of the 18th century, most of the Luis López land and some surrounding land had come into the possession of the Ortega family, mostly through sales or transfers to Gabriel. This land was situated between the Ortega and Martínez ditches and near the foothills. The Plaza itself was built on the ditch that bears the Ortega name. The reasons that the Ortegás allowed or fostered the building of a Plaza on their land are unclear. There is little to indicate that such an action would be entirely in their self-interest. It may have been simply that Gabriel saw that

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<sup>48</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 71. There must be an error with Lopez's age, because he is known to have been born in New Mexico prior to the Revolt; this would have made him at least 92 in 1772.

<sup>49</sup> In many early documents, Gabriel Ortega's name is spelled "Grabiél." The reasons for this spelling are unclear, but it is consistent in several documents.

<sup>50</sup> Borrego-Ortega papers, 12 February 1776

<sup>51</sup> Jenkins, n.d., p. 71

his own survival depended on the mutual cooperation of all the people in the community to form a defensible structure.

Gabriel remains an enigmatic character in terms of his origins. Extensive genealogical research on the Ortega family has led to Gabriel but no farther.<sup>52</sup> Bonefacia Ortega, a prominent resident of the Plaza (see Plaza Residents) said that Gabriel was born in Galicia, Spain.<sup>53</sup> The 1790 census lists his age as 48 years old; he was 64 years old in 1806 and he was deceased by the time of the 1829 census.<sup>54</sup> This would place his birth year as 1742. Gabriel is important in the history of the Plaza and tracing his origins and activities would shed much light on Plaza history. Some of his descendants have dominated the economic and political life of the Plaza and remain influential in Chimayó affairs today.

The fate of the Martín lands in the area is less clear, but the probable genealogy of the Martín family directly to Plaza resident Eulogio Martínez suggests that these lands remained in the family for several generations up to the present.<sup>55</sup> The Martínez family was also a prominent landowner in and around the Plaza del Cerro area, but the family was less involved with local politics.

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<sup>52</sup> Personal communications from Stella Usner Chávez, David Ortega, and David Jardine, all of whom have searched for Gabriel's origins.

<sup>53</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 (not recorded)

<sup>54</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 (not recorded)

<sup>55</sup> This genealogy is presumed based on the comments of people in interviews and has not been verified through church documents.

## Founding of the Plaza del Cerro

Based on the history of land ownership in the area, there is little doubt that the Plaza del Cerro was founded on lands belonging to the Ortega family (via Luis López, the original settler) and possibly the Martínez family (descendants of Luis Martín). The date of this founding remains unclear, but the reasons for the building of the Plaza relate to problems that plagued all of New Mexico in the 18th century.

Throughout the 18th century, raids from nomadic Indians plagued the unprotected colonists of New Mexico. Despite the vulnerability of the Spaniards, the Spanish resettlement pattern throughout the 18th century resumed a scattered and indefensible form. The major change seems to have been a shift from large landholdings to smaller ranchos.<sup>56</sup> Some buildings may have been fortified and some were built with torreones, but these structures were isolated from each other.

Even Santa Fé and the new Villas of Santa Cruz de la Cañada and Albuquerque lacked formal organization. Nomadic Apaches, Comanches and Utes were a threat not only to the Hispanics, but also to the Pueblos, whose villages often proved more defensible than Hispanic settlements. In more than one instance, Hispanics were forced to take refuge inside Indian Pueblos.<sup>57</sup> Located on the eastern frontier of the Spanish Colony for the first half of the 18th Century, Chimayó was especially vulnerable to these attacks.

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<sup>56</sup> Simmons, Marc. "Settlement Patterns and Village Plans in Colonial New Mexico." *Journal of the West* 8(1969), p.17.

<sup>57</sup> Simmons, p. 15

Fray Atanasio Dominguez noted in 1776 that Chimayó, lying two leagues [6 miles] to the east-northeast of Santa Cruz, was "a large settlement of many ranches in good lands and more orchards than there are at La Villa de La Cañada [Santa Cruz]." Dominguez also noted that there were 71 families with 367 persons in Chimayó at that time and that people in Chimayó were settled in many scattered ranchos, some in "nooks like cañadas" with different place names to the south.<sup>58</sup>

Truchas was founded in 1754 by thirteen families from Chimayó and Córdoba (then known as Pueblo Quemado). They petitioned for land there and complied with the requirement that they build a defensive plaza.<sup>59</sup> Dominguez noted that there were two plazas in Truchas in 1776 that Governor Cachupín had ordered built for defensive purposes.<sup>60</sup> Many of these frontier Hispanic settlements, under almost constant siege by Indians, were abandoned in the 18th Century. So remote was Chimayó at this time that Roque Lobato was banished there for three years in 1765 as a punishment for crimes.<sup>61</sup>

Near Chimayó, the village of Córdoba provides a good example of the hazards of life on the eastern frontier. Founded sometime after 1743 and known originally as Quemado, Córdoba suffered from repeated attacks by Utes and Comanches. The people abandoned their village in 1748 and moved

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<sup>58</sup> Dominguez, p. 83

<sup>59</sup> Baxter, p. 89

<sup>60</sup> Dominguez, Antansio. *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776*. Translated and annotated by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chávez. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1956, p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> Twitchell, Vol. II, p. 242

to Chimayó, but returned a year later. They took the precaution of leaving women and children in Chimayó for a while before the settlement was firmly re-established. Also desperate to alleviate their losses, the people of Truchas petitioned the governor for arms and Pueblo Indian scouts in 1772.<sup>62</sup>

New Mexico was placed under military control as a response to the incursions. Governor Mendinueta lamented the situation in a report to Viceroy Bucareli in 1772:

"... the pueblos of Indians are all grouped together and for this reason more defensible, while of the Spaniards there is no unified settlement... Their being indefensible has caused some of the advantageous frontiers to be abandoned... One of the opportune means which can be taken is to compel settlers of each region who live... dispersed, to join and form their pueblos in plazas or streets so that a few men could be able to defend themselves...."<sup>63</sup>

Governor Mendinueta repeated his plea for official action in several times between 1772 and 1777. Finally, in 1778, the Viceroy held a council in Chihuahua and issued orders for consolidation of the towns. The Villas, except Santa Fé, whose "churlish" residents resisted all authority, were organized into plaza-type towns at about this time.<sup>64</sup> Soon afterwards, rural communities were consolidated.

The plazas of the Santa Cruz valley as well as those at Trampas, Ojo Caliente, Cebolleta, Dixon, Taos, and Ranchos de Taos probably had their ori-

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<sup>62</sup> Baxter, p. 92

<sup>63</sup> Thomas, Alfred B. "Governor Mendinueta's Proposals for the Defense of New Mexico, 1772-1778." *New Mexico Historical Review* 6 (1931):21-39, p. 29-30.

<sup>64</sup> Simmons, p. 15

gins in this period<sup>65</sup> (Map 7). The Plaza at Truchas had apparently already been laid out, if not constructed.<sup>66</sup> In 1782, Fray Agustin de Morfi reported that Governor Anza, Mendinueta's successor, had reduced the settlement at Santa Cruz to a "regular form" in 1779.<sup>67</sup>

There has been much confusion as to the date of the founding of the Plaza del Cerro in Chimayó, reflected in popular literature and even in documents nominating it for National Historic Monument status. Many people have assumed that the Plaza was the original settlement structure in the area and that it dates to the late 1600's or early 1700's. Clearly, the documents show that this is not the case. No records of the construction of the Plaza have been found. The first reference to *el paraje* de Chimayó (the site of Chimayó) are made in the 1740's leading some to believe that perhaps the plaza was built at this time.<sup>68</sup> The name San Buenaventura de Chimayó appears for the first time on a will dating to 1752 and a marriage record of 1767 refers to *el puesto de San Buenaventura de Chimalló*.<sup>69</sup> San Buenaventura is the patrón saint of the plaza and use of this name has been thought to indicate the existence of the plaza. However, the association of Chimayó with a patrón saint does not necessarily mean that a Plaza existed; patrón saints have been named in other towns before the construction of a church or a plaza.

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<sup>65</sup> Simmons, p.18; Bunting, p. 16

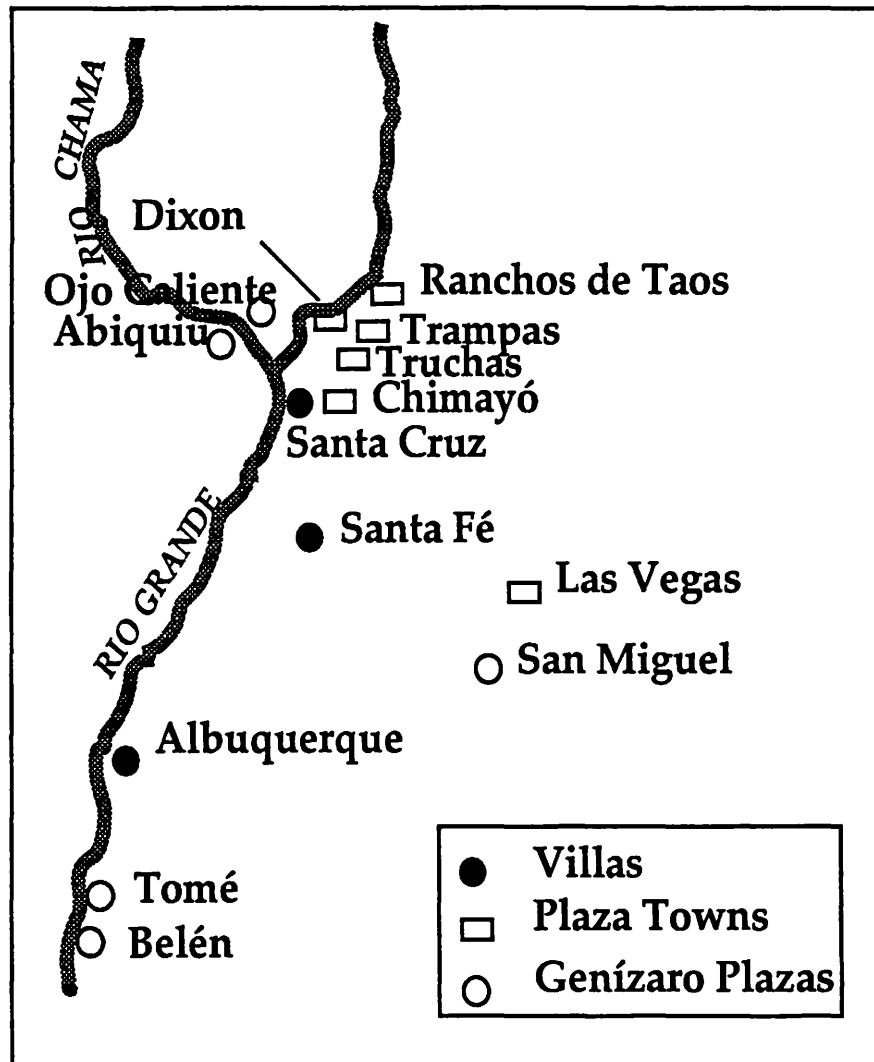
<sup>66</sup> Baxter, p. 89

<sup>67</sup> Jaramillo, Victor Dan. "La Casa del Patron." Unpublished manuscript loaned by the author, no date, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Twitchell, Vol. II, p. 213; Boyd, E. *Historic Preservation: A Plan for New Mexico*. New Mexico State Planning Office, Santa Fé, 1971, p. 80.

<sup>69</sup> Jaramillo, p. 3





Map 7 - Plaza Settlements in Northern New Mexico

Neither Bishop Tamaron nor Fray Dominguez mention a plaza in Chimayó in 1760 or 1776. Dominguez does, however, describe plazas in Truchas and Trampas.<sup>70</sup> Other traveler's accounts do not mention the word plaza in association with Chimayó until the late 18th Century and the name Chimayó is not associated in church documents with a plaza until 1785, when a baptismal record refers to the *Plaza de Sanbuenaventura de Chimayó*.<sup>71</sup> In 1806, the first document from a resident referring to the plaza as an enclosed space was filed by Gabriel Ortega, who complained that horses were being allowed inside the plaza and were ruining his crops.<sup>72</sup> In the next few decades, the Plaza is mentioned frequently in land transactions in the area.

From all of the above indirect evidence, it seems likely that the Plaza del Cerro at Chimayó was built sometime in the late-18th Century during the phase of consolidation of New Mexico settlements. But it should be emphasized that the evidence for a founding date for the Plaza is circumstantial. An independent means of dating the buildings, such as tree-ring dating of the *vigas* of several of the Plaza buildings, could be employed to improve the accuracy of the dating.

If it was built in the late 1700's, the Plaza del Cerro did not for long function as an important defensive structure. With the Comanche Peace of 1786, the frontier was more secure and settlers spread out from the Rio Grande up the Chama drainage, down the Pecos, south on the Rio Grande, and west into

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<sup>70</sup> Snow, David H. "Rural Hispanic Community Organization in Northern New Mexico: An Historical Perspective." In Kutsche, Paul, editor, *The Survival of Spanish American Villages* Colorado College, 1979, p. 47. See also Dominguez, p. 83, 99.

<sup>71</sup> Jaramillo, p. 4

<sup>72</sup> Borrego-Ortega Papers, 9 April 1806.

the Rio Puerco drainage. New fortified Genízaro plaza towns were established at Abiquiu, Tomé and San Miguel del Vado late in the colonial era on the expanding and vulnerable frontier (Map 7). Ironically, the Plaza area probably enjoyed its first period of relative peace soon after it was fortified.

### The Santa Cruz Valley in the 19th Century

Because of disease, attacks from nomadic Native Americans and isolation, Hispanic population growth in New Mexico had been slow throughout most of the 18th Century.<sup>73</sup> The 1790 Census reported 8,895 people in the Santa Cruz de la Cañada district, a large area which encompassed Chimayó, making it the highest concentration of population in the province.<sup>74</sup> In 1776, Fray Antansio Domínguez reported that there were 367 persons comprising 71 families in Chimayó, including several placitas.<sup>75</sup> These numbers are remarkably low considering that the colony had been settled for 192 years.

In the early 19th century, population began to grow more quickly, partially because of the introduction of a smallpox vaccine to New Mexico in 1805.<sup>76</sup> After the American takeover, the increased security provided by the US Army made possible the establishment of new communities.<sup>77</sup> The growth in population in the Santa Cruz valley in the 1800's put an increasing strain on the

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<sup>73</sup> Tjarks, Alicia V.. "Demographic, Ethnic and Occupational Structure of New Mexico, 1790. " *The Americas* 35(1978). p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> Tjarks, p. 58

<sup>75</sup> Dominguez, p. 84

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, Calvin A., and Susan A. Roberts, 1988. *New Mexico* . Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press. p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> Forrest, footnote, p. 186

limited resources available. According to old-timers interviewed in the 1930's, there was "plenty of land" until about 1850, and by 1875, the land was overcrowded.<sup>78</sup> A report by the Soil Conservation Service in 1937 states that the agricultural resources of the northern New Mexico region were already supporting the maximum population possible by 1850. Other writers have disagreed, suggesting that it was the alienation of communal grazing areas and woodlands, not overpopulation, that forced the Hispanic villages into a disequilibrium with the carrying capacity of the land.<sup>79</sup>

In any case, upland grazing was relatively difficult in the Chimayó area because of poor forage and steep terrain. Livestock raising seems to have never been an important part of the local economy. The valley floor at its best offered a very limited carrying capacity for an expanding population using pre-industrial technology. Climatic variability and poor farming techniques no doubt added to the stress on the capacity of the land beginning sometime in the 1800's.<sup>80</sup> These factors no doubt placed considerable pressure on the Santa Cruz valley by the late-1800's.

As mentioned, expansion of the settlement area took up some of this excess population beginning in the 18th century. As population filled up available land in the fertile lowlands, settlers spilled over into more remote basins--often into smaller, higher valleys. Córdova was founded in 1743 and Truchas in 1754 by settlers from Chimayó and other villages. Suitable valleys

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<sup>78</sup> Weigle, 1975, p. 35

<sup>79</sup> Forrest, footnote, p. 186.

<sup>80</sup> Snow, p. 51

were becoming filled by the mid-1800's, and expansion to the north and northeast brought the Hispanics into contact with Anglo settlers.

Events following the Mexican Revolution in 1821 led to increased notoriety for Chimayó and the Santa Cruz valley. Initially, things changed little on the isolated frontier of what had been northern New Spain. But a new constitution and changes in tax laws declared by President Antonio López Santa Anna in 1836 led to a local uprising that came to be called the Chimayó Rebellion.

Santa Anna's changes, generally referred to as the Departmental Plan, weakened local government throughout the new Mexican nation and imposed federal taxes uniformly in all departments. New Mexico had been exempt from federal taxes because it provided its own military protection and benefitted little from federal monies.<sup>81</sup> A minor incident in Santa Cruz de la Cañada in July of 1837 angered local leaders and ignited revolt against the authorities in Santa Fé. The rebels declared a new political body, a *cantón*, and formally organized the rebellion, which they claimed was in response to the new taxes, the extravagances of the new governor, Albino Pérez, and restrictions imposed unfairly on the people by the Church.<sup>82</sup>

Governor Pérez thought that the rebellion could be easily quelled and marched for La Cañada, but his small force was quickly routed by the rebels. The rebels captured Pérez near Santa Fé, decapitated him and paraded his head around the Plaza before installing one of their number, José Gonzales,

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<sup>81</sup> Lecompte, Janet. *Rebellion in Rio Arriba County, 1837*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1985, p. 17.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20

as the new governor. The tenure of the new and inexperienced governor was brief, however, as a force led by Manuel Armijo and funded in part by Anglo merchants from Santa Fé ousted him, defeated the rebels and regained control of the capital for Mexico in early 1838.<sup>83</sup>

This fierce uprising came to be called the Chimayó Rebellion because "so many rebels lived [in Chimayó] in 1837."<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, there is no roster of names to show who these rebels from Chimayó were. A bit of folklore also traces the heart of the rebellion to Chimayó. A *décima* --a ten-line ballad form--from the 19th century describes the event and mentions Chimayosos:

Insurgent Chimayoses  
Men of plaid coats  
Who have abandoned the looms  
To rebel against the country... <sup>85</sup>

The *décima* also mentions the "braided hair" of the Chimayosos. This ballad is interesting because it not only suggests that Chimayó was of some importance in the rebellion, but also indicates that weaving was already a common activity among the men of Chimayó, who were of somewhat different appearance than the norm.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p 148

<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, a story of the rebellion survives in the oral tradition of Chimayó. In one interview, an informant described the famous battle at Puertocito Pojoaque, where the rebels were soundly defeated by Armijo. However, in this version, it becomes a Civil War battle, and the residents who rally from Chimayó and surrounding villages are victorious, sending the "confederates" running. (See John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90).

The takeover of New Mexico by the United States in 1846 brought significant changes to New Mexico, enhancing the economic growth of the capital, of Albuquerque, and of some other communities. There was an insurrection against the new American government in 1847, in which Governor Bent was killed. Americans in Taos, Mora and Arroyo Hondo were also killed.<sup>87</sup> But unlike the Rebellion of 1937, Chimayosos were not involved enough to have the uprising named in their honor.

The Civil War also brought changes to the northern communities. Men from Chimayó left their small, isolated community to fight in the war and brought new ideas and expectations when they returned. Money from the United States also began to trickle into Chimayó in the pensions of returning soldiers, but life changed little.

Of more importance to the northern communities than the U.S. takeover or the Civil War was the arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in Española in 1881.<sup>88</sup> Many men began to use the train to migrate for work, taking some of the strain off of the land to support increasing population. The railroad also facilitated the development of new mining and logging industries in the region, which provided jobs. The population, aided by this new source of income, continued to grow, although many men were gone for a large part of the year. With access to the railroad, the population of the valley became dependent on wage labor to meet basic subsistence needs.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Simmons, Marc. *New Mexico: A Bicentennial History*. New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1977, p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> Weigle, p.236

<sup>89</sup> Calkins, 1937, p. 8

Francisco Antonio ("Güero") Maestas, the Irish great-grandfather to the Ortega clan (see Family Relationships, below), wrote a song describing the effects of the arrival of the railroad in Española. This bit of folklore gives a potent sense of the conflicts and opportunities presented by the railroad:

El Ferrocarril<sup>90</sup>

by Francisco Antonio Maestas (El Güero)

Ya la gente se enlevó  
Con el camino de hierro  
Y hasta la siembra dejó  
Por irse a ganar dinero

Now the people set sail  
On the road of iron  
Even leaving the sowing behind  
In order to go away to earn money

Todo el territorio entero  
Se ocupa en este que hacer  
Con la escrepa y barretero  
Y el desagüe en componer

All the entire territory  
Is busy in this task  
With the scraper and the pickaxe  
And the ditch works left abandoned

Si no tienen que comer  
No les importa se van  
Pero no pueden saber  
Si allá los desecharán

If they have nothing to eat  
It doesn't matter, they go  
But there's no way to know  
If they will be fired

Vienen luego a placticar  
Cada uno como le fué  
Y no hay donde trabajar  
Y lo peor que no sembré

Soon they come to chat  
Each one telling how it went  
"There's no work  
And worse yet, I didn't plant"

Dime tu ahora como haré  
Le dicen a su mujer  
De pastor me meteré  
Pa podernos mantener

"Tell me now how I'll do it,"  
They tell their wives  
"I'll become a shepherd  
So that we can survive"

Ahora si has pensando bien  
Haz como a ti te de la gana  
Pero tambien te diré  
Yo quiero un corte de lana

"Now, if you thought it out well,  
Do as you please,  
But I'll tell you also  
I want a bolt of wool"

Mujer, esa es un infamia  
No me empieces a moler

"Woman, this is blasphemy  
Don't start nagging me,

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<sup>90</sup> This song turned up in the papers of Melita Ortega and is used here with her permission.



Mira, no seas tan vana  
Porque primero es comer

Look, don't be so vain,  
Because it's more important to eat"

Bien te lo decía yo  
Al saber determinar  
Que para tener quehacer  
Lo seguro es el sembrar

"I told you well  
When I figured it out  
That in order to be sure of work  
The most certain thing is to plant"

Pero ahora ya no hay lugar  
Y el tiempo se me pasó  
La plaga nos va a llegar  
Aunque tu piensas que no

"But now we have no place to plant  
And time has passed me by  
The plague is going to come  
Even if you don't think so"

Eso es lo que siento yo  
De pasar mis malos ratos  
Como ya ni trabajo  
No te compro ni zapatos

"This is what I regret  
About going through my bad times  
Since now I don't even work  
I won't buy you even shoes"

Eso tambien siento yo  
Que ya no tiene trabajo  
Y si se mete de pastór  
Yo pesco la cuesta abajo

"This I also regret  
That you don't have work  
And if you become a shepherd  
I'll go my own way"

Though Chimayó was still regarded as a frontier town, during the 19th century settlers had begun moving outside the fortified plaza. Dominguez had noted in 1776 that there were outlying ranchos in the Chimayó area, and that these ranchos had their own place names. It is unclear whether or not these ranchos were abandoned to concentrate population in the Plaza when it was established. The move to expand the settlement area in the 19th century may have begun with a resettlement of the ranchos in the area.

The expansion from the Plaza was prompted by population increase as much as a decreased need for safety. Scattered buildings, perhaps initially used seasonally by men working the fields, became permanent home sites. Children would add onto the parents' home or build on nearby lots as land

was subdivided. Subdivision usually took place so that each heir had access to a ditch. This resulted in the long lots characteristic of the northern Rio Grande, and encouraged linear settlement pattern as houses sprang up at the head of each long lot.<sup>91</sup> Later in the century, these scattered "ranchos" began to grow and consolidate and the resulting clusters of houses developed into small communities with their own names--often the surname of the family involved.<sup>92</sup> The Chimayó *lugares* ("places") of El Rincón de los Trujillos, Los Argüellos and Los Pachecos--each a cluster of houses on the Cañada Ancha ditch--derive their names from the names of founding families.

