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La Salina of the Estancia Valley, New Mexico

COMMUNITY USE AND PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, 1830S TO 1930S

Richard Flint

Salt has always been one of the resources essential to the establishment and maintenance of human communities. The mineral is an important component of the human diet, as well as that of livestock upon which people have depended for food, motive power, and transportation. In addition salt has proved to be a key ingredient in many craft and industrial processes. Human communities, therefore, typically devote significant energy to locating, developing, and safeguarding sources of salt.

The communities of New Mexico have been no different. By means of a succession of cultural, political, and economic conventions, the peoples of New Mexico have assured themselves access to the invaluable resource of salt. The most recent wholesale cultural, political, and economic transformation of New Mexico came about as a result of the incorporation of the northern provinces of Mexico into the United States between 1846 and 1848. That transformation involved the supplanting of one set of conventions concerning the ownership, availability, and use of natural resources, including

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salt, with another set of conventions. Generally speaking the change was from universal access and state ownership to private ownership and individual control over the resources. Because the change was suddenly and forcibly imposed, it entailed widespread and lasting hardships for the occupied peoples of New Mexico and resulted in windfall benefits for many of the occupiers. Naturally, the uneven advantages bred hostility. The subsequent history of New Mexico has thus been characterized by conflict over resources of land, water, wood, and minerals, including—from the earliest dates—salt.

This article focuses on one very important source of salt in north central New Mexico, the small salt lake known as La Salina, on the eastern margin of the Estancia Valley in modern Torrance County. The study briefly sketches the framework within which the salt of La Salina was exploited during 250 years of Spanish, Mexican, and Texas Republican political control between 1598 and 1848. Then the piece delineates the processes by which La Salina was appropriated as private property and by which public access to La Salina was halted. Finally, the article considers the reactions of former users of La Salina, primarily Hispanos, who were legally denied access to their traditional source of salt and compares those reactions with the responses of Hispanos from the El Paso area, who suffered a similar dispossession of salt in the 1870s.

The Estancia Valley represents the bed of a large ancient lake, roughly crescent-shaped, about sixty miles from north to southeast and fifteen to twenty miles in width. The valley lies between the Sandia/Manzano Mountain group on the west and the line of the Pedernal Hills and the southern extension of Glorieta Mesa on the east. Since the Pleistocene lake had no outlet, it concentrated minerals and salts in the runoff, and sediments accumulated over time. The result was a landlocked salt lake. Warming and drying trends of the recent geologic past have removed the water and further concentrated salts in the soil of the valley. For hundreds of years now, a pattern of rainy summers followed by dry falls has cyclically brought various salts to the surface of numerous shallow depressions that together cover several thousand acres along the eastern margin of the modern valley. Dry for most of the year, the depressions briefly become brackish to salty lakes in late summer. As the water evaporates during the fall, crystalline salt forms a crust on the lake beds and solidifies into blocks that float atop any remaining water. Not all of the lakes produce salt of equal abundance or quality. One lake in particular, an oval depression about a mile long from north to

south and half a mile wide from east to west located approximately four and one-half miles northeast of the modern community of Willard, has been known for nearly four hundred years as La Salina because of the large amount and fine quality of salt that it reliably produces.

La Salina was the premier source of salt for Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo American residents of north central New Mexico until the 1930s. Salt from La Salina had both culinary and livestock uses and was also widely traded. Before the arrival of Europeans in the sixteenth century, Indian peoples inhabited a series of pueblos on the east flanks of the Manzano Mountains, in the Galisteo Basin to the north, and in the Médanos (upper Tularosa Basin) to the south. Archaeological evidence confirms the observations of the earliest Spanish colonizers that these Tano-, Tiwa-, and Tompiro-speaking Indians engaged in substantial trade in salt from La Salina and other lakes in the area, both with other Pueblo groups and with nomadic peoples from the Plains.² The Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate wrote, "Salt is the universal article of traffic with these barbarians and their regular food for they eat it or suck it alone as we do sugar."³ In addition Indian salt-gathering parties came annually to the Estancia Valley. The scholar Paul M. Kraemer reports, "To some extent, a state of truce was observed to allow access to the salt lakes."⁴ That is, the lakes were not considered the exclusive property of any one group.

