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Clio's Disciples on the Rio Grande

WESTERN HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Richard W. Etulain

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s were the major turning point in the century-long emphasis on western history at the University of New Mexico. In that generation, three professors—Gerald D. Nash, Donald C. Cutter, and Richard N. Ellis—captained a growing cadre of graduate students studying the American West. Moving well beyond the History Department's initial southwestern borderlands and frontier offerings of the previous half century, this professorial triumvirate led the western section into a greatly enlarged stress on the Spanish borderlands and the western frontier, with new emphases on Indian history and the twentieth-century American West. In these two pivotal decades, the westerners, linking up with others who joined them at UNM, became a powerhouse contingent preparing the section for its florescence in the next decades as one of the country's strongest programs in western history.¹

The expansion needs explanation. UNM's growing reputation for western history did not result from provocative, new approaches to the American West. The expansion took place, instead, within familiar historiographical

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boundaries of western history. Cutter and Ellis, for example, were notably conventional in their teaching and writing. True, Nash introduced work on the post-1900 West but in familiar formats. Throughout its history, the western emphasis at UNM became celebrated not for innovative, path-breaking approaches to the field but in building on and dramatically expanding well-known historiographical paths. With the ideas of Herbert Eugene Bolton and Frederick Jackson Turner much in evidence at New Mexico well into the 1970s, some even into the 1980s, westerners at UNM made their reputations and that of the department in ways other than in cutting-edge historiography.²

The emphasis on western history was leisurely in coming to UNM, although no slower than to most other far-western colleges and universities. The initial state or regional course was listed in the UNM catalogue in 1915. That year Roscoe Hill, the first professionally trained historian, joined the faculty and added courses in Latin American and New Mexico history.³ Hill also launched a School of Latin American Affairs, and after he left UNM in 1918, he went on to a distinguished teaching and publishing career in Latin American history. Then in 1920, Charles Florus Coan came to UNM with a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, where he had studied with Bolton, the country's best-known Spanish borderlands scholar, and had written a dissertation entitled "The Federal Indian Policy in the Pacific Northwest, 1849–1870" (ill. 1). Thus, roughly thirty years into its existence but just eight years after New Mexico's beginning as a state, UNM hired a



ILL. 1. CHARLES FLORUS COAN

(Photograph courtesy University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico)

professor trained in western history and offered courses on subregions of the American West.⁴

A delayed entry to the study of regional history was not unusual for some schools in the Far West. The University of California, Berkeley, did not offer a course in California history until 1913, sixty-three years after statehood. At the University of Washington, a follower of Turner gave a course in north-western history in 1897, but to the south, no offering on state history appeared in the University of Oregon catalogue until 1937. These delays, what one historian calls the “cultural lag” in far-western historiography, stemmed from two sources. First and more importantly, westerners were so tied to classical traditions of learning emanating from Western Europe and the American East that, for decades, they rejected local or regional history as a subject worthy of serious academic study. Second, the multivolume Hubert Howe Bancroft histories, appearing in a large, heavy, calf-bound series, so dominated western historical writing after their appearance in the 1880s that other popular and professional historians hesitated to enter a field that some thought Bancroft had exhausted.⁵

The first major stress on western history at UNM came in the 1920s. The emergence of regional history at the university in that decade was not unusual. Those years saw the rise of a redolent regionalism that flooded over much of the United States, especially in the West and South. Just as professors emphasizing western and Spanish borderlands history came to or remained at UNM, leading western historians elsewhere at or near the peak of their careers were producing first-rank works on the West. Bolton at Berkeley, after the appearance of his notable *The Spanish Borderlands* in 1921, continued his professional ascent to become president of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1932. His AHA presidential address, “The Epic of Greater America,” delivered in Toronto, Canada, provided an early example of a transnational history of the Americas. At the same time, Walter Prescott Webb published his memorable and influential regional work, *The Great Plains* (1931). Concurrently, several regional magazines including the *Southwest Review* (1924), *The Prairie Schooner* (1926), *Frontier* (1927), and the *New Mexico Quarterly* (1931) were founded, clear testaments to the rising regionalism in the American West.⁶

The UNM Department of History greatly benefited from the university’s mushrooming enrollments in the 1920s and from the first years of James F. Zimmerman’s energetic, insightful presidency. In addition to Professor Coan, who served from 1920 until his untimely death in 1928 at only forty-two, several other historians with research or teaching interests in the borderlands or the Southwest joined the department during the decade. The most notable of



ILL. 2. FRANCE VINTON
SCHOLES
(*Photograph courtesy Center
for Southwest Research,
University Libraries,
University of New Mexico*)

these new hires was France V. Scholes, a “lunger,” who came for one semester in 1925, returned from 1928 to 1931 before going to work for the Carnegie Foundation, and then rejoined UNM in 1946 (ill. 2). More than any other faculty member, Scholes set UNM on its course to become a premier institution for the study of the Spanish borderlands.⁷

Others came to join Coan and Scholes. Marion Dargan, trained in colonial history, arrived in 1927. Over time he, like so many professors who came to UNM, found a local subject that captured his attention. In Dargan’s case, the long years of New Mexico territorialism became his research focus. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, he published in the *New Mexico Historical Review* a series of smoothly written essays that are still useful sources on this important topic. Two years later in 1929, Lansing Bloom came to UNM, serving

until 1945. He had resided in New Mexico since 1912 and was coeditor or editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review* from its founding in 1926 until his death in 1946. Equally important, Professor Bloom and his wife, Maude McFie Bloom, journeyed to archives in Mexico, Spain, and Italy, where they transcribed notably important documents for understanding early New Mexican history. The Bloom gatherings, along with the findings Scholes brought back to Albuquerque, became the bedrock documents for much early Spanish borderlands research at UNM. Finally, Frank Driver Reeve began teaching at the university in the late 1920s, even as he completed one of the first master’s degrees in history at UNM with a thesis on the history of the university. As a student and professor, Reeve stayed more than forty-five years at the university, briefly gone only to finish his doctoral work at the University of Texas, Austin.⁸