Other names were descriptive and referred to local geographic features or characteristics. The Plaza del Cerro was so named because it is located near the prominent *Cerro de Chimayó*. Many older people still remember the Plaza del Cerro as the *Plaza Vieja* --the old plaza--in recognition of its antiquity. It was also called the Plaza Arriba to describe its location high at the head of the valley, and the concentration of settlement a mile or so down the valley was known as Plaza Abajo. Potrero was so named because of the large pastures (*potreros*) along the river there. Rincón is built in a small "cove" (*rincón*) in the badland cliffs along the edge of the valley and La Cuchilla is the settlement near a long, narrow ridge (*cuchilla*) of sandstone.

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<sup>91</sup> See: Carlson, Alvar W. "Long Lots in the Rio Arriba." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (March 1975), pp. 48-57, for a discussion of long lots in the region.

<sup>92</sup> Carlson, Alvar W. *The Rio Arriba: A Geographic Appraisal of the Spanish-American Homeland*. PhD Dissertation, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota, 1971, p. 91. Part of the pressure to consolidate into compact villages came from the fact that all available land outside the valley was taken and could no longer absorb population growth. Children were forced to settle on smaller parcels of land near their parents (See also, Snow, 1979, p. 51).

Still other names referred to the original function of a particular settlement. The land west of the Plaza was known as Los Ranchos (the farms) because many scattered farms are located there.<sup>93</sup> The name Centinela is said to refer to the fact that sentinels were often posted on this main entrance route from the eastern mountains into the Santa Cruz Valley via the Cañada Ancha (Map 8).

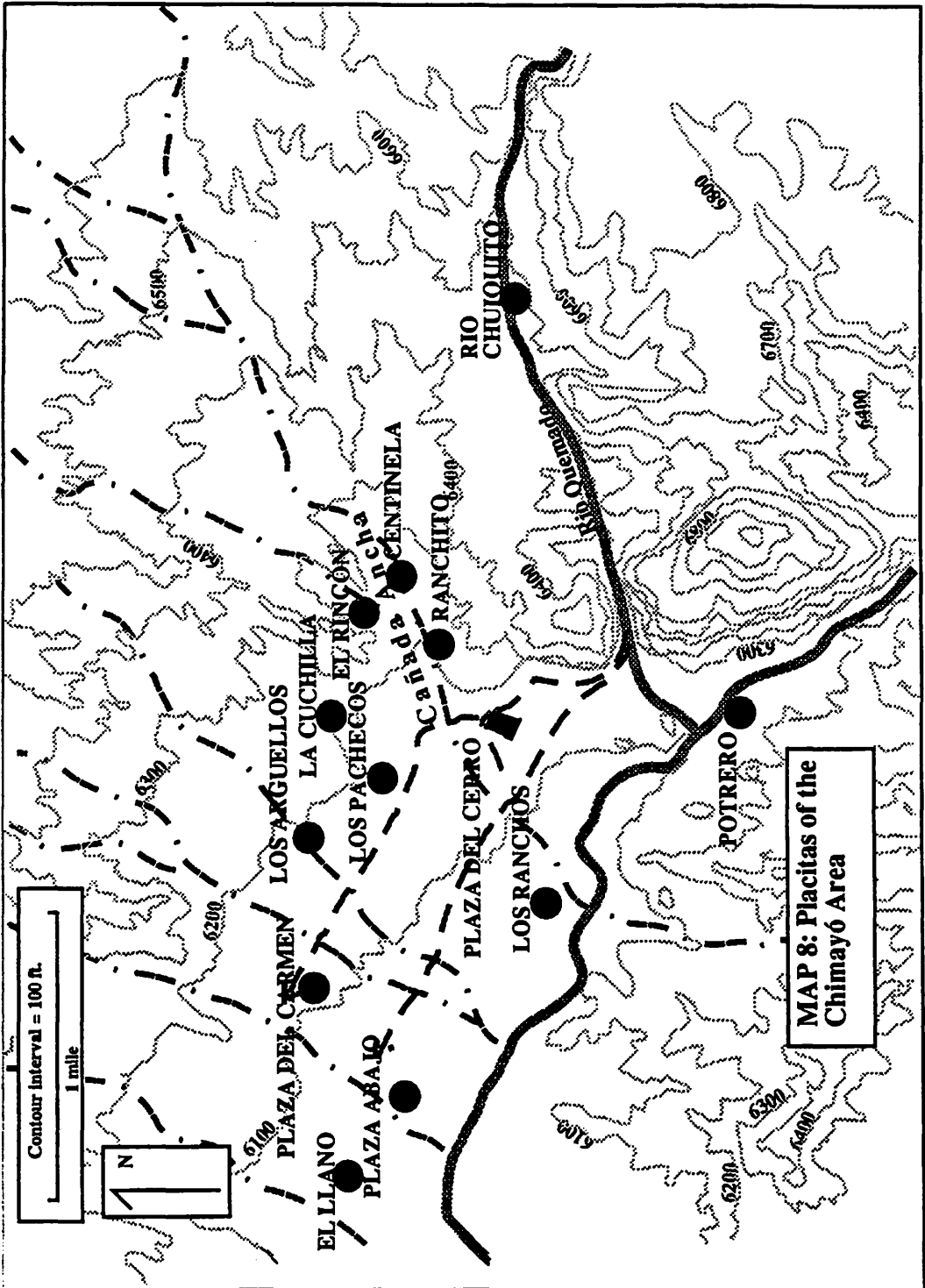
Most of these places are arranged in a linear pattern along travel routes or ditches in the valley and the majority lacked a plaza or a town center.<sup>94</sup> The Plaza del Cerro was the only formally-arranged plaza in the upper Santa Cruz valley. The Plaza del Carmen in La Cuchilla appears frequently in Santa Cruz Parish documents since it included an important church where baptisms took place, but there is no evidence that it once included a defensive plaza. DeBorhegyi mapped a plaza-like structure at La Puebla, but again, although La Puebla is an important settlement focus, no documentary evidence that such a structure existed has come to light.

The question of the dates and exact order of settlement of the Santa Cruz valley *lugares* is difficult to answer with the available information. It has often been assumed that settlement proceeded outward from established towns such as Santa Cruz. By this reasoning, Chimayó should have been settled much later than Santa Cruz. But, in fact, settlement in northern New Mexico proceeded not by the enlargement of single towns, but by the multiplication

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<sup>93</sup> The name "Los Ranchos" suggests the possibility that these lands were the farms for the Plaza residents when they were confined to the Plaza.

<sup>94</sup> deBorhegyi, 1954, p. 28.



MAP 8: Placitas of the Chimayó Area

of new, small towns.<sup>95</sup> Settlement did not proceed as a matter of diffusion from Santa Cruz, but by the appearance at various times of new settlement centers throughout the valley.

What is clear from documents, as sketched above, is that the vicinity of the Plaza del Cerro was one of the first areas in the Santa Cruz valley to be settled after the reconquest of New Mexico by Vargas. Small ranchos in the Plaza del Cerro area actually pre-dated the formal establishment of the Villa of Santa Cruz. The Plaza may have been the prime focus of population in Chimayó in the late 1700's, but it apparently lost its primacy as a central residential and defensive structure in the 1800's as new *placitas* were established in the valley.

The fact that the founding families of some of the surrounding *lugares* were not from the Plaza--such as Los Pachecos and El Rincón de Los Trujillos--suggests that not all the local settlements were founded by Plaza families. Familial ties between the Plaza and Centinela, Rio Chiquito, Rincón, and Los Ranchos support the notion that these were founded by spillover from Plaza population (see Plaza Residents). Careful genealogical research could shed light on these connections.

### **The Plaza del Cerro in the 19th Century**

Between 1813 and 1816 Bernardo Abeyta founded the famous Santuario in Potrero.<sup>96</sup> This attracted pilgrims and the flow was augmented with the

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<sup>95</sup> Harlan, Carol S. *Plaza/Placita Settlement in New Mexico and An Analysis of a Frontier Plaza Settlement*. Unpublished paper, UNM, Department of Geography, 1982, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> deBorhegyi, Stephen F. "The Miraculous Shrines of Our Lord of Esquipulas in Guatemala and Chimayó, New Mexico." *El Palacio* 60(1953), p. 95.

founding of the Santo Niño church in the 1860's.<sup>97</sup> A small number of vendors and craftsmen emerged to supply the pilgrims with religious objects as well as serapes, saddle blankets, *rebosos*, and knitted wool stockings.<sup>98</sup> This placed Potrero on the map of the pious and sparked the first hint of a commercial tourist industry in Chimayó. Chimayó was on a well-used travel route between Española and the mountain villages, and the road passed directly through the Plaza del Cerro. This enhanced its economic position.<sup>99</sup>

DeBorhegyi describes an exodus of the *ricos* of the plaza prior to the American occupation of New Mexico. He states that the *ricos* left the plaza to found mercantile establishments along roadways, but cites no source for his information.<sup>100</sup> The fact that the Plaza was inhabited by prosperous citizens and merchants in the early 20th century casts doubt on deBorhegyi's thesis. There is no documentary evidence that the Plaza del Cerro was first abandoned in the early 19th century, so soon after its construction.

An idea of how the Plaza del Cerro looked and functioned in the 19th century can be gleaned from the few scattered land documents and wills that have survived from the period. A paper from 1803 indicates that abandoned houses may have been present on the Plaza since at least that time. On March 25, José Guadalupe Martín sold a house on "the Plaza of San Buena bentura [sic]" for the price of "two masses to be said for the souls of [his] parents." He

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<sup>97</sup> Boyd, p. 81

<sup>98</sup> Arroyo-Ortiz, Nelson. "Historic American Buildings Survey Report No. NM-128, 1971." On file, Historic Preservation Division, Santa Fé, New Mexico, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Boyd, p. 81

<sup>100</sup> deBorhegyi, 1954, p. 29

describes the house as "bieja y despoblada" (old and abandoned). Although it is impossible to attach a quantity of years to "old," the fact that the house is abandoned is also of significance, suggesting that the Plaza itself was already of some antiquity by that time.<sup>101</sup> This also indicates how important religion and a good Christian burial were to these people.

On April 9, 1806, Don Manuel García de la Mora, *alcalde mayor* and Captain of the Santa Cruz militia, made a written statement concerning a land-use dispute on the Plaza. Gabriel Ortega had apparently petitioned Governor Fernando Chacon during a visit to Chimayó to order some of Ortega's neighbors to move their corrals "far and out of the Plaza del Cerro... so his garden would not be damaged." This was done, but then the neighbors, Toribio Mascareñas and Manuel Duran, went to the governor and again requested permission to build a corral within the Plaza. Chacon asked de la Mora to visit the site and settle the case. De la Mora reaffirmed the earlier decision in favor of Gabriel Ortega and provided certification of the action for the safekeeping of the Ortega heirs.<sup>102</sup>

One of the most significant statements concerning land ownership in the Plaza comes from a land sale that was certified on July 7, 1827. In this document, Mariano Silva states that he has sold a piece of property and a house to Luis Ortega. He wished to make clear, however, that in the bill of sale he did not include any rights within the Plaza which "is common grounds for all."

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<sup>101</sup> Borrego-Ortega papers, March 25, 1803

<sup>102</sup> Borrego-Ortega paper, April 9, 1806

<sup>103</sup> This brief statement suggests that the land within the Plaza was once held as communal property which could not be bought or sold--a situation which has not existed within the memory of living residents of Chimayó. It also suggests that this communal policy was already being challenged at that time.

In general, papers from the 19th century sketch the Plaza as a residential center for a population subsisting on its agricultural produce. Among the crops and products mentioned are fruit trees (apples, apricots, cherries), sorghum syrup (miel), tobacco, and cotton material. Horses, burros and cows are mentioned as trade items in land transactions. Wills and land sales often divide up property that includes fruit trees, halves of fruit trees, or individual limbs on fruit trees.<sup>104</sup>

Nineteenth-century documents also shed light on the origins of the *Oratorio* --the community chapel and important social center on the Plaza. A will written by Pedro Ascencio Ortega in 1837 lists as his property a small, private room of worship dedicated to San Buenaventura. Pedro was a son of Gabriel Ortega, the first Ortega to settle in the Chimayó area, and his mother was Anna Bartola López, who was probably a descendent of Luis López.<sup>105</sup> He may have inherited the room from his father. Pedro married Maria Francesca Abeyta, daughter of Bernardo Abeyta, founder of the Santuario de

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<sup>103</sup> The exact wording in the document is: "yo para dentro de la plasa no le bendi ningun derecho patio comun como todos."(Borrego-Ortega papers, 7 July 1827)

<sup>104</sup> See Borrego-Ortega papers, 9 May 1836

<sup>105</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 (not recorded) Usner notes that Gabriel is given an age of 48 years and Pedro 34 years in the 1790 census; this suggests that they may, in fact, have been brothers, although genealogies done by the Ortega family claim otherwise.



Chimayó.<sup>106</sup> The altar screen at the Oratorio was painted by José Rafael Aragón, the same famous *santero* who painted the *reredos* at the Santuario. Ortega's will lists a number of religious items inside the room and leaves the room to his nephew, Isidro Ortega.<sup>107</sup>

Isidro Ortega apparently never claimed possession of the chapel. Ownership of the Oratorio is unclear between the time of Pedro Ortega's death in 1837 and the turn of the century, but names inscribed on the ceiling suggest that it was maintained by Chimayó residents from many families. A document previously not included in the Borrego-Ortega papers, and hence not preserved in the State Archives, affirms the communal nature of the *Oratorio*.

The paper was revealed in the family papers of Melita Ortega during an oral history interview. This document lists those people who contributed to the upkeep of the *Oratorio* on the Plaza in the year 1878 (a *lista de limosnas*, or "list of alms"). It provides a cross-section of area residents and gives some indication of the general level of wealth and terms of exchange at that time. Most people gave *dos reales* (25 cents) as their annual dues, but some gave ten *centavos*.<sup>108</sup> Many offered produce for their dues. Maria Guadalupe Trujillo gave a half of a ristra of chile. Santos Coris and Maria Teodora Trujillo each offered two bunches of *punche* (home-grown tobacco), while José Ortega gave two *almures* (a small measure equal to about 1/2 bushel) of garbanzo beans.

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<sup>106</sup> Jaramillo, p. 7

<sup>107</sup> Jaramillo, p. 10

<sup>108</sup> These are terms for Mexican monies, but I believe they referred to US currency-- i.e., 25 and ten cents, respectively. Many elderly Chimayosos still use the Mexican names.

The list, which continues on both sides of the paper, lists a total of 44 names, eight of which are Trujillos, seven are Ortegas, and five are Martínezes. Some of the people (such as Concepción Trujillo) were from Rio Chiquito, suggesting that the Oratorio was important to surrounding communities as well as the Plaza.<sup>109</sup> Most names on the back side are also mentioned on the front side, although both sides bear the same date, 1878. This paper clearly demonstrated the community's contribution to the chapel that originally began as a private room of Pedro Ascencio, or perhaps Gabriel Ortega. It also shows the involvement of the Trujillo family- a large and prominent family based in Rio Chiquito--in Plaza affairs.

By the late 1800's, Chimayó was well connected and involved with state politics, largely because of the influence of José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl. José Ramón was a prominent leader in Plaza affairs. He was a Justice of the Peace and could read and write well. He was a strong Republican who worked to elect party candidates. Among the papers he left are correspondence with Alejandro Read concerning elections. Read was one of the leading Republicans in the state and a brother of historian Benjamin Read.<sup>110</sup> Oral tradition has it that José Ramón was also a close friend of Governor Bent. One story has it that Bent came to José Ramón to express fears about his enemies just before he was assassinated in 1847.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Three of Concepción's children married into Plaza families, linking the Trujillos of Rio Chiquito closely to the Plaza (see Plaza Residents, Chapter 3).

<sup>110</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91

<sup>111</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Plaza del Cerro had entered the American political and economic system. Still, the Plaza retained many aspects of its Colonial heritage in terms of architecture and lifestyle. In the next few decades, however, major changes took place--changes which were to lead to the eventual abandonment of many buildings on the Plaza. For the 20th century, the best source of information on the Plaza del Cerro is the people who lived there and witnessed these changes.

## PART II - ORAL HISTORY OF THE PLAZA DEL CERRO

### Background - The Plaza in the Twentieth Century

Because of the fact that the following oral history is not presented in a strict chronological framework, a brief summary of major events of the century is necessary as a prelude to presenting the view of Plaza life that emerged in the interviews.

Chimayó and the Plaza entered the 20th century during a time of relative prosperity for the northern New Mexico villages.<sup>1</sup> The Denver and Rio Grande railroad had created a connection with the outside world and the opportunity for employment.<sup>2</sup> Men who did not want to become entrapped in the *partido* system of sheep raising--which in any case was not well-developed in the Santa Cruz valley--could find wage labor outside of the area. A job in the beet fields of Colorado, at mines in Colorado or Arizona, working at a smelter, or hiring out on distant sheep and cattle ranches--all these sources of employment were available to just about any man who wanted to work.<sup>3</sup> Some jobs, such as laboring in the beet fields, required the whole family to migrate, but for most, men left seasonally.<sup>4</sup> As many as seven to ten thousand

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1 Wiegler, Marta. *Hispanic Villages of Northern New Mexico : A Reprint of Volume II of the Tewa Basin Study, with Supplementary Materials*. Santa Fé, Lightning Tree Press, 1979, p. 86

2 Calkins, Hugh G. "Village Livelihood in the Upper Rio Grande Area, and A note on the Level of Village Livelihood in the Upper Rio Grande Area." USDA Soil Conservation Service, Regional Bulletin No. 44, Conservation Economics Series No. 17, 1937, p. 2.

3 Wiegler, 1979. p. 35

4 Forrest, Suzanne. *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal*. Albuquerque, UNM Press, 1989, p. 29

villagers from the upper and middle Rio Grande valleys migrated annually for these jobs.<sup>5</sup> While this allowed families a new measure of wealth and prosperity, it put severe stress on village life, straining the traditional social structure of the communities. More importantly, it left the once-self sufficient villages vulnerable to fluctuations in the national capitalist economy.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently, as commented on by the elderly people in Chimayó, the Plaza at the turn of the century benefitted from this prosperity. All the houses were inhabited and maintained, the garden space in the middle was carefully tended, and Víctor Ortega opened up his general store on the Plaza. Víctor travelled to the train station in Española in a wagon to supply his store with bulk goods. The store also housed the Post Office and made the Plaza a center of the postal district extending from east of La Puebla to Rio Chiquito.<sup>7</sup>

Another sign of prosperity was the appearance of pitched roofs made with tin imported on the railroad.

Residents of the Plaza and vicinity partook of the exodus for work that characterized the northern New Mexico economy. Leaving Chimayó to find employment became increasingly necessary after the arrival of the railroad in 1881, as crops could not provide a sufficient surplus to exchange for needed goods. Men went as far as Wyoming to work on sheep ranches, while others travelled to Leadville, Colorado to work in mines. A favorite destination for employment was the smelter ("la smelda") in Durango, Colorado, partly be-

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5 Forrest, p. 79

6 Forrest, p. 29

7 Wiegler, p. 92

cause of the presence in Durango of a powerful Chimayó *patron* , Juan Chávez. Chávez--whose mother was an Ortega from the Plaza-- owned a hotel in Durango and personally aided newly-arrived laborers from Chimayó in finding work. He also provided loans to Chimayosos and kept paychecks for laborers in the smelter until they returned to Chimayó. Like people from the other northern villages, men worked seasonally at jobs in these places and returned to Chimayó with cash for buying needed supplies. Before 1930, an average of 250 to 300 men left Chimayó to work for 5-6 months each year, with an average monthly wage of \$35-50.<sup>8</sup>

The Presbyterian Mission arrived in Chimayó in 1900 and set up a school-room on the Plaza. After an initial period of suspicion, the Mission was welcomed and recognized as a valuable resource to the community. It was the most important outside influence in Chimayó and brought not only a refreshing new religious perspective and a break in the Catholic hegemony in the area, but it also brought new medical knowledge and treatments, new crops, farming techniques, new methods of preparing and storing food, and improvements in hygiene.

Victór Ortega's siblings, Reyes and Nicacio, both left the Plaza and established themselves just outside its north side around the turn of the century. There, they both became deeply involved in developing the local weaving industry, transforming a family tradition into a viable economic enterprise soon after the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> These men established their

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<sup>8</sup> Wiegler, p. 90

<sup>9</sup> Helen Lucero, personal communication. Ms. Lucero is a curator at the Museum of New Mexico and has studied the development of the weaving industry in detail.

homes and businesses outside the Plaza simply because there was no room on the Plaza for them, but their move began the shift away from the Plaza as an economic center.

World War I exposed Chimayó people to a much larger world. Soldiers returned with new expectations and ideas. The war also significantly expanded markets for the Santa Cruz valley's produce and sparked interest in increasing agricultural production, especially by Anglo farmers with large land holdings in the lower valley.<sup>10</sup>

Following the war, the weaving industry in New Mexico began to expand, fueled in part by the newfound American fascination with southwestern arts and crafts.<sup>11</sup> A number of weavers joined to form a cooperative to promote their business.<sup>12</sup> Numerous weaving enterprises sprang up in Chimayó in the early decades of the twentieth century, most of them focusing on wholesale arrangements with distributors in Santa Fé. The new, automobile road from Española bypassed the Plaza in the late 30's, cutting the Plaza off from the major traffic flow. Some weavers, including Nicacio, also sold retail to the tourist market and set up shop on the new road. Of all the weaving shops that opened, Nicacio's prospered the most and remains the largest in Chimayó today. The weaving industry became a mainstay of the Plaza area economy, employing around 100 people even during the Depression.<sup>13</sup>

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10 Calkins, p. 1

11 Forrest, p. 47-62

12 Helen Lucero, personal communication.

13 Wiegler, p. 90

The Santa Cruz Irrigation District was formed in the 1920's by agricultural interests in the lower valley. Their purpose was to build a dam on the Santa Cruz river above Chimayó to provide irrigation water to bring more acres under production in the valley.<sup>14</sup> Seventy-five Chimayó residents, led by Víctor Ortega, were on hand to oppose the formation of the District and were left out of the District because of their protest. The dam was started in 1926 and completed in 1931 after dramatic cost overruns and the bankruptcy of three contractors. It became a weight around the neck of the valley landowners outside of Chimayó. Families relied on outside wage labor for the funds to pay for water taxes created by the dam. The advent of the Depression left many of them facing the necessity of selling their land, and the owners of the companies in receivership were the same people who had initiated the dam project. In the end, agricultural acreage was not expanded to the level predicted by the dam promoters.<sup>15</sup>

The relative prosperity of the northern villages ended when the United States entered the Great Depression. Sources of employment almost completely dried up and the men who had left seasonally for work had to remain in the villages and find means of support, largely on the strained land base. By 1934 only 20 men from Chimayó could find wage labor, at an average monthly wage of \$9.60.<sup>16</sup> After a considerable lag time, massive federal relief

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14 Forrest, p. 31, 85.