Although the earliest Spanish *entrada* into New Mexico, led by Capt. Gen. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, did not note the salt lakes of the Estancia Valley, all subsequent *entradas* did. All were actively on the lookout for mineral resources that could be profitably developed, one of which was salt. Hernán Gallegos, like other members of the 1581 Chamuscado-Rodríguez Expedition, was enthusiastic about the salt deposits of the Estancia Valley, writing that they were "the best ever discovered by Christians."⁵ Likewise, in October 1598, shortly after having established his headquarters at Ohke (San Juan Pueblo), Oñate toured the pueblos of the Salinas region and noted the salt lakes with "an infinite quantity of excellent white salt."⁶

In addition to the mineral's importance in the diet of the nascent colony of New Mexico, salt was a crucial component in the recently invented patio process for recovery of silver from ore. Coming from a prominent silver mining family of Zacatecas, Oñate was well aware of the potential value of La Salina and its neighboring salt lakes. Soon the colony was energetically exploiting Estancia Valley salt, first in the form of Indian tribute and then through mining directly overseen by colonists. In the first years of the colony,

missions were founded at the pueblos of Chililí and Abó on the east flank of the Manzano Mountains.⁷ A sizable colonial lay presence was also established in the Salinas Province, which stepped up exploitation of the valley's salt. By 1630 complaints were lodged against the overwork of Indians in transportation of salt.⁸ The silver mining and processing establishments of the Parral mining district in Chihuahua, always in need of salt, were sending caravans seven hundred miles north to the Estancia Valley by the middle 1650s.⁹

Spanish custom placed ownership of significant salt deposits with the Crown, which then could gain revenue by licensing its extraction and taxing its sale.¹⁰ However, royal ownership of salt was apparently never formally asserted in New Mexico, which allowed governors such as Bernardo López de Mendizábal to monopolize Estancia Valley salt.¹¹ Under López de Mendizábal's direction, enormous quantities of salt were harvested, some for local consumption (distributed from warehouses in the Rio Grande Valley) but most for shipment to Parral. Spanish colonists' heavy use of salt and Indian labor for mining and transporting it contributed to friction between Pueblos of the Salinas Province and Plains Indians, particularly Apaches. There was now neither sufficient salt for intertribal trade nor sufficient labor time to harvest it, even if salt was abundant. Apaches suffered shortages and attacked Pueblos and Spanish colonists in retaliation; this was one of the factors that contributed to frequent warfare in the Salinas region from 1669 through 1672. Shortly thereafter colonists and Pueblos all abandoned the Salinas Province.¹² From then until the late 1700s, Estancia Valley salt was procured by annual caravans that left Galisteo with armed military escorts.

After the protracted convulsion of the Pueblo-Spanish War (1680–1696) and the restoration of Spanish sovereignty, exclusive gubernatorial access to Estancia Valley salt was apparently not resumed. But danger from Apaches continued; therefore the governor announced an armed pilgrimage for salt each year. For example Gov. Enrique de Olavide y Micheleña's order in 1738 to the *alcaldes mayores* of the various districts announced the departure date (7 August) of the armed escort to all citizens and Indians in their districts. In a formulaic opening to the order, Olavide y Micheleña cited the "grave need" for salt and his own desire that everyone should have the benefit of its provision.¹³ All persons in New Mexico who wanted to obtain salt that year were expected to converge on Galisteo on the appointed day and to leave from there for La Salina in a group.

Danger from Indian attack abated after Gov. Juan Bautista de Anza's establishment of peace with the Comanches in 1786.¹⁴ Thereafter, access to

La Salina proceeded without the rigid organization of the days of armed escorts. With peace livestock and farming activities spread eastward from the Rio Grande Valley to the western margin of the Estancia Valley, down the Pecos River Valley, and along the eastern foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. For the next 150 years, farmers, ranchers, and salt merchants set their own schedules for harvesting the mineral at La Salina, but generally salt was collected in the fall of each year. There is no evidence that fees or taxes for salt harvest were ever imposed or paid. The lake was open to all, and salt was free for the taking.