Continuity and experience were the hallmarks of professors teaching western history at UNM in the 1930s and 1940s. The most important symbol of continuity for the westerners was the active and vibrant leadership of President Zimmerman and his ongoing interest in tying the university directly to its cultural surroundings (ill. 3). In his inaugural address in 1928, the new president made clear that UNM must emphasize its southwestern connections in its outreach, in its cultural emphases, and even in its use of the Pueblo-style architecture, against which modernists had so obstreperously reacted in earlier administrations.⁹

ILL. 3. JAMES F.

ZIMMERMAN

(*Photograph courtesy
Center for Southwest
Research, University
Libraries, University of
New Mexico*)



Zimmerman lost little time in implementing his focus on regionalism, even though the Great Depression oppressed the country, state, and UNM campus for much of his presidency. In 1928 he encouraged the founding of a Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, partnering with the School of American Research in Santa Fe for this endeavor. This and other “cooperative programs” included bringing the *New Mexico Historical Review* and its coeditor Lansing Bloom to campus in 1929. In addition, the *New Mexico Quarterly* became a well-known outlet for literary and historical writers working on the Southwest. In 1931 Zimmerman supported the establishment of the University of New Mexico Press, which assumed and expanded on El Palacio Press begun in Santa Fe in 1913. And in the mid-1930s, the president backed a summer field school that allowed students in art to work closely with several major Taos painters.¹⁰

The History Department and its western historians benefited from other changes implemented under Zimmerman’s vigorous leadership. In 1935 George Peter Hammond, who eventually became well known for his important borderlands research and editing projects, assumed the departmental leadership (ill. 4). During the next decade, he also served as dean of the graduate school and took on additional administrative duties. Dorothy Woodward joined the department in 1935 as a Latin Americanist and an authority on southwestern subjects. Two years later the first doctorate awarded in the UNM Graduate



ILL. 4. GEORGE PETER HAMMOND

(*Photograph courtesy University Archives,
Center for Southwest Research, University
Libraries, University of New Mexico*)

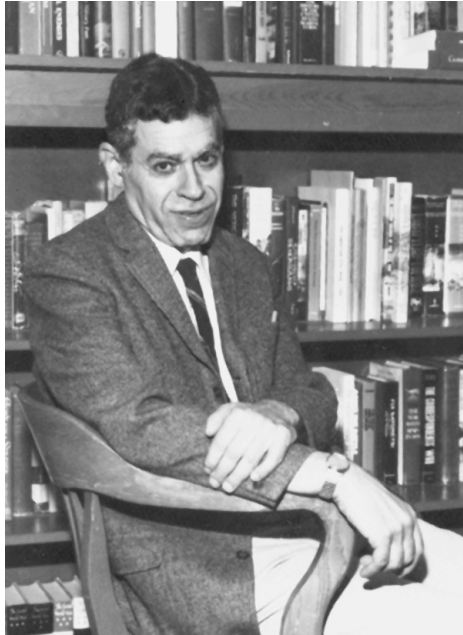
School was in the History Department. Generally, Zimmerman pushed all faculty to be more active researchers. For many professors in the humanities and social sciences, including most in the History Department, this charge meant working with New Mexico and southwestern topics.¹¹

During the World War II years, Zimmerman continued these efforts and fathered others. He expanded the Latin American Studies program and supported additional coursework in Spanish language and culture, southwestern studies, Hispanic history, and several other fields of regional studies. He also led a committee to celebrate the Cuarto Centennial Celebration of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's entrada to New Mexico in 1540. Although similar festivities celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Juan de Oñate's entrada stirred a lot of controversy in 1998, those cultural efforts sparked little conflict in 1940.¹²

Overall, Zimmerman, perhaps the most forceful and successful president in the university's history, did much to encourage and expand the college's connections to its region. As one later president and historian has written, Zimmerman "had a feeling for the Southwest—and its languages, its Hispanic and Indian cultures, its religions, traditions, music, art, and architecture, and its rich literary productivity."¹³

In the postwar years, a curious imbalance skewed the History Department—to the benefit of western history. Of the six department members, only two dealt with nonwestern subjects. The remaining four colleagues—Scholes, Dargan, Reeve, and Woodward—all focused on the Southwest in their research and much of their teaching. Attempting to remedy this dilemma of overspecialization, the department chairman "secured an agreement among the four whereby all should be permitted to direct students and give courses in this, their preferred field [the American Southwest], subject to the needs and interests of the students." Although this agreement may have calmed things for the moment, an unpleasantness remained, perhaps "a source of intradepartmental tensions in the years that followed."¹⁴

The UNM emphases on western history continued in the decade and a half after World War II, but major transitions took place among its long-time personnel. Bloom retired in 1945, Hammond left for the Bancroft Library in the same year, and Dargan and Woodward also retired within the next dozen years. Meanwhile, Scholes was occupied with his duties as academic vice president from 1949 to 1957, and Reeve devoted much of his time to editing the *New Mexico Historical Review*. If the number of western specialists dwindled in the 1950s, several newcomers arrived in the 1960s to replace the retirees or those who had moved elsewhere. These replacements included Nash, Cutter, and Ellis (ills. 5, 6, 7).¹⁵