15 Calkins, 1937, p. 5. It turned out that the Chimayó people opposed to the dam were vindicated, as many people in the Santa Cruz valley who agreed to the dam lost their land to delinquent taxes; the cost of the dam far exceeded estimates and ran annual taxes upwards of \$6, which many people could not afford. The finances of the project were mismanaged and many people lost their property (see Wiegle, 1975, p. 95, and Calkins, 1937, p.10)

16 Wiegle, p. 90



funds flowed into the region and the economic well-being of a family in the area was equivalent in its level of poverty to that of a tenant family in the rural south.<sup>17</sup> One hundred and fifteen heads of families in Chimayó received F.E.R.A. work relief, and twenty-eight received direct aid. The highest concentration of relief cases was in the badlands north of the Cañada Ancha ditch--the poorest agricultural land in the valley.<sup>18</sup> Malnutrition among children was rampant and health conditions were poor. The villages of northern New Mexico were in a state of near collapse.<sup>19</sup>

During the Depression, a uniquely New Mexican New Deal channeled funds into a number of projects in the Hispanic villages. Some of these programs were designed to help the villages regain economic independence by developing arts and crafts industries, modernizing agriculture, and restoring the fertility of the land.<sup>20</sup> Surplus foodstuffs were also delivered to villages, including Chimayó.

The people of the Plaza, however, do not recall the Depression era as a desperate time. Most remember that things changed very little in Chimayó with the advent of the Depression. They remember that life went on as it always had. People recall having no money, but insist that food, largely derived from local gardens, was adequate. Chimayó people also enjoyed what

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17 Calkins, p. 29

18 Wiegler, p. 90

19 Forrest, p. 17

20 Forrest, p. 65.

few of the other northern communities could--the presence of a local industry, weaving.

The centrality of the Plaza began to decline in the 1930's, probably at least in part because of the Depression and partly because of Víctor's advancing age.<sup>21</sup> Víctor's sons were educated in Santa Fé and remained there to work. The store on the Plaza was slowly abandoned and Víctor lost the Post Office in the early 30's. Though other, small stores were opened in the 30's and 40's, the Plaza began a similar abandonment process, as older people died and their heirs elected to stay away at permanent wage-labor jobs in nearby cities. The opening of the "new road" to Española (State Road 76) in the late 30's left the Plaza out of the main traffic flow through Chimayó and further contributed to its decline as an economic center.

World War II dragged another wave of men from Chimayó into the battle theaters of Europe and the Pacific. Besides the exodus of soldiers, many others left Chimayó to take advantage of new sources of war-related employment. The primary destination was San Francisco, where word had it that there were jobs in the shipyards. A number of families from around the Plaza left for San Francisco. There, they tasted urban life and formed a small sub-community of *compadres* in the city. The San Francisco era brought these people thoroughly into the modern industrial world, and though most of them returned to Chimayó, their perspective was forever changed. Many brought back spouses, augmenting the flow of Anglos into the Chimayó community that had begun with the Presbyterian missionaries in 1900.

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<sup>21</sup> Víctor was born in 1859.

The creation of Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory was the most significant change wrought by World War II. Hispanic communities within a large radius of the new and booming town suddenly had a local source of employment, and many residents of the Plaza area took advantage of the opportunity. The effect on Chimayó was a radical decrease in dependency on local crops for food, and much agricultural land was abandoned.

By the end of World War II, the abandonment of the Plaza was well underway. It was mostly older people who lived there. Though the interior garden space was cared for into the 50's, more and more buildings fell into disuse as working people moved to Los Alamos, Santa Fé or Albuquerque, or commuted from larger landholdings outside the Plaza. This trend has continued to the present, although in recent years there has been a new interest in reviving the Plaza, mostly by Anglos from outside the community.

Though the Plaza del Cerro is largely abandoned now, many people in Chimayó remember it when it was thriving and fully inhabited. Oral history provides a way of reconstructing the Plaza as a human community. The old people who remember the Plaza have seen it go through the transition to abandonment. For this study, interviews were used to obtain information on the Plaza in the time period just before the abandonment began--a period of change covering the first few decades of this century. The history of the Plaza since then was not a focus of this study. The first place to begin to understand the Plaza community is a description of who lived on the Plaza.

## Residents and Relationships on the Plaza del Cerro

"All the Plaza was my family, and it was beautiful," Bersabé Naranjo Chávez says of her relations on the Plaza del Cerro where she was born and raised.<sup>1</sup> This statement reflects the feeling of community felt by Plaza residents. Bersabé's sister Amada echoed this sentiment when she said, "Even non-relatives felt very close in Chimayó."<sup>2</sup> These fond reminiscences represent more than a romantic reconstruction of the past. Though not everyone who lived on the Plaza was related directly, there were many close kinship bonds cementing the Plaza community, complex and interwoven and involving several generations of families. Many people refer to certain Plaza residents as "Primo" or "Tio" and only later explained that these were informal references to the *feeling* of kinship among Plaza people, references that did not help to simplify the disentanglement of familial relationships.<sup>3</sup>

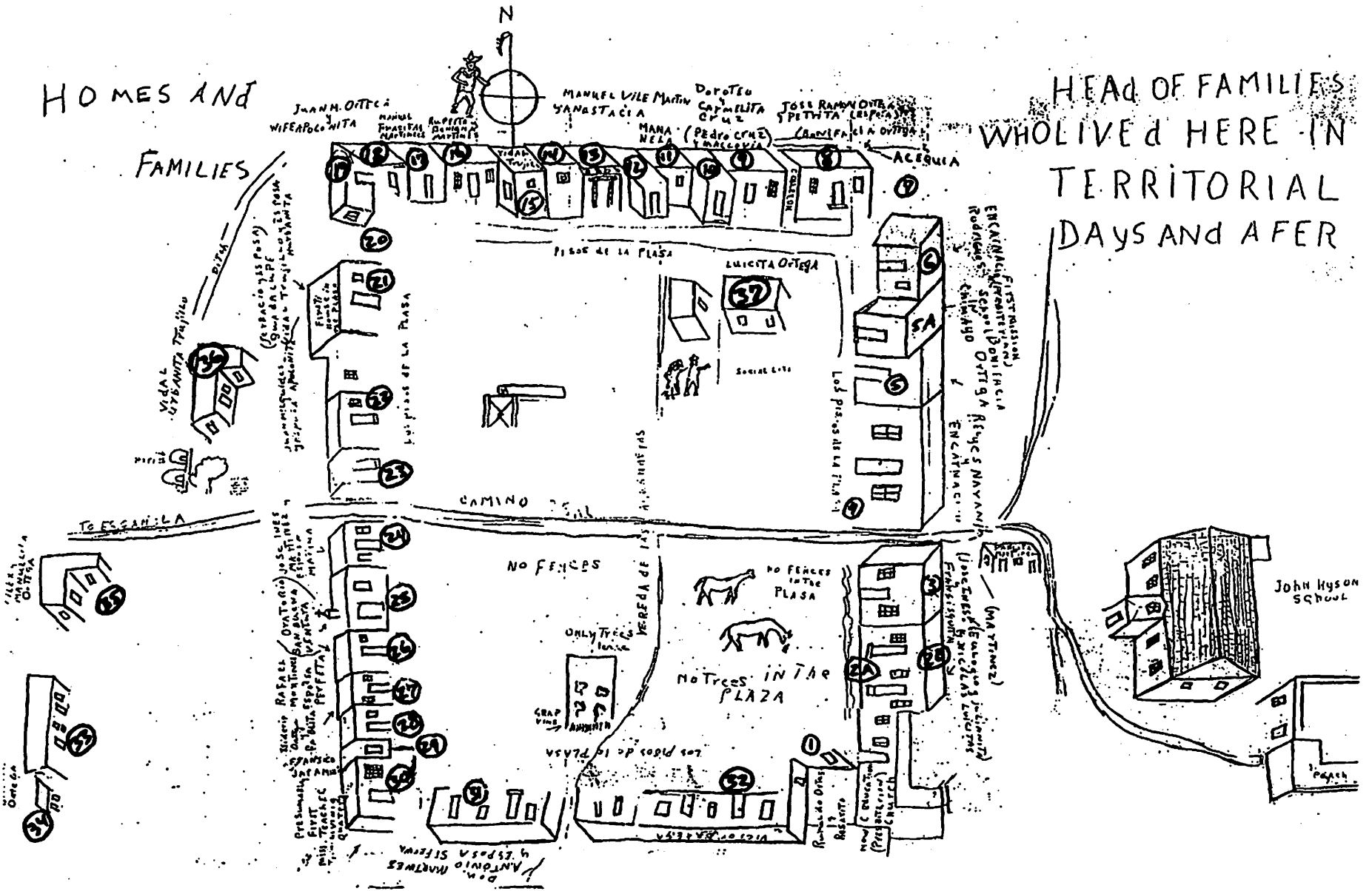
The picture is further complicated by the frequent duplicity of both family and given names on the Plaza. For example, there were two José Ramón Ortegas associated with the Plaza. There were also two contemporary Francesquita Ortegas, two men by the name of José Inéz Martínez, and two Felix Ortegas. Keeping track of these names is easier with the use of a map, which attaches each name to a residence. Using Sabino Trujillo's hand-drawn map (Map 9), the first US Land Survey map of the Plaza (Map 10), and the comments of people interviewed, the web of relationships can begin to be un-

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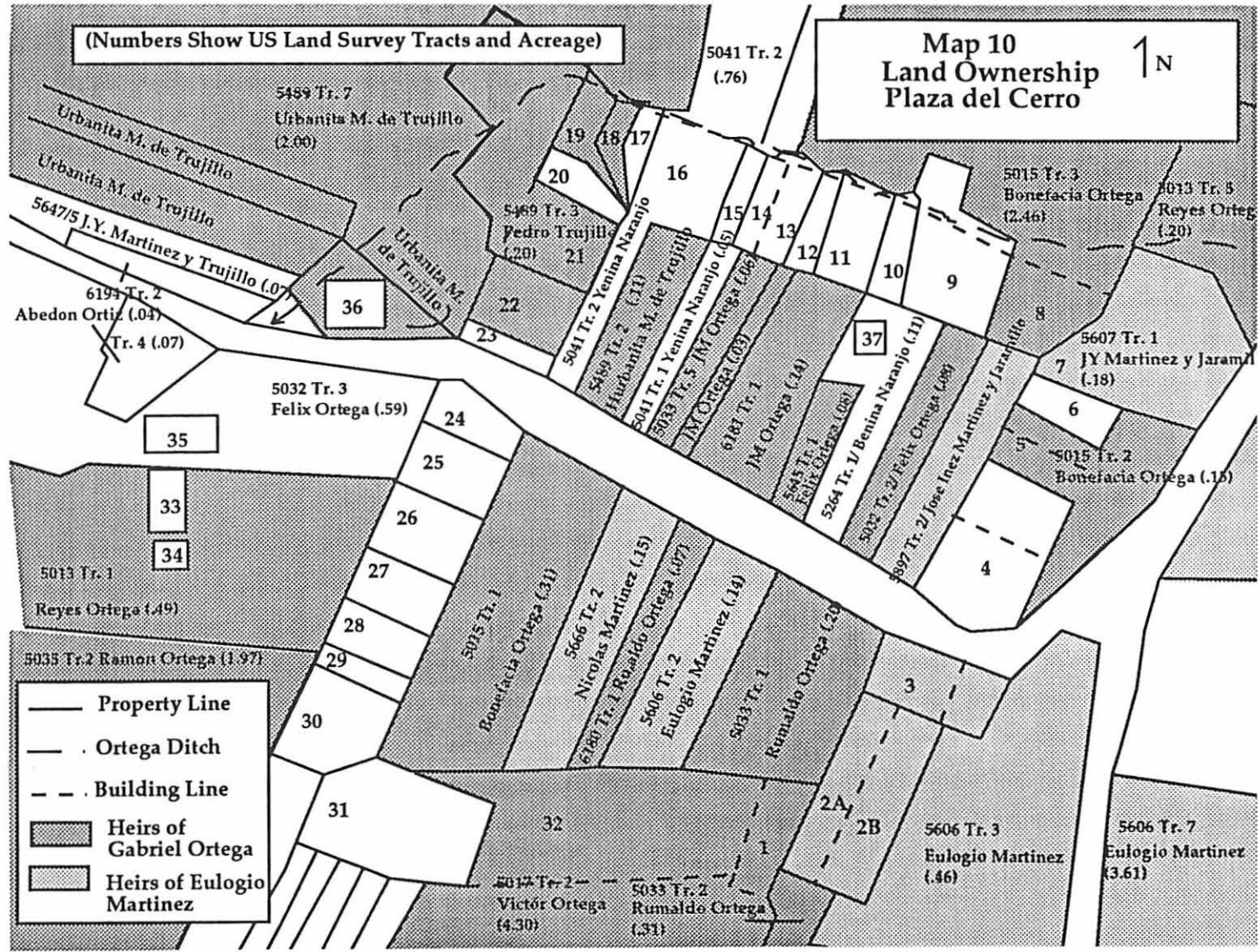
<sup>1</sup>Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>2</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/14/90



Map 9 - Sabino Trujillo's Map of the Plaza del Cerro



raveled.<sup>4</sup> A great deal of time was spent in the interviews going around the Plaza on the map and verifying or elaborating the names of its inhabitants, focusing on identifying the residents who grew up on or near the Plaza in this century before its abandonment, which began slowly in the 1930's. The maps and the oral histories complement each other to provide images of Plaza life in the first two or three decades of the 20th Century.

The result of this questioning is a slice in time showing residents on the Plaza just before it was effectively abandoned. Reconstructing the Plaza community through oral history and maps reveals that it was indeed a tight-knit community of people and that bonds were strengthened through family ties. Such a slice also reflects historical patterns of residence and ownership and suggests ways in which the Plaza evolved. The family ties of the Plaza had ramifications far beyond creating an amiable community, however. The political influence of the leaders of the Plaza was supported by family connections within and beyond the Plaza. Family traditions such as weaving were also passed through family lines and had important consequences on the development of the Plaza economically.

### **Comparison of Sabino Trujillo's Map and the Land Survey Map**

The basic tools used for reconstructing relationships are two maps of the Plaza: the official U.S. Small Holding Claims survey map and that made by Sabino Trujillo, a Chimayó native born around the turn of the century.

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<sup>4</sup> This discussion does not cover every person who lived on the Plaza in this Century. It probably does represent a fair majority of the generation that came of age early in the century .

Both maps were made to represent the second decade of the 20th century and it is interesting to compare them.<sup>5</sup>

Trujillo's map is a fascinating bit of folk art.<sup>6</sup> It represents the Plaza as Sabino pictured it--his mental map of a place very familiar to him. The perspective is ostensibly aerial but the buildings are drawn from the ground-level view of a person standing inside the middle of the Plaza looking around at the four facing sides. Each side is drawn from this perspective. Even the majority of buildings outside the Plaza are drawn as if they were seen from within the Plaza. The Plaza is also drawn as a more or less perfect square and on a perfect north-south axis, the shape and orientation one assumes it has if it is viewed from ground level.

The Land Survey Map shows an aerial perspective and does not identify individual rooms but instead maps out property lines.<sup>7</sup> This results in a very different looking map. The Plaza appears not at all square and is skewed considerably eastward off of a north-south axis. The shape of the Plaza on the Land Survey map shows a very strong oblique angle on the south side, where Víctor Ortega's property meets the Plaza. This results from the fact that Víctor's property line does not correspond at all to his house lines. The prop-

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<sup>5</sup> Sabino's map was supposedly drawn to represent the Plaza in 1916, as indicated by a notation on the original map. However, it was probably drawn much later, as Sabino's widow mentioned that he drew it in response to many curious questions about the Plaza from people Sabino worked with at the Museum of International Folk Art much later, in the 1950's. The Survey map was made in 1918 and approved in 1925.

<sup>6</sup> The facsimile reproduced here is at about 1/6 the scale of the original, which was scratched into blueprint paper. The original was microfilmed, copied, traced and reduced for this version, and some loss of detail has occurred.

<sup>7</sup> Map 2 is made from a reduction and tracing of Plat of Small Holding Claims, T20N, R9E, Map G, Sheet #5, on file in BLM Office, Santa Fe (hereafter referred to as the US Land Survey Map).



erties of Bonefacia Ortega, Benigna Naranjo and Eulógio Martínez also extend unbroken far beyond the boundaries of their Plaza rooms, though in these cases they front the Plaza squarely. Pedro Trujillo, an heir to Ortega lands, Nicolás Trujillo, and Carmen Ortega also owned parcels that extended a short distance away from the Plaza. All other properties consist of a small parcel immediately surrounding a house.

Another significant difference between the maps is the complete absence of community-access properties on the Land Survey Map. Whereas Sabino took pains to draw a strip of community right-of-way around the Plaza, and to label it the *Pisos de la Plaza*, this does not appear on the Survey maps. (The main public road--the "Camino Real" on Trujillo's map--is delineated on the Land Survey map.) Likewise, the *Vereda de las Aguanderas*, an easement through the Plaza for people to use on their way to the ditches or the fields, is not drawn in.<sup>8</sup> On the Survey Map, the *vereda* and the *pisos* were apparently divided up among multiple owners. Right-of-way was apparently maintained by custom and, in the absence of fences, had no clearly-defined boundaries. An even more remarkable difference between these maps is the fact that the *Oratorio* on the west side of the Plaza was surveyed but included no indication of ownership. These omissions may reflect the US Government's inability to recognize communal property rights, a problem which affected adjudication of land grant claims throughout New Mexico.

Besides these details of form and purpose, differences between the maps concern relatively minor details. The north side, as discussed below,

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<sup>8</sup> The *vereda* was a 10-ft. easement on either side of the property line between adjacent owners. It is now closed off by fences. (Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90)

held the most discrepancies in terms of ownership and these can be explained by single ownership of multiple properties.

One other facet of the US Land Survey Map deserves attention: an intriguing pattern of land ownership mapped at the northwest corner of the Plaza. Here several small, wedge-shaped pieces of property converge at their tips on the *Pisos* of the Plaza. This pattern is not reflected in Trujillo's map of rooms on the Plaza. It suggests that property touching onto the Plaza interior was valuable for some reason. Perhaps this reflects some sort of special rights granted at one time to property owners with a toehold in the Plaza. It may be an artifact of the time, suggested in documents, when the interior property on the Plaza was a commons shared by all Plaza residents. Access to the commons for defensive purposes may also have been granted on the basis of ownership of Plaza property.

### **Familial Relationships on the Plaza**

The following discussion is the result of a process followed in interviews, using Trujillo's map to identify residents around the Plaza in a counter-clockwise direction from the southeast corner.

José Ramón Ortega y Vigil, patriarch of one of the two Ortega families,<sup>9,10</sup> was a great-grandson to Gabriel Ortega, the first in the family to settle in

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<sup>9</sup> In common usage by the people I talked with, José Ramón Ortega y Vigil was known simply as José Ramón Ortega, whereas José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta was referred to by his binomial surname. I will follow this habit here.

<sup>10</sup> The two José Ramón Ortegas were actually distant cousins, according to Melita Ortega (Interview 10/9/90). Genealogical research shows that they were, in fact, second cousins. J.R. Ortega y Abeyta was a grandson of Gabriel Ortega, while J. R. Ortega y Vigil was a great-grandson of Gabriel. (Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 [not recorded]).

Chimayó. A prominent and influential resident active in the Republican Party, he served as a Justice of the Peace.<sup>11</sup> José Ramón Ortega lived originally on the south side of the Plaza at the east corner (Site #1) but later moved across to the north side (Site #18) and left his first house to his son, Rumaldo, identified on Trujillo's map as owner of the southeast corner house. (This house is not surveyed separately from Víctor Ortega's property on the Land Survey map.) Rumaldo married Rosarito Rodríguez of Truchas, a redhead whose genes remained in the Plaza in their son Melquiádes, known as "Tio Red" by his nieces.<sup>12,13</sup> They sold their house to the Presbyterian Church and left the Plaza in the 1920's to move to "El Ranchito" near Centinela, filing for land under the *pequeñas tenencias*, or Small Holding Claims.<sup>14</sup>

### East Side

The eastern side of the Plaza was owned mostly by the Martínez and Naranjo families. Eulógio Martínez was the patriarch of the Martínez family, remembered as a kindly and occasionally stern old man with striking blue eyes. Melita Ortega recalled passing by him as he sat outside his spinster daughter's house (Pabla Martínez) nursing a chronically-injured leg and watching passers-by.<sup>15</sup> Eulogio's origins remain unclear. He may have come

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<sup>11</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 (not recorded)

<sup>12</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>13</sup> Rumaldo and Rosarito had four sons: Felix, Melquiades, Severino (who died during a flu epidemic), and Anastacio. Melita Ortega interview, 9/14/90

<sup>14</sup> Stella Chávez Usner interview, 1/91, not recorded. I am not sure if the *pequeñas tenencias* referred to Small Holding Claims or Homesteading.

<sup>15</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/22./90

from "down below" in Chimayó;<sup>16</sup> one informant thought he was distantly related to the Ortegas,<sup>17</sup> while another was certain he was a descendent of the Martínez family that had settled in Chimayó before the Pueblo Revolt.<sup>18</sup> His extensive landholdings in the area suggest that he was a descendent of the original Martínezes. He was married to Juliana Jaramillo, a daughter of Teófilo Jaramillo of Chimayó and Juanita Martínez of Córdova.

Eulógio and Julianita had six children: José Inéz, Nicolás, Pablita, Pula, Juanita and Luis.<sup>19,20</sup> José Inéz lived next door to them to the north, and Nicolás divided his father's house (#2) lengthwise to live in the section facing the Plaza (#2A) while his father lived in the outer half (#2B). Nicolás operated a small store on the Plaza for a time after Víctor Ortega's store (#32) had fallen into decline, and was well-known for his annual production of *miel de caña* just outside the Plaza (see Food, below). He married Luicita Martínez, from Santa Cruz.<sup>21</sup> His brother José Inéz married Francesquita Ortega, the daughter of José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta--the "other" José Ramón, who lived just outside the west wall of the Plaza (#33).<sup>22</sup> José Inéz and Francesquita lived beside the road (#3).

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<sup>16</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>17</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>18</sup> Stella Chávez Usner interview, 12/30/90 (not recorded)

<sup>19</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>20</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 1/2/91 (not recorded)

<sup>21</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>22</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/22/90

Proceeding around the Plaza counter-clockwise, across the Camino Real is the house originally owned by Reyes Naranjo (#4). Reyes was a step-son to Desiderio Ortega (#28), José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta's brother. He had short, white hair and liked to be told he looked like Dwight Eisenhower.<sup>23</sup> He was a Justice or a Judge, as one person remembered a hearing taking place at his house.<sup>24</sup> His father, whose name was not revealed in this research, and his mother, Pabla Naranjo ("Mana Pabla" to many Chimayó residents<sup>25</sup>), were from Santa Cruz; his mother was remarried to Desiderio. Familiarity with José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta's family must have influenced Reyes in his decision to marry Encarnación Ortega, José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta's daughter. This meant that Encarnación, who was known in Chimayó as "Chonita," lived next to her sister Francesquita (#3).<sup>26</sup> Encarnación and Reyes had six children on the Plaza, two of which, Eduardo and Gaspar remained there for some time.<sup>27</sup> The Naranjos, fathers and sons alike, were very active politically and Reyes was especially close to Víctor Ortega (#32), a fellow outspoken Republican on the Plaza. Eduardo opened a store on the Plaza after Víctor's store had closed and for a short time operated a filling station there.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>24</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

<sup>25</sup> "Mana" is a diminutive of "hermana," an affectionate, informal adjective that does not necessarily reflect familial relationship.

<sup>26</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>27</sup> The children, in addition to Gaspar and Eduardo, were: Bersabé, Amada, Vínces, and Raquel, who died as an infant. Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>28</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90.