In May 1890, U.S. Deputy Surveyor Clayton G. Coleman remarked, “the salt lake is mainly valuable for the deposit and continual formation of chloride of sodium, large quantities of which are continually taken therefrom by citizens of the country and hauled away.”¹⁵ Nearly twenty years later, H. V. Nye, Examiner of Surveys for the New Mexico Surveyor General’s Office, found virtually the same situation with regard to La Salina:

There is a large deposit of salt in this lake, which salt is in large demand by Mexican sheep men for many miles around. There are thirteen other salt lakes either partly or completely in this township. None of these deposits, however, are of sufficient depth to be of any commercial value.¹⁶

Pedro V. Gallegos, former rancher and store owner in Villanueva, San Miguel County, recalled journeying to the lake. In 1927 the teenaged Gallegos accompanied his father and two uncles on the four-day roundtrip to La Salina to obtain salt. They left early in October with four wagons and angled across the country to Willard, where they turned back east to La Salina. Dipping into the lake’s shallow water with perforated buckets, the men drained and loaded salt into sacks that were then piled onto the wagon beds. From the edges of the lake came the dark salt, *saltierra*, for livestock; from out in the lake came the fine, white table salt. Gallegos remembered that the “lake was full around with horses and wagons.” The Gallegos men met other ranchers on their way to or from the lake. People from all over the country were going to get their year’s supply of salt. There is a hint in Gallegos’s account of underlying tension between the Hispanic ranchers and Anglo American farmers who had begun settling in the Estancia Valley in the 1880s. Somewhat cryptically he said, “usually the old timers [on their way to get salt] just stayed away from people and noises and all that stuff.”¹⁷

A decade after the salt harvesting trip narrated above, access to La Salina operated on a very different basis. Gallegos's neighbor in Villanueva, Isidoro V. Lucero Jr., made two runs for salt in the late 1930s with a one-and-a-half-ton truck. When Lucero arrived at La Salina, workers of the salt company that now owned the lake already had the salt mounded in three grades under sheds nearby. The dark salt from the edges of the lake, used for livestock, cost about fifty cents a hundredweight.¹⁸

According to Gallegos, things were changing by the 1930s: "Those trucks start[ed] coming in. So the wagon deal was kind of slowing down and most of the people would rather pay somebody to go." But people kept going to La Salina: "There was never another place . . . , until that thing [the company] was closed," supposedly due to lack of salt.¹⁹

Unbeknownst to the mostly Hispanic people of Villanueva, Anton Chico, Belen, Tomé, and other communities who had relied on La Salina for generations was that their ultimate exclusion from free access to the lake had been set in motion by events in Texas nearly a century before. At the time that Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836, the new republic's legislature took two actions that, in the long run, determined who could and could not obtain salt from La Salina. First, by means of the Boundary Bill of 1836, the Republic of Texas laid claim to all Mexico's territory north and east of the Rio Grande all the way to the river's source in present-day Colorado.²⁰ The asserted boundary included most of the populated places in the Mexican state of Nuevo México: Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Santa Fe, Santa Cruz, Taos, Las Vegas, Pecos, and Galisteo. Clearly, the claim was a long-distance land grab. Nuevo México had not joined in the Texas rebellion, the battles for independence took place exclusively in south-central Texas, and Texan political or military personnel were not present in Nuevo México. When Texas was admitted to the United States in 1845, that preposterous claim was legitimized by the federal government and then served as a pretext for war with Mexico. The U.S.-Mexico War ended in 1848 with cession of New Mexico and California to the United States, which made it ambiguous whether the most populous part of New Mexico's territory was now part of Texas. Situated in the midst of territory legally disputed by New Mexico and Texas was La Salina.