ILL. 5. GERALD D. NASH
(*Photograph courtesy New Mexico
Historical Review*)



ILL. 6. DONALD C. CUTTER
(*Photograph courtesy New
Mexico Historical Review*)



ILL. 7. RICHARD N. ELLIS
(*Photograph courtesy New Mexico
Historical Review*)

Nash, who came to UNM in 1961 with a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, eventually became recognized for a new subject field of western history. Trained in economic and political history and in policy studies, Nash was also interested in western history, particularly California history. Gradually, he pushed his research directly into the twentieth-century regional West and published the first overview of that new topic, *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis*, in 1973. With the book's publication, Nash became the leading and—some thought—the only authority on the new subject. That volume and Nash's later studies of the impact of World War II on the West, however, were innovative in neither design nor interpretation, but they were valuable introductions to new topics in western history. Until his retirement in the mid-1990s, Nash maintained his leadership in the study of the post-1900 West. If UNM had already gained at least a regional reputation for its offerings in Spanish borderlands and American frontier history, Nash expanded that notoriety with his explorations of the twentieth-century West.¹⁶

Cutter and Ellis arrived in 1962 and 1967, respectively, and continued the History Department's in-place emphases on the colonial Spanish borderlands and frontier western history. They also greatly enlarged graduate student participation in professional activities, helping some New Mexico doctoral graduates secure important graduate-level teaching positions as well as introducing to them what was later called public history. Cutter and Ellis were mentors, guides, and cheerleaders for their students, as the recollections of those students clearly reveal.¹⁷

Cutter was a product of the Boltonian borderlands program at the University of California, Berkeley. Although he wrote his dissertation for one of Bolton's students and his successor at Berkeley, Lawrence Kinnaird, Cutter was clearly in the Bolton camp of borderlands studies. His teaching and writing emphasized the collecting of documents in Spanish and Mexican archives, and the preparation of lively narratives appealed to scholars and general readers alike. Ebullient, gregarious, and enthusiastic, Cutter prodded his students to attend professional meetings, deliver seminar papers at regional gatherings, and review new books in their field for scholarly journals. Later, in 1975–1976, Cutter was honored as the first of four UNM historians to serve as president of the Western History Association (WHA).¹⁸

Ellis was less outgoing than Cutter and more inclined to deliver low-key but humor-spiced lectures. This approach mimicked that of his mentor, Robert Athearn at the University of Colorado. Ellis's classroom teaching drew positive student evaluations, even winning him a distinguished teaching award in 1978–1979. But unlike Athearn, Ellis was not a prolific publisher, in fact

authoring no monograph after the appearance of his revised dissertation. Gradually, as was true of Ellis's good friends Robert Utley and Francis Paul Prucha, he moved from researching or teaching federal military and Indian policy toward working in Native American history. Like most other historians of his generation, Ellis was not trained in ethnography; that emphasis in Native studies would come later in the department. Ellis also urged his students to participate in regional Phi Alpha Theta, state history, and regional meetings. In the Cutter-Ellis period, those western students who were not attending or participating in a history conference seemed in the minority. Presenting seminar papers at conferences and publishing them in regional journals was often their ticket into the scholarly world.¹⁹

The years of Nash, Cutter, and Ellis in the UNM History Department were a tipping point in the development of the western history section. The corner turned in the 1960s and 1970s best reveals itself in several outstanding borderlands and western students who completed their graduate training in those years and launched stellar careers in the western fields as academic scholars and public historians. Consider one such quintet. David J. Weber completed his work with Cutter in 1967, published his dissertation as *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1846* in 1971, and became the country's leading Spanish borderlands scholar before his untimely death in 2010. Marc Simmons also published his dissertation as *Spanish Government in New Mexico* in 1968 and became—and remains—the leading historian of New Mexico. John L. Kessell published widely in the borderlands field, including *Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians in New Mexico, 1540–1840* in 1979, gained a strong reputation as a National Park historian, and then returned to UNM as Cutter's successor. Janet Fireman did her doctoral work in the Spanish period and, after a brief teaching stint, became an outstanding editor and public historian. Finally, Joseph Sanchez, another borderlands specialist, also chose a career as a National Park historian and eventually was founding editor of a new journal in the field, the *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*. During these years, Darlis Miller and Dan Tyler also completed their doctoral programs at UNM and landed good positions at well-known institutions. These first-rate students, through their teaching, front-line publications, and outstanding leadership in public history, greatly advanced the reputation of the University of New Mexico as a place to study the Spanish borderlands and the American West.²⁰

The next decade saw major transitions in the western field at UNM. Cutter retired from UNM in 1980, and Ellis moved to Fort Lewis College in 1987. Their replacements were, respectively, Kessell and Margaret Connell-Szasz, both UNM graduates. For the first time, UNM hired its own doctoral students

in western history.²¹ Meanwhile, historian David R. Maciel and I joined the department, in effect replacing Manuel Servín, who had arrived as editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 1975 and, after less than two years at UNM, had suffered a serious illness and had to resign. Maciel, took over Servín's courses in Chicano history and added new ones, while I assumed the editorship of the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 1979. Maciel's hiring substantiated UNM's commitment to Chicano history, which had begun with the hiring of Servín. Maciel even offered a course or two in Spanish. His exuberance in the classroom and his emphases on U.S.-Mexico connections added markedly to the western offerings. Although the department had given courses in Indian history or Indian-white relations as early as the 1950s, it had been much slower in moving into the emerging field of Chicano history.²²