The next house to the north on the east side of the Plaza (#5) belonged to Bonefacia Ortega, José Ramón Ortega's spinster daughter. This was her *dispensa*, or storage building.<sup>29</sup> Next door to it is a building referred to on Trujillo's map as "First Presbyterian Mission School," (#5A) the first school-house for the Mission teachers in Chimayó who came in 1900. The Land Survey maps only one parcel of land here and does not delineate the two separate buildings on Bonefacia's property. The room was loaned to the teachers by Bonefacia,<sup>30</sup> and the first land survey of the Plaza identifies it as her property. Encarnación Rodríguez owned the house to the north (#6) of the school room. Encarnación remains rather enigmatic in terms of her family relations. Most informants remembered her simply as "Mana Encarnación," an old woman who lived alone, and they recall nothing of her family history.<sup>31</sup> The Land Survey map identifies this property as belonging to Pedro Cruz, assignee of Encarnación Rodríguez, but their relationship is unclear.<sup>32</sup> This house has not been maintained since Bonefacia's death in 1953 and has now fallen down.

### North Side

The north side of the Plaza was owned by a diversity of families and is the most difficult to sort out in terms of residence and ownership. A number of rooms bear no ownership name on Trujillo's map, suggesting that these

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<sup>29</sup>This building collapsed in early January 1991.

<sup>30</sup> Stella Chávez Usner interview, 1/91 not recorded.

<sup>31</sup> Encarnación is known to have had a daughter named Libradita who moved to Nambé. Stella Chávez Usner interview, 9/91, not recorded.

<sup>32</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

buildings may have been abandoned by the time he made the map. It may also be that they were simply not used as residences but were kept as storage rooms or had other purposes. The map of the US Land Survey provide clues to ownership of these buildings.

A small opening at the northeast corner of the Plaza separated Encarnación Rodríguez's house from Bonefacia's. Ownership of this piece of property is assigned to Nicolás Trujillo, Assignee of José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo, on the Land Survey map (#7). Only one informant could remember a building occupying this opening in the Plaza, now partially filled by a house belonging to a descendent of Nicolás Trujillo.

The eastern house on the north side (#8) belonged to Bonefacia Ortega. Bonefacia inherited this house from her father, José Ramón Ortega, who had moved there from the south side because he needed more space for his family of fourteen. According to Melita Ortega, José Ramón, who built this house, was affectionately known to his numerous grandchildren as "mi Tatita," an endearing diminutive of "Tatabuelo," or Great-grandfather. He married Petra Maestas of Santa Cruz, daughter of "Güero" Maestas, the boisterous and unabashed Irishman who somehow ended up being adopted into a Santa Cruz family as a young boy. Petra inherited his fair skin and freckles.<sup>33</sup> Legends of "El Güero" ("the Blonde One") are still told and retold.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/8/90

<sup>34</sup> The story of El Güero is deserving of a thesis itself. He is said to have been a sole survivor of a wagon train massacre, rescued by some Ciboleros from Santa Cruz hunting the plains. Other stories claim he was kidnapped by Indians and traded into a Santa Cruz family. Other versions are told also.

Many of José Ramón Ortega and Petra Maestas's children were to play an important part in Plaza political, economic and social life. The children were (common name in italics): María *Librada* (1853), María *Plácida* de Los Angeles (1855), María *Leonides* Tiburcia (1857), *Victor* de Jesus (1859), José *Rumaldo* (1861), Manuel *Felix* (1863), José de los *Reyes* (1865), María *Epimenia* (1864), María *Epifania* (1869), María *Escolastica* (1871), María *Bonefacia* (1873), José Enicacio [*Nicacio*] (1875), María *Francesca* (1878), and María *Senaida* (1880).<sup>35</sup> Felix died as a young boy from a fall off of a horse and Epifania died as a child. Víctor became the Postmaster and owner of the Plaza's General Store, a director of the local School (and owner of the property it stood on), Probate Judge (*Juéz de Pruebas*), and an influential politician who attended the first Constitutional Convention in Santa Fe and often met with County officials.<sup>36</sup> Reyes and Nicacio were pioneers in the weaving industry in Chimayó. Nicacio owned a general store just outside the Plaza and his grandchildren still own and operate the weaving shop he started. Reyes was also a *Juéz de Paz* (Justice of the Peace) and a director of the Public School. Rumaldo was also a weaver and an Hermano Mayor in the local Penitente chapter. The Ortega sons were known in Chimayó as *riqitos* --the moderately wealthy class of Chimayó.<sup>37</sup>

José Ramón's daughters were no less important; Bonefacia was an extremely devout and individualistic spinster who maintained the Plaza

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<sup>35</sup> Ortega family papers, courtesy of Stella Chávez Usner

<sup>36</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

<sup>37</sup> People in many interviews referred to the Ortegas as the *ricos*, *riqitos*, or *patrones* of the Plaza. Santos Ortiz, who lived near the Plaza to the west, was also occasionally referred to as a *rico* (see Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90)



Chapel (the *Oratorio* ) for decades and led the local Carmelitas (Carmelites) in their annual observance of the Mes de María rituals (see Religion, below).<sup>38</sup> She was also famed as a hardworking and efficient *enjaradora* , or plasterer--a task reserved for women of the community--in spite of her deformed and crippled left hand.<sup>39,40</sup> Her sister Francesca (known as Francesquita) married Isidoro Trujillo of Rio Chiquito (her first cousin because his mother was María Antonia Ortega, José Ramón's sister) and brought weaving to the Trujillo family. The Trujillos settled in the Centinela neighborhood one mile northeast of the Plaza in the early 1900's and are well-know weavers in Centinela and Chimayó to this day.<sup>41</sup> Escolastica was closely involved with the management of Manuel Martínez's store in Truchas and was known as a sharp businesswoman.<sup>42</sup>

As well as leaving a legacy of grandchildren, the numerous José Ramón Ortega children also linked the Ortega clan with a wide network of families both within and outside of Chimayó. Senaida married Severiano Trujillo of Rincón, Leonides married Timoteo Martínez of lower Chimayó, and Escolástica married Santiago Martínez of Truchas. The far-flung Ortega cousins made regular trips to the Plaza for visits and these familial connections were important bonds between communities.

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<sup>38</sup> A man who had killed his first wife once proposed to Bonefacia, but she bravely refused. (Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/22/90)

<sup>39</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview 9/8/90

<sup>40</sup> Birth defects such as this were attributed to the influence of the moon during pregnancy (Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/14/90).

<sup>41</sup> Irvin Trujillo interview, 10/90.

<sup>42</sup> David Ortega interview 9/23/90

West of Bonefacia's was a narrow alleyway or *callejón*, which is not noted on the Survey Map. The *callejón* provided Plaza residents with access to the Ortega Ditch and was a major point of ingress and egress from the Plaza to the fields as well as a route for drinking and irrigation water.<sup>43, 44</sup> Next to it on Trujillo's map is the house that belonged to Don Pedro Cruz and his wife Doña Maclovia ("Doña Maque") (#9). Ownership of this land is assigned to Heirs of Carmen Ortega on the US Land Survey map and to Doroteo and Carmelita Cruz on Trujillo's map. Interview sources identified Carmen ("Mana Carmen") as the mother of Victoriano and Pedro Cruz and the sister of Pabla Naranjo Ortega.<sup>45</sup> It is curious that she used her maiden name on land records.<sup>46</sup> As far as anyone remembers, Carmen apparently was not related to the other Ortegas on the Plaza.<sup>47</sup> Maclovia came from near Dixon, in the Embudo area.<sup>48</sup> Pedro and Maclovia had no land and were among the poor of the Plaza. She worked for other people in their houses and he hired out for farm labor.<sup>49</sup> They had several children, including Doroteo. Pedro Cruz was remembered as an old man with a mustache and a cane who

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<sup>43</sup> Some people believe that the *callejones* represent the original entrances to the Plaza. (Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90; see also, Boyd, 1971, p. 179)

<sup>44</sup> The *callejón* provided access to the Martínez Ditch, the Los Ranchos Ditch, or the Santa Cruz River, when the Ortega Ditch was not flowing due to a washout of the *presa* in the canyon; there were continual problems with the *presa*. (Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90)

<sup>45</sup> Stella Chávez Usner interview, 1/91, not recorded.

<sup>46</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>47</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90; Benigna commented that Bonefacia, known for her propensity of keeping track of history and genealogy, had told her this.

<sup>48</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>49</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

walked with his feet turned out.<sup>50</sup> He and many of the Cruz family had blue eyes. Doroteo inherited the house and had many children. He was a local barber of sorts, cutting hair for 50 cents. <sup>51</sup> None of the children elected to remain on the Plaza and the buildings are falling into ruin.

The room next to the Cruz's (#10) is unidentified on Trujillo's map but is assigned to Benigna Naranjo<sup>52</sup> on the Land Survey map. Naranjo owned land farther west on this side of the Plaza and this may have been an unused building belonging to her. The following room (#11) bears the enigmatic name "Mana Nela." No one in any interview was able to identify a person who went by this name. This room is recorded on US Surveyor General's Office maps as belonging to Ruperto Martínez, who lived with his wife, Benigna Naranjo, farther west on this side of the Plaza (#16), according to Trujillo's map.

To the west of "Mana Nela's" house is an empty house (#12) on Trujillo's map. The Survey assigned it to Tomacita T. Martínez, who owned a building farther west (#17) and is discussed below.

Both maps agree on the ownership of the next parcel, assigned to Anastacia T. Martínez, who lived there with her husband, Manuel "Vilí" Martínez. It appears that there were two buildings (#13 and #14) on this one piece of surveyed property; Trujillo's map leaves one building without own-

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<sup>50</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 8/30/90

<sup>51</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 8/30/90

<sup>52</sup> This name is spelled three different ways on the US Survey maps: Yenina Naranjo, Benina Naranjo, and Benigna Naranjo! Other names (such as "Relles" Naranjo), are also misspelled.

ership. Manuel apparently came from "down below" in Chimayó<sup>53</sup> but he apparently was not related to Eulógio or the other Martínezes on the east side of the Plaza, according to the people interviewed. He was killed at a dance while buying piñon nuts for his children. Anastacia's familial relationships remain unclear. <sup>54</sup>

On Trujillo's map, the vacant house (#14) is followed by a small parcel belonging to Vidál Trujillo (#15). Vidál was an owner on the west side of the Plaza (see below). This parcel is unassigned on the Survey map, though a hand-drawn arrow to Anastacia and Manuel's property suggests that it belonged to them. Vidal's granddaughter could remember her father owning property on the north side of the Plaza.<sup>55</sup> It is a small, garage-sized room that belongs to an heir of Vidál and Pedro today.

Next door to the west lived Ruperto and Benigna Martínez, a point on which both the official and the folk map agree (#16). Benigna was a sister of Reyes Naranjo, who resided on the east side of the Plaza. The survey assigns the property to her by her maiden name, suggesting that it belonged to her before her marriage. She was married to a Martínez on three different occasions. Her first husband was Marcos Martínez, with whom she had a daughter, Genoveva. She was then married to Andrés Martines and they had Apolonita and Margarito. Her third husband, Ruperto Martínez, was also previously

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<sup>53</sup> For an explanation of the various neighborhood, or barrios of Chimayó, see *Historic Settlement of Chimayó*, above.

<sup>54</sup> Manuel Vilí and Anastacia had at least two children, Monica and Manuel. (Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90).

<sup>55</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

married.<sup>56</sup> Their son, Rumaldo inherited the house and lived there with his wife, Brigida, who remained in the house until her death in the 1980's.

Tomacita Martínez is listed next to the west on both Trujillo's and the Land Survey map (# 17). Tomacita and her husband Manuel were brother and sister; Tomacita married Patricio Martínez, a brother of Ruperto Martínez (#16). It is unclear if they lived in this location on the Plaza. On the northwest corner, both maps agree on the ownership of Juan M. Ortega and his wife Apolonita (#s 18 and 19), although the Survey map also shows a small wedge of property belonging to José Inéz Martínez y Trujillo (# 20), a resident of the west side of the Plaza (see below). One piece (#19) was assigned to Juan M. by Rumaldo Ortega (#1). Apolonita was Benigna Naranjo's (#6) daughter by her first husband and Juan M. Ortega was Rumaldo Ortega's son, or José Ramón Ortega's (#8) grandson. Thus the union of Juan M. and Apolonita formed a link between the Naranjos and the José Ramón Ortegas. As far as people remember, Juan Melquiádes and Apolonita didn't live at this location on the corner next to her mother, however. Juan M., as he was known, kept his weaving looms here and lived on the west side of the Plaza.<sup>57</sup>

### West Side

Coming around to the west side of the Plaza, the house on the northwest corner (#21) bears the intriguing statement "First House on the Plaza" on Trujillo's map. This is earliest generation to which Trujillo assigned ownership on his map, but nobody interviewed was able to give a reason for his

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<sup>56</sup> Harold Martínez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>57</sup> Domitila Villa remembers that there was once a school room in one of Melquiades' rooms on the Plaza, and that another one once was used as a bar (Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90)

belief that this was the oldest house on the Plaza. However, it has often been said that Gervacio Ortega deeded the land for the Plaza to a number of settlers.<sup>58</sup> At first this seems impossible, since Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega's father, was born in 1801, long after the Plaza is thought to have been established.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, there may be some truth to the statement if one considers that it may have been Gervacio's father or grandfather--Manuel or Gabriel--who deeded the land.

In any case, informants recalled this house (#21) as originally belonging to Gervacio Ortega (spelled "Jerbacio" on Trujillo's map) and his wife Guadalupe Vigil. Gervacio's grandfather was Gabriel Ortega, the first Ortega to settle in the Chimayó area (see Documentary History of the Plaza, above). Guadalupe, though not known to anyone interviewed, is remembered by the José Ramón Ortega grandchildren as "mi Madre Vigila," from Cundiyo. Vidál Trujillo was Gervacio's grandson and he and his wife Urbanita Martínez (spelled "Hurbanita" on Trujillo's map) had come into ownership of the house by the time of my oldest informants' memories. Vidál was a son of Concepción Trujillo, the venerable patriarch of the large Trujillo family of Rio Chiquito, and a grandson of Guadalupe through his mother, María Antonia Ortega Trujillo, Guadalupe and Gervacio's daughter. He grew up on the Plaza with his Grandmother.<sup>60</sup> Vidál had four children: Pedro, Sabino (who drew the map), Julianita and Eusebia. All of these moved to land very near the Plaza.

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<sup>58</sup> This story is repeated in Weigle's reprint of the 1935 Tewa Basin Study (Weigle, 1975:100)

<sup>59</sup> Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91 (not recorded)

<sup>60</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/14/90

Pedro Trujillo inherited this house (#21) from Vidál and is listed as its owner on the Land Survey map.<sup>61</sup> Vidál's granddaughter recalled being told that Vidál and his brothers built the house, a statement which throws into question its supposed antiquity.<sup>62</sup> Pedro's first wife, Celsa, Rumaldo Ortega's (#1) daughter, died at a young age, but this marriage also linked the Trujillos to the Ortegases. Another of Concepción's sons, Isidoro, married into the José Ramón Ortega (#8) family through his union with Francesquita Ortega (not related to the Francesquita Ortega who married José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo!). Thus, the Trujillos of the Plaza were closely linked to the José Ramón Ortegases of the Plaza as well as the influential Trujillos of Rio Chiquito and Centinela.

Juan Melquiádes and Apolonita lived in the next house to the south (#22), assigned to Juan M. by his father, Rumaldo. Juan M. must have purchased the room next door to the south (#23) from José Inéz Martínez y Trujillo, identified as its owner on Survey maps.<sup>63</sup> Juan grew a garden inside the Plaza in front of his house, long after the rest of the Plaza garden space was abandoned. In addition to garden crops, he grew and sold *punche*, the local, harsh tobacco.<sup>64</sup> Juan M.'s children left the Plaza and his house is now empty.

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<sup>61</sup> Vidál's granddaughter, Domitila Villa, also believes that Vidál inherited this house from "his grandmother from Rio Chiquito." (Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90)

<sup>62</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>63</sup> This transfer may also explain the presence of a parcel assigned to Jose Inéz Martínez y Trujillo on Land Survey maps; apparently Juan M. acquired both pieces from Jose Inéz.

<sup>64</sup> Their children included Ismael, Ambrosio (died in youth), Adonisa, Elsie, Lourdes, Ambrosio (who survived to adulthood), Eustolia, Ester (died in youth), Benigna, and Eleanor (who also died in youth). Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/8/90

José Inéz Martínez y Trujillo owned the house (#24) on the opposite side of the Camino Real from Juan Melquiádes. This José Inéz was completely unrelated to José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo (#3), directly across the Plaza. Martínez y Trujillo married Martina DeaGüero from Plaza Abajo. He was a second cousin to the José Ramón Ortegas (#8) through his mother, a Trujillo, and José Ramón Ortega's children referred to him as "Primo José Inéz."<sup>65</sup> He was also a cousin to John Trujillo because he was a grandson of Concepción Trujillo and María Antonia Ortega.<sup>66</sup> José Inéz and Martina had six children, of which Estevan and Biterbo remained on the Plaza. Estevan inherited the house and lived there with his wife, Cordelia Trujillo of Rincón; his father, José Inéz, moved toward the south end of the west side (#28) at this time.<sup>67,68</sup> Biterbo married Petronila Martínez and lived in her inherited house on the Plaza (#31). José Inéz's house was bought and renovated by Arturo Jaramillo, but is now vandalized and abandoned.

The community chapel, or *Oratorio de San Buenaventura* (#25) occupied the next building to the south. (This communally-maintained place of worship is discussed under Historic Settlement and Plaza Functions.) Its ownership is left blank on Survey maps. Next to the *Oratorio* lived Rafael Martínez and Perfecta Jaramillo (#26). Her father was Pantaleon Jaramillo, and Rafael was a son of Ramóna Martínez, the local midwife more com-

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<sup>65</sup> Martínez y Trujillo's mother may have been a sister to Isidoro Trujillo.

<sup>66</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

<sup>67</sup> Cordelia Martínez interview, 1/2/91 (not recorded)

<sup>68</sup> There is a considerable disagreement between the oral record and the Survey map here. The latter assigns a house on the southwest Plaza to José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo-- the Jose Inéz from the east side of the Plaza.



monly known as "Mana Mona." Perfecta's brother, Francisco, lived three rooms to the south from Perfecta and Rafael on property surveyed as belonging to Rafael (#29). One person remembered this solitary bachelor's quarters as "el cuarto del Pancho," Francisco's nickname.<sup>69</sup> Immediately adjacent to Rafael and Perfecta lived Desiderio Ortega and Pablita (# 27). Pablita was Reyes Naranjo's (#4) and Juan Naranjo's mother by her first marriage and Desiderio was a brother to José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta (#33). On the Survey map, this parcel is assigned to Isidora Naranjo, assignee of Desiderio Ortega. Isidora was Pablita's daughter and thus a sister to Reyes Naranjo. This is followed by an empty house on Trujillo's map (#28), which is assigned to José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo by Desiderio Ortega--the "east-side" José Inéz--on the Survey map. This José Inéz was married to Desiderio's niece, Francesquita. Some people remember this José Inéz as living for a time near the southwest corner of the Plaza, having moved there from his house by the road (#3).<sup>70</sup>

At the southwest corner of the Plaza was a room that Sabino noted was "presumably" used as the first Mission teacher's living quarters (#30). The Land Survey map identifies this as belonging to a Joséfía Martínez, assignee of Eulógio Martínez. No informant could identify Joséfía Martínez.

### South Side

Around on the south side of the Plaza, Antonio Martínez and Seferina Vigil owned the first building (#31). Seferina was from Cundiyo and Antonio

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<sup>69</sup> Melita Ortega interview,

<sup>70</sup> Cordelia Martínez interview, 10/6/90; Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90. Again, there is a discrepancy between the Survey map and interview sources on this (see above).

was from "down below" in Chimayó.<sup>71</sup> He was a brother to Urbanita Martínez Trujillo, Vidál Trujillo's (#21) wife. Their daughter, Petronila, is the only current resident of the Plaza who was born and raised there. To this day she lives in the house in which she was raised. She had two sisters and one brother. She had four children by her first husband, Biterbo, who was a son of José Inéz Martínez y Trujillo (#24) and a brother to Estevan Martínez.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, Víctor Ortega and his wife Refúgio Jaramillo owned the massive, long, center building on the south side of the Plaza (#32). Refúgio was a sister to Simona Jaramillo, who married José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta; this created a marriage link between the two José Ramón Ortega clans. Refúgio's father was Teófilo Jaramillo, born in 1824, and her mother was María Juana Martínez, born in 1830.<sup>73</sup> This would make her a sister also to Julianita Jaramillo Martínez, Eulógio's wife (#2). Thus, there was a trio of Jaramillo sisters who married Plaza residents. As mentioned, Victor was a son of José Ramón Ortega (#8) who rose to considerable prominence in Plaza life. "Victór was a rich man," Amada Trujillo says. "He had horses and a buggy."<sup>74</sup> He was a large, forceful man with a knack for business and hard work. This building was the General Store and Post Office for many years beginning as far back as any of my informants could remember. It was an important economic and so-

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<sup>71</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>72</sup> Their children were Filimon, Gilbert, Merlene and Lawrence.

<sup>73</sup> Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90

<sup>74</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

cial center and brought residents from all over Chimayó to the Plaza on business.<sup>75</sup> It is discussed in more detail under Plaza Functions (below).

There was only one house inside the Plaza when the two maps were made. This belonged to a Luicita Ortega ("Señora Luicita"), who was a Tía of Don Pedro Cruz and a sister to Carmen Ortega (#37). She had two children and is identified on the Land Survey map as María Luisa Ortega. She assigned her land to Benigna Naranjo, though their relationship is unclear. Her daughter Pablita married Juan Duran and lived in La Cuchilla. Her son's name was Juan María Ortega, who moved to the Dixon area.<sup>76</sup> Her relationship to the other Ortegas on the Plaza remains unclear but informants did not recall any relation to José Ramón Ortega.

#### Nearby Residents

In addition to these Plaza residents, a number of individuals and families who were also very important in its affairs lived close-by the Plaza. Their presence on Trujillo's map is testimony to their relevance and importance in Plaza life. Foremost among these were probably José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta and his wife Simona, who lived just west of the Plaza (#33). José Ramón was a *Juéz de Paz* (Justice of the Peace) and was long the primary caretaker of the Oratorio on the Plaza, until his conversion to Protestantism. As mentioned, his daughter, Francesquita, lived on the Plaza, having married into the Martínez family, and his wife's sister, Refúgio, was married to Víctor Ortega. His son Felix owned land inside the Plaza and was the only person who lived

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<sup>75</sup> The area served by the post office extended from La Puebla to Rio Chuiquito to Potrero (Weigle, p. 92)

<sup>76</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/14/90

outside the Plaza and owned land within. Felix (#35) lived on one side of Ortega y Abeyta and his brother Agapito (#34) lived on the other side. The striking poverty of Agapito's life was noted by some people, suggesting that Ortega y Abeyta's prosperity was not shared with his family. Agapito owned no property, slept on the floor and cooked only in an open fireplace, long after woodstoves were the norm.<sup>77</sup>

Also nearby the Plaza was the home of Vidál and Urbanita Trujillo (#36), who owned a second house inside the Plaza. This L-shaped house is better remembered as the home of Juliana and Eusebia Trujillo, Vidál Trujillo's daughters, who lived there and raised Vidál's orphaned grandchildren, Domitila and Urbanita. The presence of the Presbyterian Mission school east of the Plaza also can't be overlooked on Trujillo's map. Its influence is discussed under Education, below.

A final interesting note on Plaza residents is the fact that transient people not at all related to Chimayó people sometimes settled on the Plaza. Such was the case with Manuel Silva, a travelling *maromero*, or acrobat and all-around performer. He was from Mexico and lived on the north side of the Plaza for a few years in the house marked "Vidál Trujillo" (#15) on Trujillo's map, probably in the 1920's.<sup>78</sup> Other short-term residents included Charles and Mary Barrows. Barrows (known as "El Chuca"--a local way to pronounce "Chuck") was a government-hired hunter who trapped skunks (*sorillos*), and other animals around Chimayó for several years.<sup>79</sup> There are probably

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<sup>77</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>78</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview

<sup>79</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

other Plaza residents who came and went in a similar fashion, but these were the minority. The Plaza was dominated by stable family clans for the most part.