Besides editing the *New Mexico Historical Review*, I offered courses in western popular culture and western historiography. With research seminars in western and borderlands history already spoken for by other faculty, I prepared a readings seminar in western historiography that became part of the western offerings for the next thirty years. Reflecting my research interests, I also built professional bridges to the Department of American Studies through my focus on popular images of the American West in literature, film, history, and art.²³

The growing influx of western graduate students in the 1970s and 1980s allowed for the expansion of western courses in the History Department. In addition to the usual undergraduate classes in New Mexico, frontier or western, Indian, southwestern, and Chicano history, graduate seminars proliferated in these areas. In extraordinary years, the department offered as many as five seminars in western history: western or frontier history (Ellis or, later, Paul Andrew Hutton), American Indian history (Ellis or Connell-Szasz), Spanish borderlands (Cutter or Kessell), western historiography (myself), and Chicano history (Maciel). In addition, Nash's seminar in modern U.S. history often included a contingent of graduate students working in western history. The lower and upper division courses in New Mexico, borderlands, and the frontier or West drew especially large enrollments. Along the way, courses in the twentieth-century West and western military history also proved to be very popular with students.

Adding to the clear strengths among western specialists were other regional topics that professors trained in foreign or other fields taught or researched. Iberianist Robert Kern wrote about labor in the Southwest, Europeanist Jake Spidle taught courses about and published on southwestern medicine, and, most significantly, Americanist Ferenc Morton Szasz became a leading specialist in the study of science and religion in the American West.²⁴ All these expansions and strengths, taken together, gave western professors

and graduate students alike the feeling that they were living and working in a regional-history showcase. Increasingly, UNM boosters, but others as well, began to speak of the western section at New Mexico as the strongest in the entire country. Those were heady times.

Westerners at UNM were also fortunate to enjoy other kinds of support. None was more sustaining than Chair Jonathan Porter's backing for the western section. On occasion Porter, an Asianist, attended the WHA Annual Conference, often met with the leading western scholars brought to campus to deliver the Calvin Horn Lectures, and urged administrators to underwrite western program needs. He once quipped at a huge informal gathering during an annual WHA roundup that if a natural disaster wiped out those in attendance, UNM would lose half its history faculty. Most important of all, Porter urged the westerners to build on their strengths. When one of the periodic departmental evaluations seemed to confirm the department's report that UNM hosted one of the—if not *the*—strongest remuda of western historians, Porter spoke with me about doing something to highlight those strengths. The department chairman suggested a “center for the American West” to utilize the westerners' strengths and call attention to their achievements. After hesitating, I accepted Porter's challenge, and the Center for the American West (later changed to the Center for the Southwest) opened in 1989. For more than twenty years, especially most recently under the able leadership of Virginia Scharff, the Center has been a clearing house and meeting place for western history at UNM (ill. 8).²⁵

Even in these halcyon years of expansion and achievement in the western section, a few drawbacks kept the western emphasis from being as vigorous and far-reaching as it could have been. Intersectional as well as intrasectional disputes fractured collegial connections in the History Department. Some younger members of the American section considered western history the refuge of flabby minds and a field rife with outdated and superficial historiography. They were bent on keeping the westerners from gaining more institutional ground in the department. Unfortunately, the disputes spilled over among the westerners themselves. So divisive were the conflicts during the 1970s and part of the 1980s that graduate students were fearful of taking courses from professors lining up on either side of the disputes. Students even had difficulty enlisting sufficient numbers of thesis



ILL. 8. VIRGINIA SCHARFF
(*Photograph courtesy
Virginia Scharff*)

or dissertation readers because some westerners refused to serve on the exam, thesis, or dissertation committees of colleagues with whom they did not speak. Doubly unfortunate, much of this destructive contention occurred when a man with a hobby field in western history occupied the president's office. Seen in longer perspectives, these conflicts limited the western section and kept it from becoming an even stronger unit.²⁶

But, as it often does, change brought a partial remedy. Some of the contentious folks left the department, and they were replaced with new colleagues, who were not a party to the previous upsets. A new era of good feelings settled over the western section. Kessell took the reins of the New Mexico and Spanish borderlands courses and immersed himself in the multivolume translation, annotation, and publication of the don Diego de Vargas papers, the most ambitious editing project in that field in recent times.²⁷ Connell-Szasz increasingly expanded her work in Indian history, particularly bringing ethnographic and comparative perspectives to bear on her teaching and writing. Hutton took over the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 1986, while offering courses in U.S. military and frontier history that steadily grew to very large enrollments. Before Nash retired in 1995, he was named Presidential Professor (1985–1990) and then Distinguished Professor (1990–1995). During the academic year 1990/91, he was awarded the prestigious Fulbright position of the George Bancroft Professor of American History at the University of Göttingen in Germany. In the same year, his contributions to western history were saluted when he was selected president of the WHA.²⁸

Although this contingent of westerners and those who followed were less driven than Cutter and Ellis to push graduate students into the profession, enrollments remained high in lecture courses and graduate seminars. New colleagues brought fresh emphases from the late 1980s onward. Native American, African American, Chicano, and women's studies programs were launched at UNM during the 1960s and 1970s, but the History Department was slow to hire faculty in these fields. As early as the 1920s, Professor Coan was prepared to teach Indian-white policy history, and so was Frank Driver Reeve from the 1930s and 1940s onward, but little emphasis was placed in the subject until the 1970s. Likewise, no historian of the Chicano experience came to UNM until the mid-1970s, and that subject at first failed to entice many graduate students to enroll in courses on the topic. But after Barbara Reyes arrived in 2000, Chicano history became more integral to the western section of the department. A course or two on African Americans in the American West was offered over the years, but no specialist in African American history has ever been part of the department.²⁹

The field that did explode onto the scene was women's studies. A few courses were offered in the late 1980s, but western women's history entered center stage when Scharff and Elizabeth Jameson joined the department in 1989 and soon thereafter offered courses on western women.³⁰ Along with Jane Slaughter's and Linda Hall's courses focused on European and Latin American women, UNM had launched a powerful program in women's history, with a major focus on women in the American West. Later, in 2004, Cathleen D. Cahill added strength to the field in still other very important ways, particularly in sociocultural emphases.

Even the traditional western courses underwent shifts in the 1990s. When Samuel Truett came to UNM to teach the Southwest, he chose not to emphasize primarily the Spanish-colonial borderlands that had been the mainstay of Scholes, Cutter, and Kessell. Instead, Truett stressed the full history of the borderlands and borders from the earliest Spanish entradas to the present. His own research dealt primarily with the U.S.-Mexico borderlands from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.³¹ Still another shift occurred when, after the retirements of Nash and myself, no specialist in the twentieth-century West arrived to replace us. Generally these shifts in faculty were not so much path-breaking as tinkering changes that kept traditional western emphases in place but moved them in different directions.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a flash flood of change enveloped western historical writing. In the four-year period from 1987 to 1991, the new western history washed over western historiography with little warning. Historians such as Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, and Donald Worster called for a new kind of western history, one more analytical than narrative, one less inclined to fall victim to the triumphalism of earlier Wild West historiography. Practicing what they preached, Limerick in her widely mentioned book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987), and White in his lengthy overview, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (1991), produced probing analytical studies of the regional West, with particular emphasis placed on race and ethnicity, the environment, and the cupidity of western settlers, and with new stress on class conflict and gender experiences. These writers markedly influenced the teaching of western history from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. They came to the UNM campus to speak, their books were assigned to western courses, and their ideas were (and still are) bandied about in seminars and hallways. But the UNM westerners, like many others nationally, were not unanimous on these new trends. When the WHA met for the first time in Albuquerque in 1994, Executive Director Paul Hutton observed, "Our organization is divided on this issue [of the new western history], and our meetings are lively."³²

No one in the UNM History Department touted himself or herself as a full-fledged new western historian, but one colleague did strongly dissent from this new gospel in western historiography. Professor Nash's reactions to the new western history were clear, edged, and, for those historians who did not know his background, often difficult to understand. Scion of a Jewish family that fled Nazi Germany in 1937, Nash thought positively and patriotically about his adopted country and its heritage. The United States had taken in his family, given them refuge, and sustained them and his own work through the doctorate at superb American universities. He could not agree with the young western historians, whom he thought much too critical, undeservedly so, of the United States. Nash labeled himself a "self-described 'old curmudgeon'" who had "rebelled against the rebels, revised the revisionists." When his views surfaced in the public, the History Department received phone calls asking if Nash's position was a UNM point of view. It was not, of course, but explanations of why Nash might think as he did seemed not to satisfy those scholars whom he had criticized.³³

In the generation from the late 1980s to the present, the achievements of and recognitions for UNM westerners, faculty and graduates alike, drew further attention to the program. I served as WHA president in 1998/99 and Scharff followed in 2007/08, bringing to a total of four presidencies held by UNM faculty, a number unrivaled by faculty in any other western program. Nominated in spring 2012, Connell-Szasz will likely add a fifth WHA presidency in 2013 (ill. 9).³⁴ Even more remarkable, two of UNM's doctoral graduates have been named WHA presidents: Weber in 1990/91 and Fireman in 1997/98. And recently UNM Professor Hutton and even more recently doctoral graduate Kevin Fernlund have served as the executive directors

of the WHA for more than a combined twenty years. In addition, Hutton and Scharff have been named Distinguished Professor of History. Several UNM doctoral graduates also gained positions at major state universities. These graduates included, for example, Richmond Clow, George Moses, Henrietta Whiteman, Charles Cutter, Sandra Schackel, Jon Hunner, Durwood Ball, Bart Barbor, Andy Kirk, John Her-



ILL. 9. FERENC MORTON SZASZ AND MARGARET CONNELL-SZASZ
(*Photograph courtesy Mike Wilkinson Photography*)

ron, Liping Zhu, Jeff Sanders, Rebecca Jager, and others. Still others landed important positions in public history, worked as independent public historians or in public history firms, or taught in the field, including Veronica Tiller, Tom Chávez, Art Gómez, Hana Samek, Michael Welsh, Charles Rankin, Sarah Payne, Hunner, and Kirk.

From the 1980s forward, as before, several persons and organizations were indispensable supporters of the western section at the UNM History Department. Consider a handful of these partners. Chief among them was UNM regent and historian Calvin Horn and, along the way, the Horn family. Their establishment of the Calvin Horn Lectures in 1985 has brought dozens of first-rate western authors to campus and led to the publication of several major books under the imprint of the UNM Press. Beginning in 2002, the Horn family also funded the Richard W. Etulain Lectures on Regional History, which has supported presentations by UNM faculty working in a variety of western fields.³⁵ In recent years, Tobías Duran, director of the UNM Center for Regional Studies, has funded fellowships for western history graduate students and for student editorial assistants at the *New Mexico Historical Review*, and supported initiatives in other western programs. Over the years, the programs in Chicano studies (especially through the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute), Native American studies, African American studies, women's studies, and American studies have also partnered with the History Department. Perhaps the most notable collaboration of all has been with the UNM Press, which has published dozens of books on western topics. For more than thirty years, David V. Holtby acquired, shepherded, and touted books on the American West. We UNM historians owe him a great deal for his yeoman work in the western history field.