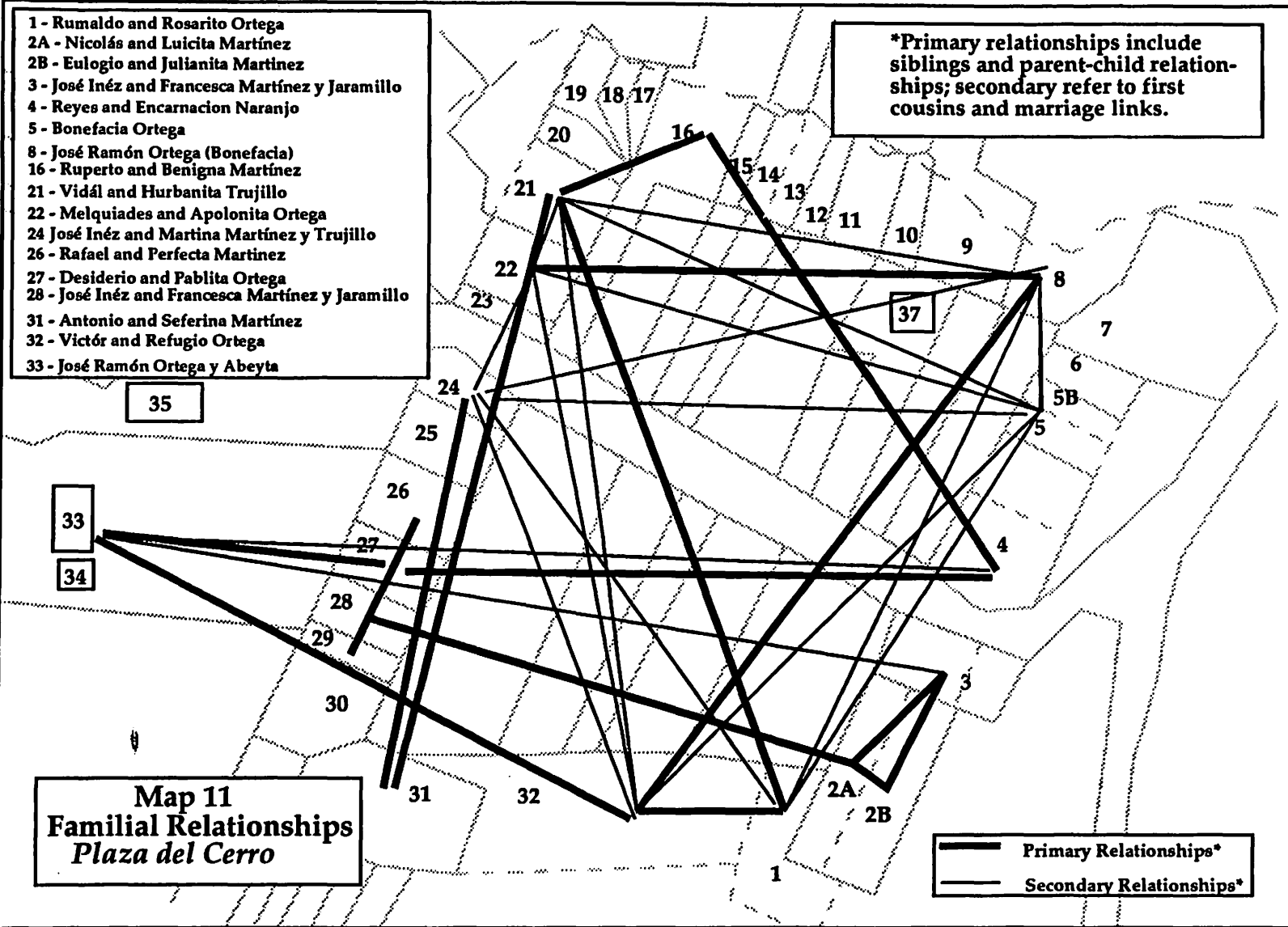
From the above discussion, it can be seen that Plaza residents were closely interrelated and that the José Ramón Ortegas were particularly well-established and connected with other Plaza residents. Besides three siblings owning land on the Plaza, the family was closely linked to the Trujillos of the Plaza. They were more distantly linked to the Naranjos, through Apolonita's marriage to Juan Melquiádes, and to the Ortega y Abeytas through marriage. The Naranjos were also linked by blood and marriage to many Plaza residents, including both the Martínez y Trujillos and the Ortega y Abeytas. The Plaza was practically one big family! The pattern of relationships of Plaza families is illustrated on Map 11.

### **Plaza Relationships and Land Ownership**

The layout and ownership of land parcels in and around the Plaza reflects the history of settlement in the area. The lots in and around the Plaza are mostly divided up in long strips extending from the Ortega Ditch, a characteristic pattern in northern New Mexico. The ditch takes a sharp right-angle turn around the Plaza and lots on the west side of the Plaza extend away from the ditch to the west. The north-south lots are interrupted by the Plaza, which strongly suggests that the lots preceded the construction of the Plaza, a notion that documentary evidence supports (see Historic Settlement, above). Most of the north-south lots outside the Plaza belong to Ortega descendents, which supports the idea that the land inside the Plaza once belonged to the Ortegas.

- 1 - Rinaldo and Rosarito Ortega
- 2A - Nicolás and Luicita Martínez
- 2B - Eulogio and Julianita Martínez
- 3 - José Inéz and Francesca Martínez y Jaramillo
- 4 - Reyes and Encarnacion Naranjo
- 5 - Bonefacia Ortega
- 8 - José Ramón Ortega (Bonefacia)
- 16 - Ruperto and Benigna Martínez
- 21 - Vidál and Hurbanita Trujillo
- 22 - Melquiades and Apolonita Ortega
- 24 José Inéz and Martina Martínez y Trujillo
- 26 - Rafael and Perfecta Martinez
- 27 - Desiderio and Pablita Ortega
- 28 - José Inéz and Francesca Martínez y Jaramillo
- 31 - Antonio and Seferina Martínez
- 32 - Víctor and Refugio Ortega
- 33 - José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta

**\*Primary relationships include siblings and parent-child relationships; secondary refer to first cousins and marriage links.**



**Map 11**  
**Familial Relationships**  
*Plaza del Cerro*

**Primary Relationships\***  
**Secondary Relationships\***

Though there is a continuation of the same north-south orientation of lots inside the Plaza, there is no linear correspondence between the owners of the strips of land inside and outside of the Plaza. This is an indication that the inner lots were sold, traded and passed down in no relation to the outside plots and may have been valued quite differently. They are smaller than outside plots. The largest interior plots belong to the descendents of José Ramón Ortega (#8).

It is curious and perhaps more than coincidental that the interior consists of strips of land belonging alternately to Ortegases and Martínezes or their descendents, the first two families to own land in the Plaza area. This could be an artifact of the way the original landowners elected to divide the interior space. Perhaps the Ortega and Martínez patriarchs of the day agreed to grant--or sell--land for the houses on the Plaza and retained ownership of the interior land in alternate strips. This would allow the landowners to continue controlling the land wealth of the area while insuring the survival of the community through common defense. It would also leave many homeowners on the Plaza landless and forced to work for the people who owned land.

Indeed, not everyone who owned a house on the Plaza also owned land inside. There were a total of thirty-two houses or rooms around the Plaza, owned by twenty people. Of the owners of these units, the following had no land inside the Plaza: Seferina Martínez, Pedro Cruz, Ruperto Martínez, Tomacita T. Martínez, Anastacia T. Martínez, José Inéz Martínez y Trujillo, Rafael Martínez, Isidora Naranjo, and Joséfía P. Martínez (Table 1).

In terms of actual numbers, the total land area surveyed inside the Plaza is a tiny 1.64 acres divided among 10 owners. Of this, .81 acres, or nearly 50%, belonged to descendents of José Ramón Ortega y Vigil. Extending back in time, to possible heirs of Gervacio Ortega (thus including Hurbanita Trujillo, an heir by marriage to Vidál), the total Ortega land goes up to .92 acres, 56% of the total. Extending another generation back, to Gabriel Ortega (thus including both José Ramón Ortega families, and Felix Ortega's parcels), 63% (1.04 acres) belonged to Ortega heirs (See Table 2 and Map 10). Most of the remainder of the land inside the Plaza (.40 acres, or 24% of the total) belonged to descendents of Eulogio Martínez. Thus, the majority of the land inside the Plaza was divided between these two families.<sup>80</sup>

If the total acreage of the house lots on the Plaza is considered, the dominance these two families is less clear; of approximately 1.8 surveyed acres of house lots, only .41 acres (23%) belonged to descendents of Gervacio Ortega [Victór Ortega (#32), Bonefacia Ortega (#8, 5), Rumaldo Ortega (1), Juan M. Ortega (#18, 19, 22), and Pedro Trujillo (#21)] (Table 1). This may indicate that land, which could be used to produce sustenance and wealth, was more valuable than a dwelling on the Plaza by the early 20th Century. It may also indicate that the Plaza buildings turned over more often and were sold or traded outside of family lines than landholdings.

On land immediately surrounding the Plaza, there is again a striking degree of dominance in ownership by a few families (Map 10). Large parcels in the vicinity of the Plaza were all owned by José Ramón Ortegas. When land

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<sup>80</sup> Only Benigna Naranjo could not be traced to Eulogio Martínez or Gabriel Ortega ancestry. However, she married three men named Martínez and, though their relationship to the other Plaza Martínezes is unclear, one of them may have been related.



Table 1: Homeowners on the Plaza del Cerro

<u>Survey Number</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Name/Map Number</u>	<u>Acerage</u> <sup>2</sup>
5015 (2, 3)	Bonefacia Ortega (5,8)	.012
5897 (1)	Pedro Cruz (6)*	.03
5607 (1)	Jose Inéz Martinez y Jaramillo (7)	.05
5666 (1)	Nicolás/Eulogio Martinez (2A,B)	.02
5606 (4)	Josefia Martinez (30)*	.08
5364 (1)	Jose Inéz Martinez y Jaramillo (3)	.07
5046 (1)	Reyes Naranjo (4)	.13
5034 (1)	Carmen Ortega (9)	.08
6199 (1)	Benigna Naranjo (10)	.03
6192 (1)	Ruperto Martinez (11)*	.05
6193 (1)	Tomacita Martinez (12)*	.02
6196 (2)	Anastacia Martinez (13,14)	.12
??	Vidal Trujillo (15)	.05
5041 (2)	Benigna Naranjo (16)	.08
5742 (1)	Tomacita Martinez	.02
5033,6181	Juan M. Ortega (18,19,22)	.06
5647 (1,2, 3)	Jose Inéz Martinez y Trujillo (20,24, 23)*	.06
??	Oratorio	.05
5489 (3)	Pedro Trujillo (21)*	.08
6197 (1 and 2)	Rafael Martinez (26,29)*	.08
5040 (3, 4)	Desiderio Ortega (27, 28)	.09
5018 (2)	Antonio Martinez (31)*	.08
5017 (2)	Victór Ortega (32)	.20
5033 (2)	Rumaldo Ortega (1)*	.05
<sup>1</sup> US Land Survey tract numbers.	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b> *No land inside Plaza.	<b><u>1.59</u></b> <sup>2</sup> Estimate

Table 2: Landowners in the Plaza del Cerro Area

Name	Tract Numbers <sup>1</sup>	Acerage
Bonefacia Ortega	5015	.31
*Nicolas Martinez	*5666	.15*
Rumaldo Ortega	6180	.07
	5633	.20
*Eulogio Martinez	*5606	.14*
*J.Y Martinez/Jaramillo	*5897	.11*
Felix Ortega	5032	.08
	5645	.04
Benigna Naranjo	5264	.11
	5041	.05
	5041	.04 (approx.)
Juan M. Ortega	6181	.14
	6195	.03
	5033	.06
Hurbanita Trujillo	5489	.11
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>		<b><u>1.64</u></b>
HIGH	5015	.31
LOW	6195	.03
<b>Gabriel Ortega Heirs</b>		<b>1.04 (63%)</b>
*E. Martinez Heirs		.40 (24%)

<sup>1</sup>Refers to US Land  
Survey tract numbers.

belonging to Gervacio Ortega's offspring is mapped, including descendents through his daughter's marriage into the Trujillo family, there is an even higher degree of dominance in land ownership in and around the Plaza by this extended family. When descendents of Eulógio Martínez (#2) are marked, it is clear that this family, in addition to the Ortegases, was an important and dominant landowning family around the Plaza.

The evidence strongly suggests that land ownership pattern in and around the Plaza is a reflection of the historical precedence of the Ortega and Martínez families in the Plaza area.<sup>81</sup> The Martínez family land was concentrated east of the Plaza while the Ortegases owned land on the immediately north and south of the Plaza as well as most land within the Plaza. This overlay of the Plaza onto previous land ownership patterns hints of a very early *patrón* type role for the Ortega and perhaps the Martínez family. By controlling land and perhaps selling or trading for plots on the defensible Plaza, the early landowners would have placed themselves in positions of considerable influence. It seems quite possible that such motives prompted the Ortegases and perhaps the Martínezes to foster the building of the Plaza where it is.

Land ownership continued to reflect relative power and influence in the area during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a consequence, it seems more than likely that inequality in the distribution of wealth was a facet of Plaza life in the early 20th Century. Although previous eras may have shown a lesser degree of inequality, by the 1900's this was clearly the case. A few people owned most of the land and many were, for all practical purposes,

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<sup>81</sup> The Martínez family was the first to settle in the Chimayó area, and the Ortegases arrived not long after the re-settlement in the early 1700's and began to acquire property in the area (see Historic Settlement, above).

landless. This was exacerbated by the fact that land had been increasingly divided with successive generations so that by the 20th Century, very few people had enough to support themselves. As one area resident put it, "Most Plaza residents had only a small piece of land. They mostly had just the house, like in the city."<sup>82</sup> Some people who didn't own land rented it from others.<sup>83</sup>

The oral tradition of the Plaza preserves an image of an idyllic and peaceful community of closely-knit people. When pressed, most people acknowledged that there was an unequal distribution of wealth in Chimayó as far back as they could remember, often even within families, and that the male descendants of José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl were clearly the *ricos* of the Plaza. However, they stressed that the wealthier people helped poorer people by giving them food outright or by offering employment. Although many people lacked money and material wealth, nobody suffered for food, according to all the people interviewed.<sup>84</sup> The close familial bonds of the Plaza community assured this kind of mutual aid.

The close bonds also assured a degree of political cooperation among members of the same family line. This is especially true of the Ortega family, where strong Republican men--particularly Víctor Ortega--maintained a high degree of control over local economics partially because of well-developed family connections within and beyond the community. Reyes Naranjo and his family connections countered Víctor with a Democratic political challenge

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<sup>82</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/8/90

<sup>83</sup> Cordelia Martínez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>84</sup> See Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90; Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90.

that had little effect on the Ortega economic dominance. The Martínez family was less involved in politics and didn't seem to make the important transition from land wealth to monetary wealth that the Ortega family did.

The Ortega family web also served as a line of transmission for weaving skills. Long a family tradition, the Ortega brothers, Reyes and Nicacio, transformed the craft into a local industry at the crucial time when the Plaza was undergoing a radical transition from a subsistence and market-oriented economy to a cash economy. Their sister, Francesquita, brought the craft to the Trujillos of Centinela, who also developed it into a cash-earning livelihood.<sup>85</sup> There were many other weavers in Chimayó, but these two families founded the most prosperous and enduring weaving businesses in Chimayó.

Abandonment of the Plaza as a residential space took place in part because of the economic forces affecting the region, which drove people off the land and to the city for employment. The more prosperous younger people left for education. People also left because of new needs and expectations for residential space, moving away from the communal style of living on the Plaza toward single-dwellings outside the Plaza or in town. The Ortega family also began to leave the Plaza, lured by the same socioeconomic factors as the other residents.

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<sup>85</sup> Their aunt, Maria Antonia, who also married into the Trujillo family, may also have had a role in passing weaving to the Trujillos.

## **The Plaza as a Functional Space**

The Plaza was a remarkably united community settlement, functioning on the basis of cooperation and shared interest. Its form of an enclosed square facilitated this unity by providing a central focus for some activities. The most important of these for the Plaza community were the religious activities at the Oratorio. For the larger Chimayó community, the Plaza filled an important role as a business, administrative and educational center, at least in the early decades of this century. It was also an important garden space for subsistence crops, though as an agricultural center, the Plaza itself was of minimal importance in an economic sense. The Plaza, with a total of 1.64 acres of interior space, was much too small to grow commercial crops and was used as a personal garden space only by Plaza landholders. The gardens were well-tended, however, and at least into the 1940's provided a verdant and productive center to the Plaza. The beauty and bounty of these well-kept gardens is remembered well by all who witnessed it.

## **Agricultural Functions**

### **Subsistence Crops**

People in Chimayó still talk of times when "all they needed to buy was coffee and sugar," describing a time when people were able to survive almost entirely off of their farm holdings. In reality, though, the days when Chimayó subsisted on its own products had largely passed by the early 1900's, the earliest date remembered by my eldest informants.

However, small-scale agriculture was still the cornerstone of Chimayó's economy at the turn of the twentieth century and the community

retained a sense of self-sufficiency that lingered from an earlier era. Depression-era economics forced many people to use garden crops for food as much as possible. Plaza residents utilized land for a large surrounding area as well as the small amount within the Plaza. Nearly every informant commented on the beauty of the cultivated interior of the Plaza, with every piece of land cared for even into the 1950's.<sup>1</sup> The word "clean" is used over and over again to describe a Plaza interior that was free of weeds, trees and organic debris. This garden space in the Plaza was an important source of vegetables for residents. There were no fences in the Plaza in the early part of the century, but everyone respected each other's garden area.<sup>2</sup> By the 1950's, there were fences in the south side of the Plaza and others were soon placed in the north half.<sup>3</sup>

The Plaza has always been irrigated by the Ortega Ditch (Map 12), one of the oldest ditch systems in New Mexico. Luis López commented on taking water from this ditch in 1703, and stated then that it had been previously built by Tano Indians.<sup>4</sup> The *presa*, or out-take, for the Ortega Ditch is in the canyon of the Rio Quemado a short distance above the Chimayó valley. The ditch curves northward around the foothills to reach the Plaza. The Plaza was built at its location to be near the ditch (see Historic Settlement, above).

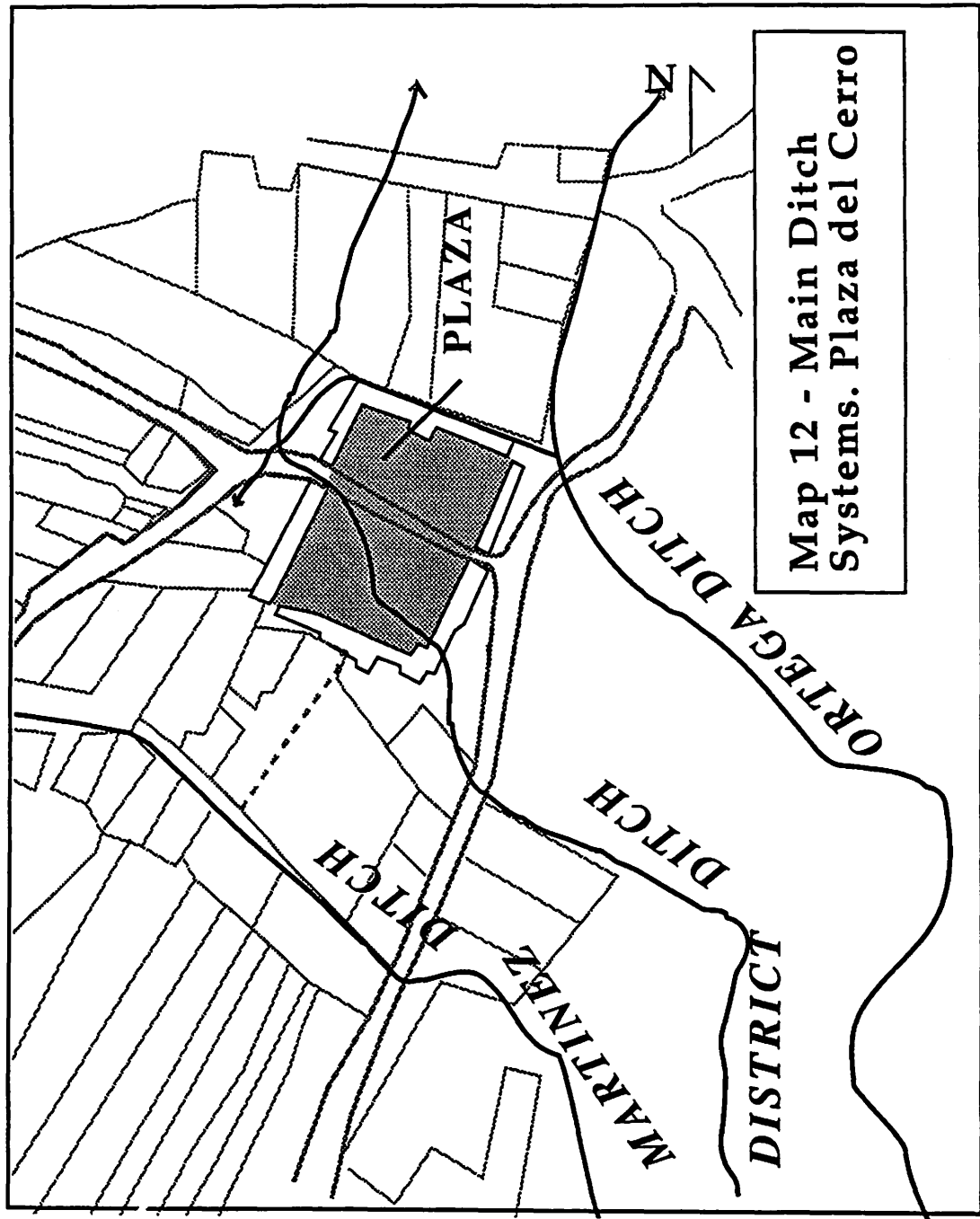
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<sup>1</sup> As late as the mid-1950's, only one piece of property in the Plaza was not planted. (Harold Martinez interview, 9/30/90)

<sup>2</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>3</sup> Harold Martinez interview, 8/30/90

<sup>4</sup> Borrego-Ortega Papers, 10 Sept. 1706.





The larger ditch cutting diagonally across the Plaza is the "District Ditch," built in conjunction with the Santa Cruz Dam and Irrigation District project in the 1920's and 30's. It has never provided irrigation water to the Plaza or environs. The ditch cuts across the Plaza because Víctor Ortega vowed that he would not allow it to cross one inch of his land.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the ditch had to be placed around his large acreage on the south side of the Plaza, and it just barely does so, passing east of his land and then cutting directly under the floor of the SE corner building to cross the Plaza. Some landowners, such as Reyes Ortega, were offered a deal whereby their property taxes would be reduced in exchange for rights of access for the District Ditch.<sup>6</sup> Some people suspect that the placement of the ditch across the Plaza could represent a bit of retribution on the part of the dam promoters against Víctor and other Chimayosos who opposed the dam. Plaza residents resented the ditch. Bonefacia Ortega didn't want the ditch because it would cut all the properties in the Plaza in half.<sup>7</sup> John Trujillo states flatly that the ditch "ruined the Plaza."<sup>8</sup>

According to John Trujillo, a number of springs below Rio Chiquito--the next town upstream on the creek--keep the Rio Quemado running even in the driest of years and assure Plaza residents a good supply of water. This was one of the reasons that Plaza residents saw no need to support a dam

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<sup>5</sup> Usner, Stella Chávez, interview, 5/27/91, not recorded.