In short, the strong emphases on western history, begun nearly a century ago at UNM, remain firmly in place. Indeed, so powerful has this concentration become that anyone acquainted with the college-level teaching and scholarly writing about the American West would be forced to admit that the University of New Mexico has hosted one of the premier programs—if not the leading one—in this field during the past thirty to forty years. In its numbers of faculty and enrolled graduate students, in its hundreds of published essays and books, and in its distinguished master and doctoral students, the UNM History Department ranks at the very top of western programs.³⁶ Those clear, persisting achievements are cause for celebration.

* * *

Yet, missed opportunities must be admitted and future goals laid out. UNM should have worked more closely with its administrators and fund raisers to establish an endowed chair in western history. Perhaps it would be well,

to forestall any intradepartmental conflicts, to fund the chair and name a recipient from outside the department in an underrepresented subject area such as political history, environmental history, or one that offers perhaps the best possibility of wide support, the history of science.

The section has not pushed much, either, for a comparativist in racial or ethnic studies. In fact, the department has never had a member who was trained or working in the field of comparative studies of race or ethnicity. It should have such a scholar on its faculty, so that students—and colleagues—would be encouraged to think more comparatively in those areas.

Too often within the department—and sometimes within the western section itself—state and subregional history has been treated as a down-at-the-heels-buffalo chip endeavor. Seen aright, however, such local studies, particularly if viewed from Annalist or Namierist perspectives, could produce the kind of in-depth case studies that have been illuminative and provocative in the historical field since the Second World War.

Looking forward, I hope that westerners will keep their emphases broad and diverse. Doctoral graduates should know the historiography of the field and the many analytical approaches to the subject. But the western professors should not overlook the importance of instruction in narrative history, particularly in the craft of writing. If David McCullough and Doris Kearns Goodwin help us to see that trained scholars can also write for the general public, we ought to do more to show our doctoral students how their dissertations can become their first book, written to be read, not merely to become a professorial footnote or to prove historiographical fetishes.

In addition, graduate students deserve more classroom opportunities—besides those of grading blue books and heading up discussion sections. They need to be experienced teachers before they leave UNM—not only for the practical reason of helping them land jobs but also to enhance the reputation of the western section as preparers of teaching scholars.

Can we do more with limited resources? Most of my forty years in higher education leans toward a negative answer. But I'm also convinced we can still stretch ourselves to be even better teachers, scholars, and colleagues without added financial support—if we choose that route. I recall my frustration when telling a UNM dean that he and previous administrators lauded the Anthropology, Psychology, American Studies, and other departments without naming History among its front-rank departments. I told him that I thought we had the best western section in the country. His reply: "Tell me about it, tell your department chair to let me know about this achievement." I thought then—and still think—we never do enough to tout ourselves. Would you be above telling current administrators about the strengths of the western sec-

tion, above bragging about it and giving evidence of its excellence? I hope not and urge you to do more to sound the tocsin for western history at UNM.

* * *

My final point: *New York Times* journalist Thomas Friedman has convinced us that the world is indeed flat, more and more global, and similar in so many of its interests, advancements, and needs, especially in the fields of technology and economic advancement.³⁷ Friedman's world is less tied to the mountains and valleys of its own individual interests. Although admittedly a giant leap, a similar flattening characterizes much of the most recent decade of western historical thinking and writing. The recent writings of Elliott West, Walter Nugent, Virginia Scharff, and Albert Hurtado, among many others, illustrate this historiographical flattening. Their articles and books seem less driven by clash-and-conflict themes that have dominated the field since 1970. In particular, Elliott West, in book after book and essay after essay, proves that a new complex historiographical West has come on the scene. In moving beyond the new western history, Professor West demonstrates that he and others with similar approaches can deal with conflictive events *and* colliding opinions and still provide a narrative of complexity that incorporates multiple perspectives and contentions. West also advances a provocative new interpretation, which he calls the Greater Reconstruction. This fresh approach demonstrates how westward expansion and the Civil War, once interpretively conjoined, can reconfigure American history of the mid-nineteenth century.³⁸

For the most part, the UNM westerners seem to be walking on this complex, integrative path. Perhaps they have been doing so over the past generation or two. In their teaching and writing, UNM's western professors are neither throwbacks to the old nor spearheads of the new. They occupy important and strategic midpoints between the traditional and the avant-garde. Even when they have participated in pathbreaking areas such as the twentieth-century West, ethnographic, women's, environmental, or transnational history, they have done so, by and large, in familiar story form. They have become venturesome conservatives, flattening out the terrain between the new and old, the narrative and the analytical, the well-trod and the cutting edge. For some, this middle-of-the-road tendency may have been the bane of existence; I consider it a major reason for the section's superb contributions. Most of the western contingent proves that they are aware of the "flatness" of recent western historical writing, and they are advancing it. Avoiding a hydroponic historiography nourished through windy assertions, hyped conflicts, and hot-house distortions, UNM western historians, instead, seem rooted in the fertile and stable ground of balance and breadth. So it has been, so it can remain.

Notes

1. Four sources have been especially useful in preparing this essay. First, Michael Welsh, "History of the University of New Mexico," University Archives, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. Welsh is a product of the university's western history doctoral program. Second, the best published source on the history of UNM is William E. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa: A History of the University of New Mexico, 1889–2003* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006). Third, Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, UL, UNM]. Fourth, e-mails from history faculty now teaching at UNM and from doctoral students enrolled in the History Department and specializing in western history.
2. I am defining *path-breaking* as a two-part shift: Path-breaking historians not only must be innovative in subject matter, they must be tradition-breaking in interpretive methodologies. Frederick Jackson Turner, in his new emphasis on the frontier rather than on European cultural legacies and in his utilization of social-science methods, clearly broke new ground. James Malin did the same in the 1930s and 1940s by stressing the close study of local history but also by his path-breaking use of census reports and other statistics. In addition to these two western historians, several colonial historians, such as Darrett Rutman, Philip Greven, and Kenneth Lockridge, in the 1960s and 1970s, were path-breaking in stressing community studies and utilizing cliometric approaches to study their New England communities. Although UNM historians dealt with new topics—the twentieth-century West, women's and environmental history, and transnational topics—they did so in quite traditional ways and thus do not epitomize the more complex path-breaking historiography defined here. For interesting discussions of turning points in American historiography, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Richard S. Kirkendall, ed., *The Organization of American Historians and the Writing and Teaching of American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
3. In his helpful essay, "A History of the Department of History," William M. Dabney states that UNM's first regional course was offered in 1909, but in his companion piece, "A History of the College of Arts and Sciences," he gives the date as 1915; see pp. 2 and 8 respectively. Both of these essays are part of an unpublished manuscript, "The College of Arts and Sciences, A Centennial History: 1889–1990" (1990). Copies of the essays are in the UNM Archives and the UNM History Department files.
4. Dabney, "A History of the Department of History," 194–95; Welsh, "History of the University of New Mexico," chap. 6, p. 34; Hill and Coan records, Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, UL, UNM; and *Bulletin of the University of New Mexico Catalogue*, 1915–16, 107–108. Coan's work is still frequently cited in monographs on federal Indian policy. For example, see Charles Florus Coan, "The First Stage of the Federal Indian Policy in the Pacific Northwest, 1849–1852," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 22 (March 1921): 46–65; and Charles Florus Coan, "The Adoption of the Reservation Policy in the Pacific Northwest, 1853–1855," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 23 (March 1922): 3–27.

5. Earl Pomeroy, "Old Lamps for New: The Cultural Lag in Pacific Coast Historiography," *Arizona and the West* 2 (summer 1960): 707–26. For a brief overview of Bancroft's career and influences, see Charles S. Peterson, "Hubert Howe Bancroft: First Western Regionalist," in *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 43–70.
6. Richard W. Etulain, *Re-imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 79–118; Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931); and Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands, A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, Chronicles of America series, vol. 23 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1921).
7. France V. Scholes record, Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, UL, UNM; Dabney, "History of the Department of History," 199; *35th Annual Catalogue, State University of New Mexico, 1925–26* (1926), 8; Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, 124; and *Albuquerque Journal*, 13 February 1979.
8. Marion Dargan, Lansing Bloom, and Frank Driver Reeve records, Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, UL, UNM; Marion Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood, 1895–1912," *New Mexico Historical Review* 14 (January and April 1939): Part 1:1–33, Part 2:121–42; 15 (April 1940): Part 3:133–89; 16 (January and October 1941): Part 4:70–103, Part 5:379–400; and 18 (January and April 1943): Part 6:60–96, Part 7:148–75; James T. Stensvaag, "Fifty Years of the *New Mexico Historical Review*: An Archival Record," *New Mexico Historical Review* 51 (October 1976): 269–80; Nancy M. Brown, "Sixty Years of the *New Mexico Historical Review*," *New Mexico Historical Review* 61 (October 1986): 341–52; and Frank Driver Reeve, "History of the University of New Mexico" (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1928).
9. Welsh, "History of the University of New Mexico," chap. 7; and Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, chap. 9.
10. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, chap. 9; and Stensvaag, "Fifty Years."
11. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, 153; and Dabney, "History of the Department of History," 201.
12. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, chap. 10.
13. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, 177; and Paul A. F. Walter, "Necrology: James Fulton Zimmerman," *New Mexico Historical Review* 20 (January 1945): 83–89.
14. Dabney, "A History of the Department of History," 202.
15. Lansing Bloom, George Peter Hammond, Marion Dargan, Dorothy Woodward, and Frank Driver Reeve records, Faculty Contract Files, University Archives, UL, UNM.
16. For Nash's classic work of western synthesis, see *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973). For details on Nash's career, see Richard W. Etulain and Ferenc Morton Szasz, eds., *The American West in 2000: Essays in Honor of Gerald D. Nash* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 1–5, 6–16, 186–98; and Ferenc Szasz and Richard Etulain, "Nash, Gerald," American National Biography Online, <http://www.anb.org/articles/14/14-91919.html>.
17. Margaret Connell-Szasz, e-mail message to author, 12 January 2011; Necah Stewart Furman, e-mail message to author, 26 January 2011; John L. Kessell, e-mail message