<sup>6</sup> Usner, Stella Chávez, interview, 5/27/91, not recorded.

<sup>7</sup> Petronila Martinez interview, 9/21/90

<sup>8</sup> The ditch's route directly across the interior of the Plaza may also simply be the most efficient route for maximizing the irrigable area in the lower valley.

project. However, the *presa* has always been plagued with washouts in severe floods and at least once had to be abandoned for a season while water was diverted from the Cañada Ancha ditch in Centinela to satisfy water needs.<sup>9</sup>

Water was taken from the Ortega Ditch through the north alleyway (*callejón*) of the Plaza and through the east entrance of the Plaza to irrigate the garden space within. It also irrigated most of the surrounding agricultural land of importance to the Plaza residents. Other nearby ditches--the Martínez ditch below the Plaza and the Cañada Ancha ditch in Centinela and Rincón in particular--irrigated nearby farmland. The Ortega Ditch was a source of drinking water for Plaza residents and livestock as well as a place to wash clothing into the 1950's.

Chile was an important crop from both a subsistence and an economic perspective. Chimayó people have always eaten a lot of chile and have been famous for growing the best, most flavorful varieties.<sup>10</sup> Everyone in Chimayó grew chile, and it was a common crop inside the Plaza as well as outside. Families and neighbors usually came together for the important task of tying strings of chile (*ristras*) in the fall. Some families hired women to help tie the *ristras*. They usually did the tying at night, indoors in a *dispensa* (storage building) or a barn, and often buried a watermelon in the pile of chiles as a prize for fast tying. The excitement of this simple game is

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<sup>9</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

<sup>10</sup> The Tewa Basin study noted in 1935 that "Chimayó chile is famous throughout the Southwest." (Wiegler, Marta. *Hispanic Villages of Northern New Mexico : A Reprint of Volume II of the Tewa Basin Study, With Supplementary Materials*. Santa Fé, Lightning Tree Press, 1979, p. 89.)

remembered by many people. This was entertainment and a chance for the Plaza residents to visit and tell stories.<sup>11</sup>

Other garden crops that were important to Plaza residents included corn, squash, melons, pumpkins, onions, garlic, and *alberjones* (chick peas), and *habas* (cow peas). Herbs such as *yerba buena* (spearmint) and cilantro were also cultivated. Melons--cantaloupe and watermelon as well as honeydews--also did well in Chimayó. *Punche* --the local variety of tobacco--was grown and sold by Plaza resident Juan Melquiades.<sup>12</sup> Beans, peas and squashes were not planted in abundance because of bug pests.<sup>13</sup> Garden crops such as carrots, lettuce, cabbage and spinach were not commonly grown in Chimayó until after the Presbyterian Mission was established. Before then, people relied on wild, weedy plants that found their way into the garden, perhaps via the animal dung that was spread on the fields for fertilizer. These opportunistic crops included purslane (*verdolagas*) and wild spinach (*quelites*). People ate these plants extensively in the summer. Later, more familiar garden vegetables, introduced by Ms. Prudence Clark, the first Mission teacher, were grown in and around the Plaza.<sup>14</sup>

Corn was a food crop and was also used as a grain food for pigs and horses. Small plots were grown inside the Plaza and larger fields surrounded it. People came together at harvest time to help each other with the corn

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<sup>11</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/8/90

<sup>12</sup> Harold Martinez interview, 9/30/90; Benigna Chávez interview, 9/8/90

<sup>13</sup> See Wiegler, 1975, p. 90

<sup>14</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

husking and sometimes people with large harvests hired people to help.<sup>15</sup> Members of the extended family and often just neighbors met and sat around a big pile of corn in a dispensa or a barn by lantern light in the Fall. Corn was used to make *posole*, flour for *atole* (a thick, hot drink), and *chaquegue* (a coarse gruel-like cereal).

Chimayó's fruit crop was another important subsistence crop. Fruit trees were a valued sign of wealth in the 19th and early 20th centuries, often parceled out tree by tree (or even branch by branch!) in wills.<sup>16</sup> There were very few trees inside the Plaza, however, that space being reserved for garden crops. Trujillo's map shows only a small enclosure of trees in front of Víctor's store and emphasizes in writing that there were "No Trees in the Plaza."<sup>17</sup> Fruit was grown mostly outside the Plaza and foremost among the fruits grown were apples. The old people remember the old variety of choice, *manzanas mexicanas*, a small, yellow apple rarely grown today. Recalling the flavor of roasted *manzanas mexicanas* brings a smile to all the old people.

Apricots and cherries as well as peaches and pears were dried or canned for winter use. Melons were hung out to dry on a line to make dried melon slices (*tasajos*), which were cooked to make desserts in the winter.<sup>18</sup> Canning was not common until after the Presbyterian Mission was established in

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<sup>15</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

<sup>16</sup> A will dividing up tree limbs was shown to me by Melita Ortega during an interview; it remains in her collection of private papers.

<sup>17</sup> Harold Martinez remembers Melquiades having "an orchard" inside the Plaza, but its location is unclear.

<sup>18</sup> Amada Trujillo interview 9/9/90

Chimayó. The Mission teachers taught the people how to can soon after arriving in 1900. Before then, fruits were mostly dried and stored in sacks or chests, but afterwards people it became more common to can everything, including beans, meat, posole, green chile, fruits, vegetables, jellies and jams.<sup>19</sup>

Documents from the 17th Century suggest that Chimayó was once known for its grapes, but only Víctor Ortega is remembered as having grown grapes in the Plaza, at a small enclosure in front of the store. His brother, Nicacio, was known for making wine from the green grapes that he also grew just outside of the Plaza.<sup>20</sup>

Farm work was generally done by both men and women. Women took over the entire operation when men went away for work, resulting in a breed of very strong, hard-working, women farmers that endures to this day. The Ortega women (wives of the *riquitos* Nicacio, Reyes, Víctor and Rinaldo), however, were never allowed to work in the fields, and this was regarded as a sign of their relative wealth.<sup>21</sup>

Not everyone who lived on the Plaza had the land or the animals to make farming worthwhile. Many--Pedro Cruz, Ruperto Martínez, José Inéz

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<sup>19</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90. Canning was also taught by county agricultural agents of the NM Agricultural Extension Service. However, it was not widely employed in northern New Mexico (because of the expense of pressure cookers and other supplies) until well into the thirties, when New Deal programs again promoted canning (see, Forrest, Suzanne. *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal* . UNM Press, Albuquerque, 1989, p. 66).

<sup>20</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/8/90

<sup>21</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

Martínez y Trujillo, Francisco Jaramillo--had to work on other people's land, for which they were often paid with produce. Farming equipment was also rare and difficult to acquire; one woman recalled that times were so hard for a period that a man actually hitched his wife to a plow to get the job done.<sup>22</sup> Farm machinery began to replace animals on large landholdings in Chimayó and at the wheat and alfalfa fields of Llano Abeyta in the 1930's and 40's.

Although the climate is not ideal for wheat production, some Plaza residents grew wheat west of the Plaza or in Centinela where sufficient landholdings were available.<sup>23</sup> Only people who had large tracts of land, such as the Ortega brothers (Reyes, Víctor and Nicacio) and Reyes Naranjo, grew wheat. But many Chimayosos were able to obtain land in Truchas and dry-farmed wheat there. They took summer trips to Llano Abeyta, a large, flat open area west of Truchas, to plant and harvest wheat and alfalfa.<sup>24,25</sup> Other crops were grown as well by Chimayosos, presumably with irrigation in the valley above Truchas, including peas, beans corn, garbanzos and horse beans (*habas* ).<sup>26</sup> Young girls came along to cook and help with the harvest, and many women recall the adventure and hardship of these wagon trips.

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<sup>22</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>23</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>24</sup> Among those mentioned as owning property in El Llano were Reyes Naranjo, Reyes Ortega, Nicacio Ortega, Timoteo Martinez (brother-in-law to the Ortegas of the Plaza through his wife, Leonides), Melquiades Ortega, and Rumaldo Ortega. Torivio Trujillo of Rincón, related through marriage to the Martinez's of the Plaza, had land in upper Truchas.

<sup>25</sup> The Tewa Basin Study found that 50 people from Chimayo owned land at El Llano and 30 more had rights on the Rosario Grant of Truchas (Wiegler, 1975, p. 94).

<sup>26</sup> Gregorita Martinez interview, 10/5/90

Landowners maintained a small log shack or *fuerte* at El Llano where they camped during planting and harvest, as well as when they were cutting firewood.<sup>27</sup>

Wheat was planted in April or May and harvested before the corn, in August.<sup>28</sup> Reyes and Víctor Ortega and others who farmed at El Llano often hired men to help with the work, paying 50 cents per day for the labor.<sup>29</sup> Petronila Martínez remembers her widowed mother paying her help with a share of the harvest.<sup>30</sup> The wheat was cut by hand, with a scythe (*os*). Men on a typical holding spent a week in harvesting wheat, sending wagon loads down to Chimayó periodically. Threshing took place at an *era* --a large, flat area of packed earth--in El Llano, using Truchas goats.<sup>31</sup> The threshing operation also took place in Chimayó for the wheat grown there. The threshing of the wheat was a colorful, fun work occasion, almost a festivity in the memories of the old people.

In Chimayó, Plaza people threshed their wheat northeast of the Plaza on high ground near the present location of the Community Center (Map 13). They leveled a wide area and packed the earth down hard until it was hard and smooth. Goats walked around the wheat piled in the center and their

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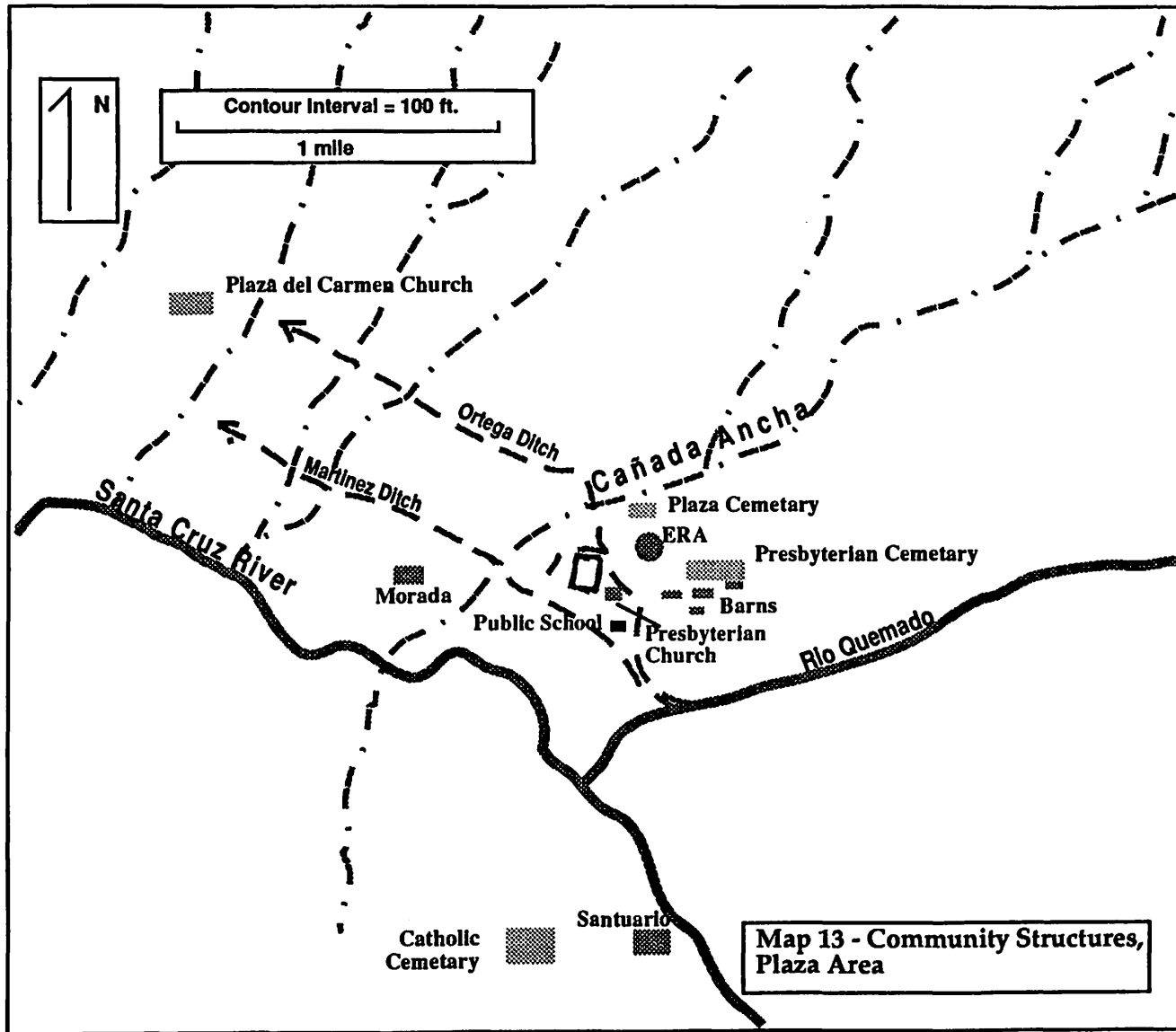
<sup>27</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>28</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>29</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>30</sup> Petronila M. Ortiz interview, 9/29/90

<sup>31</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/8/90



Map 13 - Community Structures, Plaza Area



hooves separated the grain from the stalk.<sup>32</sup> Winnowing was accomplished by tossing the wheat in the air and letting the chaff fly in the wind.<sup>33</sup> The wheat was then sifted in cribs made of rawhide punctured with small holes and the resulting grain was washed and spread on *pisos* (floor rugs) to dry.<sup>34</sup> The sifting of the wheat took place at night at Llano Abeyta and the grain was taken to Chimayó in big sacks. Benigna Chávez remembers that it took two trips with the wagon full of sacks to get all the wheat to Chimayó. Her father stored it there in his dispensa.<sup>35</sup> Some of it was then taken to one of the local mills to be ground into flour and some was saved for making *panocha*, a sprouted-wheat cereal. Some people stored the whole grain in bins (*trojas*) along the walls of a room in the house.<sup>36</sup>

Older people recall the days when their families ate primarily home-grown wheat ground to a coarse flour. However, it was not long into the century, as more and more men began to leave for employment and land acreage per family shrank, that increasing numbers of people began to buy almost all their wheat. Melita Ortega (born 1910) remembers that her father bought all of his flour by the time she was grown enough to remember.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Patricio Cruz was known as the keeper of goats in Chimayó; he had a large herd just south of the Plaza.

<sup>33</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>34</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>35</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>36</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>37</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

There were several small mills in and around Chimayó that were used to grind wheat as well as chile and sometimes corn. That wheat flour often tasted of chile because of residue on the millstones. Plaza resident Eulogio Martínez owned a mill in Potrero on the Santa Cruz river. Francesquito Chávez also owned a mill in Potrero, and Perfecto Trujillo of Rincón owned one on the Rio Quemado upstream of Chimayó at a place called La Cajita.<sup>38</sup> Other mills were located in Centinela and in Rio Chiquito and there was another in La Puebla. These small mills were generally built of logs and employed a simple, horizontal grindstone system. By all descriptions they were typical of Hispano gristmills in northern New Mexico. <sup>39</sup> (Map 14)

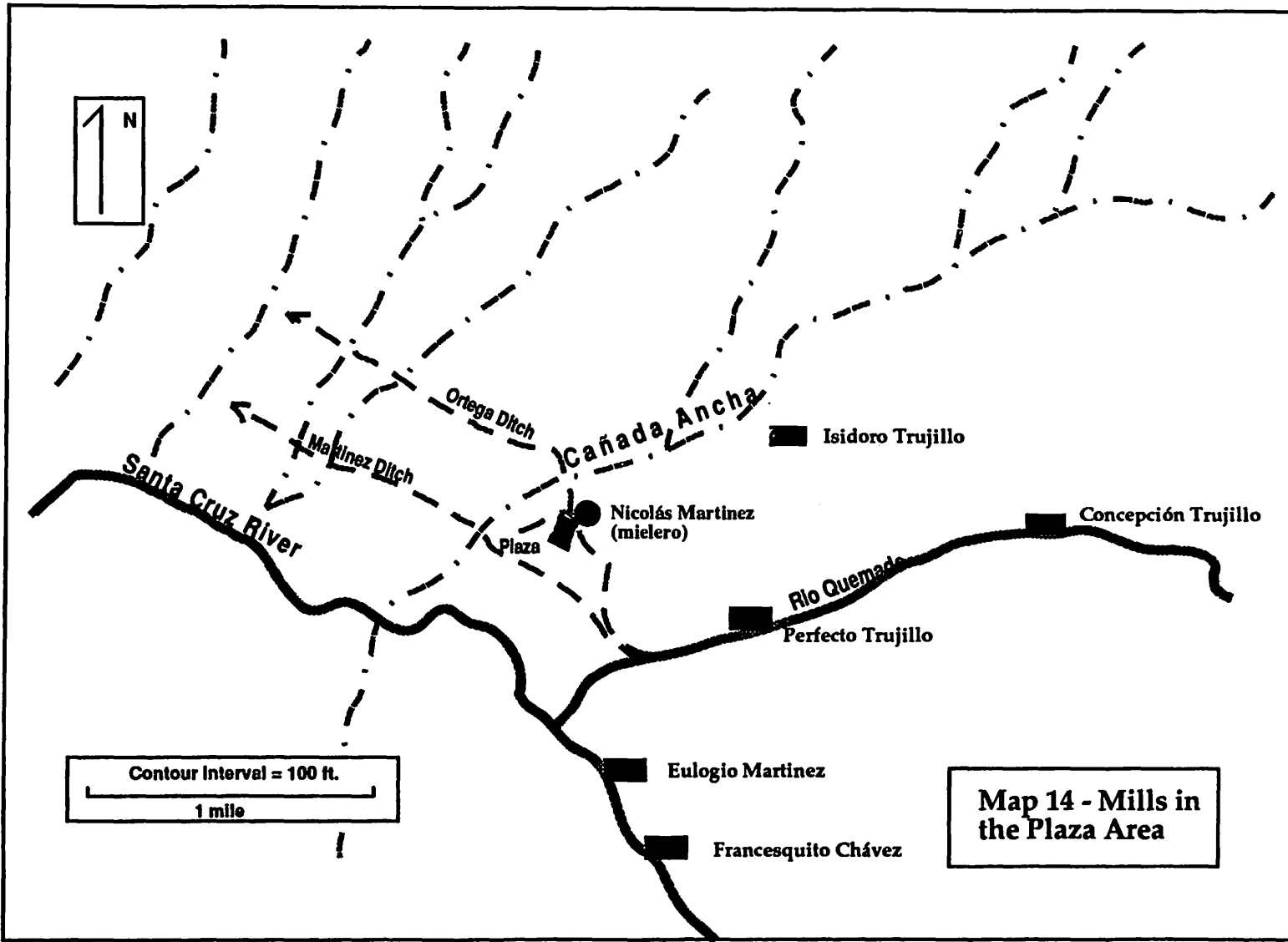
The mill at La Cajita (the "little box") was situated at the mouth of a small box canyon about a mile east of the Plaza and could only be reached by walking over a rough trail. A ditch took water out of the Rio Quemado above a small waterfall and carried it to an arroyo where the log mill shack sat on a bank. The remnants of the house and the ditch are still visible, though the mill has been out of operation since at least the 1930's. The short journey to the mill is recalled as a bit of adventure and diversion by some older Chimayó residents. Sacks of chile were hauled up on mules or over-the-shoulder and returned as fine chile powder. Access to the mill was granted on the basis of friendship or relation to Perfecto Trujillo--"Mano Perfecto."<sup>40</sup> Most people now remember La Cajita only as a picnic spot where the Mission

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<sup>38</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>39</sup> For a description of the mills, see Gritzner, Charles F. "Hispano Gristmills in New Mexico." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 64(1974):514.

<sup>40</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90



teachers took children in the spring.

Some Chimayosos also grew alfalfa in El Llano.<sup>41</sup> It was possible to get two cuts per year--in June and October. Bersabé Chávez remembers going to El Llano to cut alfalfa, spending three days in the harvest. Her father, Reyes Naranjo, transported the alfalfa to Chimayó in wagons fitted with *guadañas*, extensions on the sides of their beds which made them capable of carrying a wider load. He stored his alfalfa in big piles in his barns near the hills east of the Plaza, where many of the Plaza residents maintained barns.<sup>42</sup> At first harvested by hand, Chimayo people later used Manuel Martínez's machine for cutting the alfalfa.<sup>43, 44</sup>

Another local crop that required considerable processing--and one that is almost forgotten as a northern New Mexico product--was cane (*caña*). This was probably sorghum, as sugar cane could not be grown in New Mexico's climate. Plaza resident Don Nicolás Martínez is widely remembered as the man who made *miel de caña*, a dense, molasses-like extract of the cane. Nicolás planted large fields of cane near the Mission school, and others, such as Reyes Ortega, planted smaller amounts.<sup>45</sup> Nicolás cut the cane before the

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<sup>41</sup> Harold Martinez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>42</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>43</sup> Cordelia Martinez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>44</sup> Manuel was a cousin to the Plaza's Jose Ramón Ortega's children through his mother, Escolastica Ortega Martinez.

<sup>45</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

apple harvest, about September, and stacked it in his shed.<sup>46</sup> He had his *mielero* by the Ortega Ditch just outside the east side of the Plaza (Map 14), and the annual production of the miel was a well-attended event. Everyone remembers the good taste of the crude, nutrient-rich syrup, which they ate on tortillas, *sopaipillas* or bread.

Nicolás produced miel every day for a week in the Fall. The miel was squeezed from the cane by a large, horse-powered press. Connected to the press by a long beam, the horse walked around and around the *mielero* in a circle. The juice was collected in tubs beneath the press, and then was transferred to a large pot where it was heated over an open fire to boil down to a thick syrup. Nicolás scooped the miel out with a dipper and poured into gallon containers. People bought or traded produce for the miel.<sup>47</sup> Nineteen forty-four was the last year that Nicolás made miel.<sup>48</sup>

### Trade and Cash Crops

Chimayosos had to go outside of the area to find a market for their produce, though Taos Indians occasionally came to the Plaza to trade their pottery for produce or blankets.<sup>49</sup> Trade was oriented primarily to the east, where Plaza residents traded for higher elevation crops that couldn't be grown in Chimayó. The reciprocal trade relationship allowed the people of

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<sup>46</sup> Benigna Chávez interviews, 9/22/90; 9/30/90.

<sup>47</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/22/90

<sup>48</sup> Camilo Trujillo interview, 11/2/90

<sup>49</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

both locales to subsist off a wider resource base, each exploiting their own environment to maximum benefit. Cash markets for crops were located in Santa Fé and Española (Map 15).