- to author, 2 January 2011; and Cheryl J. Foote, e-mail message to author, 31 January 2011.
18. See Albert L. Hurtado, *Herbert Eugene Bolton: Historian of the American Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); John Francis Bannon, *Herbert Eugene Bolton: The Historian and the Man, 1870–1953* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978); and David J. Weber, “Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands,” *American Historical Review* 91 (February 1986): 66–81. Cutter’s WHA presidential address appeared as “Prelude to a Pageant in the Wilderness,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 8 (January 1977): 5–14.
 19. Janet Fireman, e-mail message to author, 4 February 2011; Charles Rankin, e-mail message to author, 4 February 2011; Charles Cutter, e-mail message to author, 30 January 2011; and Richard N. Ellis, *General Pope and U.S. Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970). Several scrapbooks on file in the UNM History Department contain newspaper stories and other publicity about the expanding reach of the western section at UNM from the 1970s onward.
 20. Fireman, e-mail message to author, 4 February 2011; David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); Marc Simmons, *Spanish Government in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968); and John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico, 1540–1840* (1979; repr., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). Darlis A. Miller’s dissertation, finished in 1977, appeared as *The California Column in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). Miller also published *Mary Hallock Foote: Author-Illustrator of the American West*, The Oklahoma Western Biographies series (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).
 21. Earlier, M. Jane Slaughter, a Europeanist, and later Larry Durwood Ball, a westerner, were other UNM doctoral graduates hired back into the department. Ball was hired as editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 2000. Robert Himmerich y Valencia, Elizabeth Jameson, and John Kessell preceded him in the position during the 1990s.
 22. David Maciel, e-mail messages to author, 29, 30 December 2010; and Brown, “Sixty Years,” 349.
 23. After retiring from UNM, I continued to write and publish on the American West; see *Beyond the Missouri: The Story of the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).
 24. Jake W. Spidle, *Doctors of Medicine in New Mexico: A History of Health and Medical Practice, 1886–1986* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Day the Sun Rose Twice: The Story of the Trinity Site Nuclear Explosion, July 16, 1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); and Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000).
 25. The founding of the Center for the American West is detailed in UNM’s *Campus News*, 3 May 1990, and the *Albuquerque (N.Mex.) Tribune*, 19 April 1990. A reporter for the campus newspaper, the *New Mexico Daily Lobo*, quoted History chair Jonathan Porter as stating that the UNM History Department was “widely recognized for its work concerning the American West and Latin American studies.” In fact, UNM could boast that it had “the leading program in the country and the world on the American West.” *New Mexico Daily Lobo*, 3 September 1993. See also Davis,

- Miracle on the Mesa*, 310. The external Unit Review in 1993/94 saluted the nationally recognized strengths of the UNM Western Section, making no suggestions for its improvement. Allan Bogue, et al., "Review of the Department of History, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque," July 1994, on file in the UNM History Department.
26. Several anonymous e-mails make this point; also my personal observations and experiences inform this brief discussion.
 27. The historical editing project spearheaded by John L. Kessell and assisted by others eventuated in the publication of the letters and journals of don Diego de Vargas, Spanish agent of the Reconquest and later governor of New Mexico in the 1690s and into the early 1700s. This multivolume collection remains a work of remarkable scholarship. John L. Kessell, ed., *The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1691–1704*, with Rick Hendricks, et al., 6 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989–2002).
 28. Szasz and Etulain, "Nash, Gerald," *American National Biography Online*. Nash's WHA presidential address appears as "The Great Adventure: Western History, 1890–1990," *Western Historical Quarterly* 22 (February 1991): 5–18.
 29. Davis, *Miracle on the Mesa*, app. 7.
 30. Virginia Scharff, e-mail message to author, 14 December 2010; and Larry Durwood Ball, e-mail message to author, 30 December 2010.
 31. Professor Samuel Truett pointed out that the UNM History Department was thinking "across borders" and seeing them in broad, even global perspectives, in UNM's *Campus News*, 15 November 2004; and Samuel Truett, panel commentator, Colloquium on the Legacy and Future of Western and Borderlands History, 25 March 2011, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
 32. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987); and Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). The best collection representing and commenting on the new western history is Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991). Hutton quoted in *Campus News*, 7 October 1994.
 33. Two of Nash's essays were strongly worded criticisms of the new western history, see Gerald D. Nash, "Point of View: One Hundred Years of Western History," *Journal of the West* 32 (January 1993): 3–4; and Gerald D. Nash, "The Global Context of the New Western Historian," in *Old West/New West: Quo Vadis?*, ed. Gene M. Gressley (Worland, Wyo.: High Plains Publishing Company, 1994), 147–62, 183–84. For Nash's description of himself, see *Albuquerque Voice*, 3 October 1990.
 34. My presidential address appeared as "Western Stories for the Next Generation," *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (spring 2000): 5–23; Scharff's presidential address is "What's Love Got to Do with It? A New Turner Thesis," *Western Historical Quarterly* 40 (spring 2009): 5–21.
 35. C. Ruth and Calvin P. Horn Lecture Series and Etulain lectures, Center for the Southwest, University of New Mexico, <http://centerforthesouthwest.unm.edu/events/c-ruth-and-calvin-p-hornlecture>.
 36. More recently Arizona State University and the University of Oklahoma have challenged UNM for primacy in the western field. Yale and University of California, Los

Angeles, have always had small but very strong programs in western history. Revealingly, the University of California, Berkeley, after hosting the country's strongest program in western history in the 1930s and 1940s, seemed to lose interest in the field. Under the leadership of the late David J. Weber, the Southern Methodist University History Department has developed a robust program in southwestern borderlands history and studies and successfully competes with the UNM History Department for graduate students in this field.

37. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005).
38. Elliott West, "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly* 34 (spring 2003): 7–26; and Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story*, Pivotal Moments in American History series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially xvi–xix, 318–19.