Chile was the most valuable surplus crop in the emerging cash economy and the Santa Cruz valley was one of the state's largest chile-producing centers. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, which reached Española in 1881, gave Chimayosos access to a much larger market than had previously been available. Chile from Chimayó and other northern valleys commanded a higher price than chile from southern New Mexico and California, the competing chile producing areas. In spite of the price difference, northern New Mexico chile sold better.<sup>50</sup>

Chile was not truly a cash crop, since it generated very little cash but was more often exchanged for credit with Española merchants. Bond and Nohl's store was the principal merchant outlet used and provided credit to Chimayó farmers. Most of Chimayó was in debt to Bond and Nohl through this barter arrangement, with chile as the only means to repay their debt.<sup>51</sup> There, Chimayosos traded chile *ristras* for groceries and other items that they couldn't produce.<sup>52</sup>

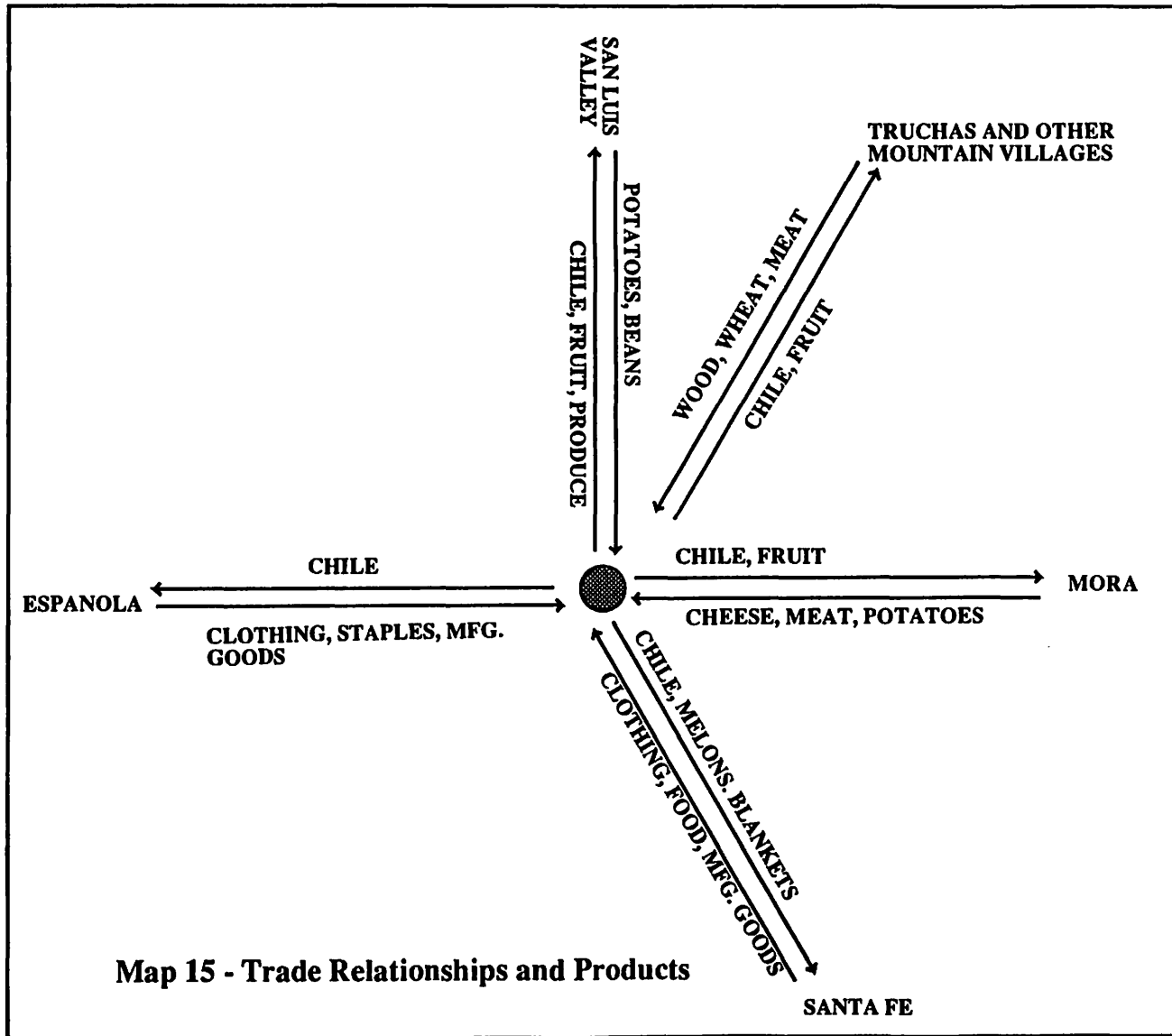
A double *ristra* of 5 feet brought 50-75 cents, and sometimes \$1 in exchange value at Bond and Nohl's, although the price varied widely year-to-

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<sup>50</sup> See Wiegle, 1975, p. 225

<sup>51</sup> See Wiegle, 1975, p. 225

<sup>52</sup> This store was variously referred to as "Bond's," or "Bond and Nohl's."



year depending on supply.<sup>53</sup> In the mid-1930's, the price dropped to a catastrophic 35 cents per *ristra*.<sup>54</sup> Older residents of Chimayó remember taking the chiles to Española in a covered wagon.<sup>55</sup> For some people, such as Eusebia and Julianita Trujillo, who had no male partners who could seek employment, chile was the only source of credit for obtaining necessary items.

Some plaza residents took their garden produce to trade in Santa Fé, Mora, Peñasco, Truchas, Taos, Chacon, Chamisal and other nearby towns. Before the advent of automobiles, these journeys took place in wagons, but later the trade continued using pickup trucks. In Santa Fé, Chimayosos usually sold their produce for cash, whereas in the mountain communities they traded for crops that were difficult to grow in Chimayó or for which more extensive amounts of land were required.

Melons were frequently traded or sold in Santa Fé. People made an overnight wagon journey to Santa Fé, camping at Tesuque, and sold to markets or in the street. Melons were also brought to the Pueblos for barter or sale to the dances on San Juan and Santa Clara Feast Days.

Early in the century, there was a strong produce trading relationship with the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado, where the Chimayosos traded their famous chile for potatoes or pinto beans.<sup>56</sup> A similar, reciprocal trade

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<sup>53</sup> A double *ristra* consists of a 10-ft. string of chiles hung from its mid-point into one "double."

<sup>54</sup> See Wiegler, 1975, p. 89

<sup>55</sup> Gregorita Martinez interview, 10/5/90

<sup>56</sup> The Conejos area of southern Colorado was also sometimes mentioned as a place where produce was traded for pinto beans.



relationship existed between Chimayó and Mora, where goat cheese (*queso de cabra*), potatoes and meat (mutton) were the preferred trade items, and with Truchas and Peñasco, where Chimayosos obtained wheat and potatoes.<sup>57</sup> They also sometimes traded chile for wood from the Trucheños, who couldn't easily grow chile or fruit.<sup>58</sup> Don Luis Martínez, one of Eulogio Martínez's sons, was still making wagon trips to Mora in the 1950's. The trade with the San Luis valley was stopped when the Colorado legislature enacted laws requiring all commercial truckers to obtain Colorado licenses, carry expensive insurance, and pay a levy on all tonnage hauled. This was impossible for the small operators from the northern New Mexico villages who were accustomed to barter.<sup>59</sup>

Although apples grow well in Chimayó, they are seldom mentioned as a trade item. One person recalled that apples were sometimes traded with people for Pecos for their harvest of piñon nuts. Reyes Ortega was one of the first to grow the larger, red *manzanas americanas* in Chimayó.<sup>60</sup> Others soon followed suit in planting these red delicious apples, impressed by their superior size and sweetness, though all the old people remember the *manzanas mexicanas* and delight at being presented with one. Expansion of apple production was limited by the lack of a market.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>58</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

<sup>59</sup> Forrest, p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

<sup>61</sup> See Wiegler, 1975, p. 90

## Livestock

Most Chimayó families had animals of some kind, but these were forbidden inside of the Plaza since its earliest inhabitation (see Historic Settlement). Barns and pigpens were maintained outside the Plaza. Víctor Ortega had his outside the south side of the Plaza on his property, and Rumaldo had his barns and corrals just outside the east Plaza, where the Presbyterian Church now stands. Other residents raised barns near the foothills to the east, above irrigable land, including Reyes Naranjo, Reyes Ortega, Nicacio Ortega and others.

Interviews suggested that animals were not kept in large numbers by Chimayó residents. Most Chimayosos were farmers, not stockmen.<sup>62</sup> Animals were raised only for domestic use and were generally not raised for sale. Chickens and pigs were the most common domestic food animals, and many people, especially those with large landholdings, kept draft and riding horses. Every family had chickens and relied heavily on eggs for food. Some people kept a milking cow or two or a few sheep. Víctor Ortega kept a small herd of sheep on his land behind his Plaza house and also raised *caballos garañon*, or studs. He also had large draft animals that he travelled annually to Colorado to purchase.<sup>63</sup> Patricio Cruz, who lived between the Santa Cruz River and the Plaza, kept a large herd of goats and sold or traded milk and meat for crops grown by Plaza residents.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Wiegler, 1975, p. 96, reports total numbers of livestock in 1935.

<sup>63</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

<sup>64</sup> Harold Martinez interview, 9/30/90

Cruz grazed his goats on the hills around Chimayó daily, and people remember the sound of the bells on his goats as he came home in the evenings. Some cattle also grazed in the hills, although the majority of people recalled their cows were kept in corrals or small pastures. Those who did send their cows out to graze often hired young boys to tend to them. The favored grazing lands for cattle were in the Cañada Ancha, where there is a large area of nearly level ground and a small spring, *El Ojo Negro*. Sheep from Córdova were also grazed there.

The scarcity of extensive grazing land nearby precluded large-scale ranching in Chimayó, and overgrazing also led to a decline in livestock numbers in the 1930's.<sup>65</sup> A cholera epidemic wiped out most pigs in the area in 1931 and drought and poor harvests forced the people to kill much livestock in the following few years.<sup>66</sup> But meat was an important part of the local diet. Meat was obtained through trade with mountain villages, especially Mora, and through the raising of a few animals locally.

Milking cows were not common in the Plaza area, and they were considered very valuable. Víctor Ortega owned a milk cow and sold milk to other residents for 5 cents per quart. No other Plaza residents were mentioned as having milking cows. Goats' milk was much more common, sold by Patricio Cruz, who milked his goats at night in his corrals south of the Plaza.<sup>67</sup> Most of the old Chimayosos grew up on this milk and still recall its rich flavor.

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<sup>65</sup> See Wiegler, 1975, p. 96

<sup>66</sup> Wiegler, p. 96

<sup>67</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

Curiously, no one mentioned buying goat cheese from Cruz, though some remember trading for it with Mora residents.

### **Economic Functions**

Located directly on the Camino Real, the main artery for traffic in the area, the Plaza del Cerro once had a prime location for commerce. By 1900, with the emergence of mercantile capitalism in northern New Mexico communities, the Plaza became an economic center of Chimayó.

For the first three decades of the Century, the focus of economic activity on the Plaza was Víctor Ortega's General Store and Post Office on the south side of the Plaza. Tio Víctor's or Don Víctor's, as it is remembered by people, was only one of several commercial outlets to exist in Chimayó between 1900 and 1950. On the Plaza, Eduardo Naranjo and Nicolás Martínez had stores after Víctor's was closed (Map 13). But Víctor's was the largest and most prosperous.<sup>68</sup> People met at the store to talk politics and hear the news, as well as to purchase needed supplies. Beginning with the store and extensive landholdings, Víctor Ortega, gained a foothold in the changing economic order of New Mexico and along with his brothers emerged as a powerful force in early 20th Century economic and political development in Chimayó.

The store faced north and lacked of southern windows--a hold-over

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<sup>68</sup> Small stores were quite popular in Chimayó. Other stores in the area, at various times, were located at Santos Ortiz's, just west of the Plaza; Nicacio Ortega's, just north of the Plaza; Teofilo Ortega's, just west of the Plaza; Patricio Trujillo's (location?); Severo Jaramillo's, north of the Plaza; Don Nemecio's, about 1/4 mile northwest of the Plaza; Ursulo Ortiz's in lower Chimayó; Orlando Martinez's father's store, near the present Post Office; Abelino Trujillo's store in Rincón; E.D. Trujillo's, in Rincón; Manuel Vigil's store in Potrero (which also had a dance hall);

from the days when the Plaza was a defensive fortress. As a consequence, it was dimly lit, and people remember it being dark inside.<sup>69</sup> It was a big store with long, glass counters, and not surprisingly, since they knew it as children, many Chimayosos remember best the candy on sale. The other item most mentioned in its inventory was old, button-up shoes. They remained there--over 200 pairs--until they were stolen, along with many other items, in the 1970's.<sup>70</sup>

Victór's store was a general merchandise store, as indicated by the sundry items mentioned in interviews: hardware, cloth, some clothing (including jeans), canned goods, tubs, washboards, nails, kerosene (10 cents/gallon), matches, tobacco, cookies, milk, baloney and some other non-perishable foods such as canned sardines and salmon.<sup>71</sup> Food items in general were not a major product sold at the store and lumber was apparently not available there.<sup>72</sup> People who had means of transportation preferred to go to Española and buy things in bulk, but for those who didn't have wagons--or for those little items that one forgot to pick up in town--Victór's store was there to provide.<sup>73</sup> Victór provided charge accounts and allowed people to charge all their items while the men were away at work, and to pay off their bills when they came

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<sup>69</sup>Camilo Trujillo interview, 11/2/90

<sup>70</sup>Ben Ortega interview, date?

<sup>71</sup>These are items mentioned by several people in different interviews.

<sup>72</sup>Petronila M. Ortiz interview, 9/29/90

<sup>73</sup>A book with charge accounts and other records from the store was given to Mr. Dan Jaramillo of Chimayó by Victór's some, Ben (Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90; these are unavailable to me at the present time. (See also, Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90)

home.<sup>74</sup> He picked up his merchandise in Española at the train depot and transported it to Chimayó in his wagon.<sup>75</sup>

The presence of the Post Office in the store further strengthened the Plaza's central role in Chimayó life, as people came from all of Chimayó's many *barrios* to pick up mail. The Postman came to Víctor's store on a horse in the earliest memories, and later in a wagon. He continued on to Cundiyo via the trail to the mill at "La Cajita."<sup>76</sup>

Originally the store was housed in one long room at Víctor's house. He later added another room, which was a dry goods store. There was a pot-bellied stove in the store, with benches around it. A large trough of sand was provided for cigarette butts. Here the men of the Plaza gathered in the winter to smoke, talk politics and listen to the news.<sup>77</sup>

After the decline of Víctor's store in the 1930's, the centrality of the Plaza underwent a slow but dramatic change, from an active, alive center of Chimayó life to a collection of abandoned buildings. It is interesting to note that this transition was reflected in the interviews; older people (over 80) recall the Plaza as a central place of some importance, while younger people describe it as just another neighborhood of Chimayó.

Eduardo Naranjo opened a store and later a poolhall at his father's east-

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<sup>74</sup>Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90

<sup>75</sup>Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

<sup>76</sup>Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90 (450)

<sup>77</sup>Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90

side house as Víctor's store fell into decline. He sold canned goods, sodas, and ice cream, among other things, and also had a small gas station here for a time.<sup>78</sup> Nicolás Martínez also opened a store that sold candy and canned goods and other small items.<sup>79</sup> Both of these outlets were relatively small and sold few goods. They didn't provide a central focus of social activity as did Víctor's, probably because by the time they were opened, the Plaza was off of the main travel routes. The opening of State Road 76 in the late 1930's and the emergence of the weaving industry at locations outside the Plaza severely affected the Plaza's central role. For all its importance, Víctor's store had a fairly short life, closing in the 1930's. The Post Office was moved down the road a very short distance outside the Plaza to Anastacio Trujillo's about this time.<sup>80</sup>

The weaving industry sustained many residents of the Chimayó area. There were 90-100 weavers in Chimayó in 1935, selling their products mostly to dealers in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California.<sup>81</sup> Of six blanket dealers in Chimayó, two were located just outside the Plaza and were run by Reyes and Nicacio Ortega, Víctor's brothers. Nicacio's store emerged as the largest and most prosperous store in the area. The weaving industry was definitely focused in the Plaza area.

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<sup>78</sup>Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90.

<sup>79</sup>One person remembered a *cantina* on the Plaza, operated by a man named Marcelino, but I was unable to confirm this with other informants. (John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90)

<sup>80</sup>Alejandro Ortiz, Petronila's husband, remembers delivering food supplies to the new Post Office at Anastacio's during the Depression. (Petronila M. Ortiz interview, date?)

<sup>81</sup> Wiegler, p. 90-91

Additional attention was brought to the Plaza early in the century by the fact that Víctor was a probate judge who heard cases in his home on the Plaza. Nearby, José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta performed his duties as a Justice of the Peace, as did Reyes Ortega just outside the north Plaza.<sup>82</sup> Reyes Naranjo was also apparently a justice, as some people remember hearings taking place at his house.<sup>83</sup> Documents indicate that Reyes Ortega and José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta also held posts as election officials, collecting the poll tax, and Víctor and Reyes were directors of the local public school, located just off the Plaza.<sup>84</sup> These were Santa Fe County posts, as the Plaza del Cerro is located just inside the County line.<sup>85</sup> The fact that the Mission school was located near the Plaza, and that the schoolteachers maintained residences there early on, also brought people to the Plaza. These administrative functions also made the Plaza an active center of Chimayó.

### Social Functions

The Plaza attracted people because of its economic and administrative functions, but the Plaza community was more strongly tied to Chimayó through informal social contacts. Plaza residents were linked to families in many of the nearby *placitas* of Chimayó, and these came in frequently to visit

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<sup>82</sup> Papers signed by "José Ramón Ortega, Juez de Paz" were shown to me by Melita Ortega, his granddaughter, during interviews. Benigna O. Chávez reported that her father, Reyes, was a J.P.

<sup>83</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

<sup>84</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 11/25/89

<sup>85</sup> This curious fact may be no accident, as Víctor and other influential people on the Plaza may have recognized and cultivated the advantages of being linked with the capital. See Documentary History of the Plaza, above.



relatives on the Plaza, often on foot. The Plaza was, to a limited extent, a central socializing place for Chimayosos from all over the valley. It was "muy mentada" (very famous, often mentioned) among residents from outlying *barrios* of Chimayó in the early part of the century.<sup>86</sup> It was the only true Plaza in the valley for as long as anyone can remember and was respected as a prosperous place. The central, communally-oriented Plaza was a focusing place for social contact among family and friends, although it held no formal meeting place.

### Religion

Until 1900, Chimayó was a purely Catholic community. Priests came from Santa Cruz once a year, for Lent, to perform Mass in the Santuario; later they came once a month.<sup>87</sup> The bonds of family and community, already focused spatially by the Plaza form, were further intensified by the focus on a common religion.

The most important events of Plaza life centered around religion. The small chapel on the west side of the Plaza, the *Oratorio*, was for decades a unifying focus for the community. Everyone fondly remembers the annual *Mes de María* rites at the Oratorio, even the Protestant converts who were prohibited from entering the Oratorio. The Oratorio was used almost exclusively by residents of the Plaza; people from outlying *placitas* attended ser-

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<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, several older people commented on this fact. (Gregorita Martinez interview, 10/5/90, and Cordelia Martinez interview, 10/6/90, for example). Younger people I talked with downplayed the central importance of the Plaza, a reflection of the fact that it had fallen into decline by the 1930's and 40's (Camilo Trujillo interview, 11/2/90).

<sup>87</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

vices at the Santuario, the Plaza del Carmen chapel in La Cuchilla or in their own private family chapels.<sup>88</sup> (Map 13)

The annual *Mes de María* (Month of Mary) rites at the Oratorio were germane to the social life of the Plaza. The Oratorio was originally a private chapel but was maintained by the community throughout the late 19th Century. Names scrawled on the ceiling of the Oratorio attest to the numerous contributors to its upkeep (see Historic Settlement). A collection was taken up for its bell by Juan Naranjo, Plaza resident Reyes Naranjo's brother, who purchased it in Mora and transported it to the Plaza in the early 1900's.<sup>89</sup> The older people remember it now as *el Oratorio de Doña Bone*, for it was Bonefácia Ortega who maintained the Oratorio for the first four decades of this Century. She was the leader of the local chapter of the *Carmelitas* (the Carmelites), a lay Christian association whose banner still stands in the Oratorio. Bonefacia presided over the rosaries and the walk around the Plaza for the *Mes de María*, assisted by several other women (*resadoras*) who led the recitations.

Domitila Villa took part in the annual procession as one of the flower girls. She remembers her Aunt Eusebia Trujillo leading the procession, carrying a cross, followed by the *resadoras* and then the flower girls. The walk began at the Oratorio and proceeded counter-clockwise around the Plaza. Periodically, the *resadoras* stopped to pray and the flower girls sprinkled

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<sup>88</sup> As far as anyone remembers, Mass was not held in the *Oratorio*.

<sup>89</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90; Benigna O. Chávez recalls that Rumaldo Ortega took up the collection for the bell (Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90)

them with the rose petals they had gathered before the ceremony from the *rosas de castilla* along the ditch.<sup>90</sup> The people also sang hymns as they walked. After circling the Plaza, the procession went back to the Oratorio. Somehow Bonefácia always seemed to time it so that the rosary was completed just as the procession arrived back at the door to the Oratorio--a feat that still makes the old people marvel. The Oratorio was decorated with water glasses filled with roses, Indian Paintbrush and other wildflowers gathered from the hills.<sup>91</sup>

The flowers, the bell chiming, and the singing as the procession made its way around the Plaza is one of the most vivid images of Plaza solidarity that people remember. Everyone turned out and these ceremonies cemented the ties of the Plaza residents more surely than any other event. The Oratorio was also used by people on the Plaza for their individual devotions and prayers throughout the year.<sup>92</sup>

Rivalling the *Mes de María* ceremonies for unifying the Plaza were the social gatherings that ensued with the death of a Plaza resident. "Deaths were the big news back then," one person recalled. The tolling of the little bell at the Oratorio announced a death in the community. "We would hear the bell and we'd all go running, saying 'Who died?'" Domitila Villa remembers.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Melita Ortega recalls that Bonefácia Ortega was the first person to plant roses in front of her house. (Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90)

<sup>91</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>92</sup> Petronila Martinez Ortiz interview, 9/21/90

<sup>93</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

The preparation of a body and the ensuing wake, or *velorio*, gave people a chance to see family and friends and share in open, unrestrained grieving. The *velorio* took place at the home of the bereaved or, more rarely, at the Oratorio.<sup>94</sup> The body was bathed in herbs by a family member or friend and, if the deceased was male, his face was shaved. The body was then dressed and placed on a sheet on a table covered with about 1/2 inch of sand, which kept the body cool. A ribbon was tied around the head to keep the mouth closed. Relatives and friends arrived in the afternoon with food. Penitentes came and sang their chants if the deceased was a member or friend of the order.<sup>95</sup>

While people ate, talked, wailed, and prayed the rosary, the sound of hammers announced the construction of a coffin outside. Local carpenters such as Hermenegildo Jaramillo were adept at making fine coffins, which they lined with white cloth that was folded into neat pleats around the body's head.<sup>96</sup> The day after the wake, a funeral was held at the Santuario or the Santo Niño church in La Cuchilla.

When a person was dying, it was necessary to call for a priest from Santa Cruz. Benigna O. Chávez remembers priests coming in buggies over the long, rough road to administer the last rites.<sup>97</sup> If a death came suddenly, there

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<sup>94</sup> Cordelia Martinez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>95</sup> Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>96</sup> Some people did not want to be buried in a coffin; Domitila Villa remembered that Abedon Ortiz requested not to be. (Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90)

<sup>97</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

was often not time to call a priest from Santa Cruz before burying the body and as a result many people were buried without the benefit of last rites. If a woman died in childbirth--a sad and all too common event in Chimayó--the priest sometimes came and performed a funeral and a baptism for the bereaved family in the same day.<sup>98</sup>

Most burials took place at the Catholic cemetery, near the Santuario, but there were other locations for burying bodies as well, including a nearly-forgotten site north of the Plaza by the arroyo coming down from the Cañada Ancha (Map 13). (A cemetery for the "San Buenaventura Plaza" is mentioned in some historical documents, and this site by the arroyo may represent the Plaza cemetery.) Children were sometimes buried inside the Oratorio; Gumesinda Ortega, an infant of Reyes Ortega, is known to be buried there, and there were others as well.<sup>99</sup> The families of these deceased came to place wreaths in the Oratorio on Memorial Day.

The Penitente Brotherhood, or *Cofradía de Nuestro Padre Jesus*, whose chapel and chapter house (*morada*) is located west of the Plaza, used the Oratorio annually during Holy Week. On Easter, the penitentes visited the Oratorio, coming from Truchas, Córdova, Santa Cruz and Chimayó. Some people remember a large group of them arriving at the Plaza at midnight, chanting and carrying lanterns. The penitentes entered the Oratorio and spent some time in there singing and chanting; some people recall that they spent the whole night in the Oratorio. Their chants were beautiful and sad as they

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<sup>98</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>99</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

emanated from the Oratorio. The sight of the bare backs and the flailing whips of the penitentes on the way to the Oratorio scared the children. They wore only long underwear bottoms and had bare backs. They wore black masks (a piece of black cloth wrapped around the head with holes cut out for the eyes) and carried whips. Blood ran down their backs as they came down the road toward the Oratorio singing. From the Oratorio the penitentes went on to their *morada* to prepare for Good Friday services the next morning.<sup>100</sup>

Most of the Plaza went to the Good Friday services, performed by the penitentes at the arroyo west of the Plaza.<sup>101</sup> There, the penitentes came in procession with one of their members dressed as Christ and his face covered. Women came from La Cuchilla, dressed in black. In the arroyo, Christ met Mary and they re-enacted *las tres caídas*. The Stations of the Cross were set up along the arroyo and in the afternoon the crowd visited the stations. This tradition continues today.

The tolling of the bell at the Oratorio was a signal for other important events in and around the Plaza. Many of the older people remember Halley's comet of 1910. People had been watching it night by night and describe it as "a big star with a tail."<sup>102</sup> But one night the tail became especially bright red and it alarmed the Presbyterian Mission schoolteacher, Miss Ellworth, so much that she rang the bell to alert the people to the danger. Everyone was worried that the comet's tail might burn the crops, but to their surprise nothing was

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<sup>100</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

<sup>101</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/22/90; these rituals still take place in Chimayó.

<sup>102</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

harmed. The comet was seen as a sign of impending disaster--a premonition that was confirmed with the start of World War I.<sup>103</sup>

The Presbyterian mission in Chimayó had a profound effect on the religious homogeneity and unity of the Plaza. It was no accident that the Presbyterians chose the Plaza as the site for their mission; this was the center of Chimayó. Yet it seems bold that they set up so near the Oratorio and the Penitente *morada*. The presence of the Presbyterian church and school adjacent to the Plaza strengthened the Plaza's status as a center of Chimayó.

Before many people converted, the entire Plaza community went to the *Mes de María* ceremonies, but afterwards, the Protestants no longer participated and were in fact forbidden from watching.<sup>104</sup> Devout Penitente Catholics, such as José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta, converted and gave up the venerable faith of the Hispanic New Mexican. Along with it, José Ramón gave up his caretakership of the Oratorio. Tiofilo Ortega, Victoriano Cruz, Leandro Ortiz, Sabino Trujillo and Doroteo Cruz were among the first on the Plaza to convert. Church services were initially held in the Mission school.<sup>105</sup>

The coming of the Protestants was a difficult time for the Plaza community, splitting it, almost literally, for a time: the east side of the Plaza became the bastion of the new faith, while most of the rest of the Plaza remained Catholic. The Mission church and school were built just outside the

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<sup>103</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 10/12/90

<sup>104</sup> Benigna Chávez interview, 9/8/90; Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>105</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

east Plaza. Ironically, the church was built on the former property of a dedicated Penitente, Rumaldo Ortega. Protestant families on the Plaza were those of Nicolás Martínez, Melquiades Ortega, Reyes Naranjo, José Inéz Martínez y Jaramillo, and Pedro Cruz.

People remember the bitter words that the Parish Priests had for the newcomers. Insisting that the Bible was not for the common man to read, the Priests gathered up the Books that had been distributed to their fold and burned them on the Plaza in Santa Cruz.<sup>106</sup> Bersabé Chávez remembers that her grandfather burned her mother's bible when her mother converted.<sup>107</sup> The Mission school was strictly off limits to any Catholic, in spite of its superior quality of education. The priests ordered people to remove their children from the Mission school. People who defied the order to avoid the the school were threatened with excommunication. Women who allowed their children to attend the Mission school were expelled from the Carmelite order.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the priests incited persecution of converts, who were taunted and struck with rocks. However, this backfired to some extent, as some people became so angered at the priests for their behavior that it prompted them to convert.<sup>109</sup>

Nevertheless, people gradually adjusted to the presence of the new faith and accepted its converts. The furor soon died down. The *Mes de María*

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<sup>106</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>107</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 10/6/90

<sup>108</sup> John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90

<sup>109</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90



ceremonies continued unabated and with plenty of participants, guided by the stern, strictly-Catholic Bonefácia Ortega, while the Protestants quietly went about the conversion of more Chimayosos. The Missionaries were accepted because they offered education and they knew a lot about health and nursing. They visited the houses of the sick and offered more modern and effective cures. It seems an equilibrium was reached and the furor died down by the 1930's. The most powerful influence of the Protestants in this century seems to have been the quality education of countless young Chimayosos.

### **Other Social Functions**

For its residents, the Plaza was the nexus of family and community life. Most of the old people remember that the main social activity on the Plaza was simply visiting relatives and friends in the area. In winter, people visited each other to gossip, exchange news, and chat, eating piñon nuts and apples stored from the summer.<sup>110</sup> Víctor Ortega's store was a favorite gathering place, especially for men. There, they sat around the old pot-bellied stove and smoked, talking politics. The long winter was a slow, relaxed time, a respite from the fast-paced summer of employment and crop-raising. This was also the season when weavers dedicated most of their time to the looms, working in dim dispensas lit by kerosene lamps.

Social life in Chimayó was also marked by frequent celebrations associated with religious holidays. These took place near the Plaza. Santiago Day (25

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<sup>110</sup> Ben Ortega interview, 9/16/90

July), honoring Chimayó's patrón saint, was the biggest *fiesta* in Chimayó. The statue of Santiago was carried around on horseback to bless the fields. A big celebration followed in Chimayó. Santiago Day brought people from all over the valley to the Plaza--from "as far away as Española" in their buggies. The dance for the day was usually held at Vigil's dance hall in Potrero, though a dance platform (*taríme*) was sometime erected outside the Plaza. One year, a large tent, made from the canvass covers of wagons was erected east of the Plaza for the food and a dance. In some years, a merry-go-round (*los caballitos*) was brought from Santa Fé. Vending booths were set up near Nicacio Ortega's store just north of the Plaza.<sup>111</sup> There were horse races and other events associated with this day.<sup>112</sup>

Special food items are particularly well-remembered: *biscochitos*, cakes, bread, bread pudding (*capirotada*) and green chile and ice cream made by Nicolás Martínez. Goats were killed for the occasion. An orange juice drink (*agua de naranja*) and *aguas frescas*, as well as *alegría*, a red drink made from a wild plant, were other favorites for this and other feast days.<sup>113</sup>

Señora del Carmen Day was also celebrated in Chimayó, with a procession filing from La Cuchilla to the Oratorio on the Plaza and then on to Rio Chiquito. A boy with a drum led the procession, and when Plaza residents heard its tapping, they emerged and joined the procession. The local men

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<sup>111</sup> Benigna O. Chávez interview, 9/30/90

<sup>112</sup> In "the early days"-- around the 1920's and 30's-- there was no Mass in Chimayó for Santiago Day, but later, festivities began with a Mass at the Santuario. Starting in the 1940's and 50's, a parade was part of the festivities.

<sup>113</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

went up to the dam (*presa*) for the Cañada Ancha ditch, where they asked for the water to be blessed.<sup>114</sup>

### Education

There were two competing gradeschools in the Plaza area in 1900--the Presbyterian Mission school, and the Public school.<sup>115</sup> Both were located very close to the Plaza and most Plaza residents attended one or the other or both. There was considerable enmity between the Catholic clergy and the Mission school, as the priests saw the school as a threat to their monopoly on religion in the area. There were also public schools in nearby La Cuchilla and in lower Chimayó. The schools brought an educational focus to the Plaza area.

The public school hired local people to teach, whereas the Mission imported teachers from outside of the region. Most people agree that the Mission offered far superior educational opportunities to the Chimayosos, and it was a welcome addition to the community. Many adults were very interested in learning English and other basic skills and travelled from great distances to attend night classes offered by the first Mission teacher, Ms. Prudence Clark. Melita Ortega described how her father, Reyes Ortega, attended English classes 2-3 times per week. He learned English better than any of his siblings in the Ortega clan and later taught school to interested Chimayosos in the sitting room (*sala*) in his home just outside the Plaza. Many other people who were older than the teacher attended classes at the

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<sup>114</sup>Domitila Villa interview, 9/21/90

<sup>115</sup> There were four public school districts in Chimayó: Río Chuiquito, Rincón, Plaza Abajo, and Plaza del Cerro (Wiegler, p. 97).

school, including married men. People were very interested in learning.<sup>116</sup> Some children walked three or four miles each way to attend school.<sup>117</sup>

The Public school was a three-room building on Víctor Ortega's land just south of the Plaza (Map 13). It has since burned down and has been relocated twice to its present location in lower Chimayó. Víctor leased the land to the school and was one of three "directors" charged with maintaining the building, hiring instructors, and supplying wood to the school in winter. Among the early instructors remembered from the Public school were Ricardo Ortega, Pedro Trujillo, Miguel Jaramillo, and "Maestra Magdalena."<sup>118</sup> Most were from Chimayó and taught in English, although they also used Spanish, which was viewed as a handicap by school administrators.

The first Mission school room was on the Plaza's northeast corner and the first teachers lived on the Plaza's west side near the south end. By 1905, the Mission had erected a large new school building, located just up the road to the north of the public school, opposite the Presbyterian church, and it still stands and is in operation. It is a large building, two-storied, with a large play area surrounding it. The teachers usually came from the East and spoke no Spanish upon their arrival in Chimayó. The first teacher to arrive was a man, "Mr. Rodríguez," and his wife, but the rest were all single women in the early decades. The first of these was Miss Prudence Clark, followed by Miss

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<sup>116</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

<sup>117</sup> Harold Martinez interview, 8/30/90

<sup>118</sup> Melita Ortega interview, 9/21/90

Ellsworth. Miss Clark married Tiofilo Jaramillo, starting a tradition; several of subsequent Mission teachers married Chimayó men, which served to integrate them closely into the community.

Education beyond the eighth grade was impossible to obtain in Chimayó. Wealthier people could send their children to the Allison-James, a Presbyterian school for girls, or St. Michael's a Catholic boys' school in Santa Fe. The Catholic Loreto Academy for girls was more expensive, but some Chimayosas went there. By the 1930's and 40's, many Chimayo children were attending the Menaul Presbyterian High School in Albuquerque.

### Social Structure

The question of the social structure of the northern New Mexico villages has received considerable attention.<sup>119</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the structure of the Plaza community in any great detail. The views of informants definitely suggest that there was a strong *patrón* system operating in the Plaza area, characterized by a strong leader who controlled local politics. But all the people interviewed stressed that that the system did not necessarily foster social inequality in Chimayó. The concept of a passive, one-sided *patrón-peon* relationship is also being questioned in sociological literature. It is being replaced by a model of a system in which hierarchy and

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<sup>119</sup> Few models for northern New Mexico have been developed, and traditional models are being challenged. For a discussion of the literature on this subject, see Forrest, p. 27-30 and Van Ness, John R. Hispanic village organization in northern New Mexico: corporate community structure in historical and comparative perspective. pp. 21- 44 IN Kutsche, Paul, editor, *The Survival of Spanish American Villages* , Research Paper # 15, Colorado College, Spring 1979.

equality coexisted.<sup>120</sup> The description of the structure of the Chimayó community suggests more of the latter type of relationship.

The local *patrón* acted as an intermediary between the local Hispanics and the central, Anglo-dominated political hierarchy. The extension of the *patrón* system and the kin network into politics gave the villages some measure of social and political leverage at the state level.<sup>121</sup> Víctor Ortega was undoubtedly the local *patrón* and also filled the role of *jefe político* in Chimayó, organizing and buying votes for the Republican Party. Víctor was a well-known speaker and political activist, and an ardent Republican. He attended the Constitutional Convention in Santa Fé and was well-connected with politicians and bureaucrats in the State government. He organized local people to oppose the Santa Cruz dam project and may have been instrumental in the change in county boundaries that brought the Plaza from Rio Arriba into Santa Fé county in the 1870's.<sup>122</sup> Reyes Naranjo was also active in politics. He emerged as the local party boss for the Democrats when he switched parties in the thirties.<sup>123</sup>

Amada Trujillo explained the perennial importance of politics in Chimayó when she said simply, "Politics was important because jobs de-

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<sup>120</sup> Forrest, footnote 39, p. 190

<sup>121</sup> Forrest, p. 29

<sup>122</sup> This is merely a hunch, but the fact that Víctor was active in Santa Fé suggests that he may have wanted the Plaza associated with that relatively wealthy, forward-looking county instead of Rio Arriba.

<sup>123</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 1/91, not recorded

pended on politics."<sup>124</sup> Many people mentioned politics as a divisive factor on the Plaza in the 20th Century. Some Plaza residents were active and passionate about their politics, and political feuds sometimes even divided families. The Ortega brothers, especially Víctor and Reyes, are remembered as being very aware of Political events outside of Chimayó. Reyes subscribed to the *Albuquerque Tribune*, and was the only one of the prominent Ortega brothers who could translate the paper into Spanish.<sup>125</sup>

Many informants stressed that politics was an important part of peoples' lives and that today's populace is apathetic by comparison. Politics were actively discussed among the men, often in Víctor's store, and voter turnout was always high.<sup>126</sup> Chimayosos who lived in Rio Arriba County voted in La Cuchilla, whereas those living in Santa Fé County voted in the public schoolhouse in Chimayó.<sup>127</sup> It was standard practice in Chimayó for the influential, politically-minded people to organize and buy votes to win an election for their candidate or party. Vote-buying was not always a guarantee of votes, however, as many times people accepted bribes and then reneged on their promise to vote.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90

<sup>125</sup> José Ramón Ortega, the father of Víctor and Reyes, had also been a prominent leader in Plaza affairs. He, too, was a strong Republican. See Plaza Residents, above. (Stella Chávez Usner, personal interview, 5/27/91).

<sup>126</sup> Such a view is consistent with studies of Hispanic voter records from the era, which reveal "a deep and abiding interest in politics" (Forrest, p. 28).

<sup>127</sup> Camilo Trujillo interview, 11/2/90

<sup>128</sup> Bersabé Chávez interview, 1/91, not recorded

The political rally was a forum for debate that often brought political differences into the open. These rallies usually took place at large meeting halls--the dance hall in La Cuchilla or in Potrero--and the Plaza was not a focus for these activities. More than once, fights broke out at rallies and occasionally fatal, violent attacks took place. Such was the case at a rally in Chimayó attended by "Pulas" Martínez, the most famous of the criminals of Chimayó. Known as a *matador*, or killer, stories about Pulas abound, especially the events leading to his assassination at a political rally in Córdova.<sup>129</sup>

The Plaza began to decline as a functional focus for the Chimayó community for several reasons. The need for a local mercantile store declined as people found it easier to get to Española or Santa Fé on improved roads and with transportation provided by automobile. The market areas of these larger towns effectively expanded with the new road. The stores along the highway took command of what business was available.

The Oratorio fell into disuse upon the death of Bonefácia, its longtime caretaker and the local leader of the Carmelites. Easier access to nearby churches, increased use of the Santuario by the church and eventually the construction of a new church in Plaza Abajo, decreased the need for the local chapel's functions. Proprietorship of the Post Office was "grabbed," as many informants put it, by people outside the Plaza and ended up on the new highway to Española, near the church. The Public School also moved out of the Plaza, first just to the northeast but eventually down the new road toward

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<sup>129</sup> See John Trujillo interview, 9/14/90 and Amada Trujillo interview, 9/9/90 for two versions of the story of Pulas.



Española.

Indeed, the trend in Chimayó has been a steady movement westward from the Plaza for important community functions. Plaza Abajo is now the focus of activity, largely because of its strategic location on Highway 76. The Plaza was simply bypassed by this lifeblood of the modern community.

## CONCLUSION

This research has revealed that the Plaza del Cerro was an integrated community of neighbors (*vecinos*) with a common interest in survival. Through successive generations, the close bonds of the Plaza community remained strong. Many of the principal founding families of the Plaza remained on the Plaza into the 20th century. After so many generations of residence, it is not surprising that many of the families were related.

A patronage system of political organization led by Ortega family members (particularly Víctor Ortega) was firmly in place in the Plaza area by the early 20th century. The information gathered in this research indicates that the Ortega family established its influential role since the very founding of the Plaza, when it had control of much of the land in the area.<sup>1</sup> No other people were as persistently involved in Plaza affairs over generations as Gabriel Ortega and certain of his descendents. This suggests that the community structure of this Hispanic village has its roots in a long tradition of patronage. The local *patrones* directed the Plaza toward a prominent position in the economic and political landscape of the area, and at the same time elevated themselves to positions of considerable wealth.

However, oral interviews also suggest that the Plaza functioned as a closely-knit community where kinship bonds encouraged cooperation and a sharing of resources. There remained into this century a strong sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Ironically, these once prominent *patrones* are represented in Chimayó today by only two surviving residents with the Ortega surname. The Ortegas still maintain a prominent position through ownership of the weaving shop, but have faced the same pull to leave as other people in the community.

communal survival among Plaza residents, perhaps lingering from the era when the residents joined to build the Plaza. This study clearly supports the notion of a symbiotic patronage system --one that was not exploitive or one sided.<sup>2</sup>

Yet this research leaves more questions than answers, and opens up many avenues for further research. Among these are: the locations of the earliest settlements in the area, especially the Hacienda de Moraga; more detailed investigation into the founding date of the Plaza; the origin and political connections of Gabriel Ortega; the original arrangement between the Ortegas and settlers concerning the location of the Plaza; the political affiliations and activities of Ortega family members--especially José Ramón Ortega--in the 19th century; the effects of the village structure and Ortega hegemony on the development of the weaving industry; and the activities of Víctor Ortega in state government that may have affected the Chimayó community. On a more general level, this research opens up questions regarding the nature of Hispanic village social organization, especially vis-à-vis the foundations of the "corporate community" as addressed in literature on Hispanic northern New Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

The Plaza del Cerro is a good place to address many of these and other important questions regarding the origins and evolution of Hispanic communi-

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<sup>2</sup> See Forrest, Suzanne. *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal*. Albuquerque, UNM Press, 1989, pp. 28-29 and footnote 50, p. 190, for a discussion of the changing perceptions of the patrón system among sociologists.

<sup>3</sup> c.f. Van Ness, John R. "Hispanic Village Organization in Northern New Mexico: Corporate Community Structure in Historical and Comparative Perspective." pp. 21- 44 IN Kutsche, Paul, editor, *The Survival of Spanish American Villages*, Research Paper # 15, Colorado College, Spring 1979.

ties in northern New Mexico. This paper, by outlining the background on the history and social structure of the Plaza, provides a foundation for addressing these questions.

Oral history has proved invaluable in reconstructing the Plaza social community. Oral sources reveal a richness in the social structure that is not easily discernable in written records. The oral history of a historic site deserves preservation as much as its architectural features. Unfortunately, prospects for recording the oral histories of important sites are diminishing year by year in the northern villages. It is hoped that this study will encourage other oral history research in the Hispanic communities of New Mexico.

## **Appendix 1 - Biographical Information on Informants**

1. Chávez, Benigna Ortega. Born 1898, Chimayó, daughter of Reyes Ortega and Genoveva Quintana; a descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón and her father. She was born and raised just north of the Plaza at her father's house.
2. Chávez, Bersabé Naranjo. Born 1910 on the Plaza del Cerro, the daughter of Reyes Naranjo and Encarnación Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Pedro, José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta and her mother. Born and raised on the Plaza.
3. Jaramillo, Teresita Trujillo. Born 1899 Rio Chiquito, daughter of Isidoro Trujillo and Francesquita Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, and her mother. Stayed with relatives on the Plaza often.
4. Martínez, Cordelia Trujillo. Born 1913, on the Plaza del Cerro. Daughter of Torivio Trujillo and Andalecia Córdova; great-granddaughter of Eulogio Martínez through her mother. Raised in Rincón and visited relatives on the Plaza del Cerro in her youth; lived on the Plaza when married.
5. Martínez, Gregorita Martínez. Born 1896 in Plaza Abajo. Daughter of Timoteo Martínez and Leonides Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, and her mother. Visited her primos on the Plaza often.

6. Martínez, Harold. Born 1946 on the Plaza del Cerro. Son of Rumaldo Martínez and Brigida Trujillo. Second cousin to the Naranjos of the Plaza; not related to the Ortegas.
7. Martínez, Petronila. Born 1908 in Cundiyo. Daughter of Seferina Vigíl and Antonio Martínez. Lived on the Plaza del Cerro her whole life. Familial connection to other Martínezes on the Plaza unclear. Not related to the Ortega family.
8. Ortega, Ben. Born 1904, on the Plaza del Cerro. Son of Víctor Ortega and Refugio Jaramillo. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, and his father. Grew up on the Plaza until age 18.
9. Ortega, David. Born 1917, just outside the Plaza del Cerro. Son of Nicácio Ortega and Virginia Trujillo. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, and his father.
10. Ortega, Melita (María Manuelita). Born 1908, just outside the Plaza del Cerro. Daughter of Reyes Ortega and Genoveva Quintana. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, and her father.
11. Ortega, Virginia Trujillo. Born 1885, Rio Chiquito. Daughter of Manuel Trujillo and Tonita Martínez. Married to Nicacio Ortega; lived just outside of the Plaza del Cerro her adult life. Descended from Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, María Antonia Ortega Trujillo, and her father.

12. Trujillo, Amada Naranjo. Born 1909 on the Plaza del Cerro, the daughter of Reyes Naranjo and Encarnación Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Pedro, José Ramón Ortega y Abeyta and her mother. Born and raised on the Plaza.
13. Trujillo, Camilo. Born 1927, Potrero. Son of Camilo Trujillo., Sr. and Sophia Ortiz. Grandson on his mother's side of Santos Ortiz, weaver and store-owner just west of the Plaza. No relation to the Ortegas. Visited the Plaza often.
14. Trujillo, Irvin. Born 1952. Son of Jacobo Trujillo and Belle Garcia. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, Francesquita and his father. Weaver of Centinela.
15. Trujillo, John. Born 1912, in Rio Chiquito. Son of Encarnación Trujillo and Eulogia Roybál de Trujillo. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, Maria Antonia Trujillo, and his father. Visited relatives on the Plaza often and attended the Mission School.
16. Trujillo, Mercedes. Born 1904. Daughter of Isidoro Trujillo and Francesquita Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl and her mother. Visited relatives on the Plaza del Cerro often.
17. Usner, Stella Chávez. Born 1922, just north of the Plaza. Daughter of Abedon Chávez and Benigna Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, Reyes, and her mother.

18. Villa, Domitila. Born 1923, Chimayó. Daughter of Vidal Trujillo and Celsa Ortega. Descendent of Gabriel Ortega through Manuel, Gervacio, José Ramón Ortega y Vigíl, Rumaldo, and her mother. Raised just outside the Plaza del Cerro.



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