The second step taken by the Republic of Texas that had eventual bearing on ownership of and access to La Salina was inclusion of Section 10 in the General Provisions article of Texas's 1836 constitution. Section 10 stated, "Every head of a family [who is a citizen of the Republic] shall be entitled

to one league and labor of land; and every single man of the age of seventeen and upwards, shall be entitled to the third part of one league of land."²¹ In 1845 Texas was admitted to the Union as a state. The constitution that established the government of Texas recognized the same "headright" for every head of household and every single, adult male citizen until July 1847.²²

Under these provisions, on 5 January 1846, Simon Prado, a single man, swore before the chief justice of Bexar County, Texas, that he had "arrived in the Republic of Texas previous to the 1st October, A.D., 1837 . . . and [had] resided in the same three years, and performed all the duties required of him as a citizen." As a result, Prado was granted a headright certificate, number 169, entitling him to 640 acres of land (fig. 1).²³ To redeem the certificate for land, the holder would need to have a property of requisite size surveyed somewhere within the limits of the state of Texas.

Historian Thomas L. Miller wrote, "The words 'land' and 'fraud' were almost synonymous in Texas. It began when Texas first began issuing land certificates."²⁴ He quoted the first Texas land commissioner (1837–1840) as saying "that frauds have been practiced in procuring the [headright] certificates from the Board of Land Commissioners must be evident to all."²⁵ Whether fraud was involved in Prado's claim is not certain, but his action immediately after receiving the certificate certainly raises that possibility. Later in the day on 5 January 1846, perhaps only minutes later, Prado sold his headright certificate for fifty dollars to a man named George Voss.²⁶ Between then and 1851, Prado's headright changed hands twice more, to Arnold Henckel and then to Henry Volcker.²⁷ Neither Voss nor his two successors redeemed the certificate by conducting a survey. Before that succession of transfers concluded, Prado sold his headright certificate a second time, on 3 November 1849, to Isaiah A. Paschal for forty dollars.²⁸

Paschal was a lawyer and native of Georgia who had moved to San Antonio in 1845. He was elected to the Texas State Legislature in 1857 and is said to have been a well-known land speculator.²⁹ Paschal was probably aware in early 1850 that the U.S. Congress would soon vote to truncate Texas's western territorial claim at the 103d meridian, thus securing for New Mexico what is now its eastern half. Clearly, he was also aware of the potentially valuable salt deposit known as La Salina within the territory about to be excluded from Texas sovereignty.

Paschal's knowledge on both of these points was made manifest in early 1850 when, on the basis of Headright Certificate no. 169, close relative George W. Paschal (also a lawyer and recent Texas immigrant) had 640 acres of land surveyed "on the table land or plain between the Rio Grande and the

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS }
 COUNTY OF BEXAR }

20 Acres. 2 Class.

BEFORE US TO CERTIFY, that Simon Prado

has appeared before us, the Board of Land Commissioners for the County aforesaid, and proved, according to law, that he arrived in this Republic previous to the 1st October, A. D. 1837.

that he is a single man, and has resided in the same three years, and performed all the duties required of any citizen, and having never received a certificate for the quantity of land for which he applies, he is entitled to six hundred

two and forty Acres of Land.

GIVEN under our hands at the City of San Antonio, this fifth day of January, A. D. 1846.

David Morgan, Chief Justice,
 And ex officio Pres't Board Land Com'rs

Thomas Whitbread, Associate
 And ex officio Cl'k Board Land Com'rs

Attest:
Robt. Adams, Cl'k County Court,
 And ex officio Cl'k Board Land Com'rs.

FIG. 1. SIMON PRADO, HEADRIGHT CERTIFICATE, NO. 169, SECOND CLASS (Courtesy Texas General Land Office)

Pecos River . . . as to cover and include said salt lake [La Salina].”³⁰ As later confirmed by the New Mexico surveyor general, Paschal’s one-square-mile La Salina Grant did include all of the salt lake except its extreme northern and eastern shores (fig. 2).³¹

How Paschal became aware of La Salina remains something of a mystery. The most likely possibility is that he heard about the salt lake from Spruce M. Baird or one of his colleagues. In 1848 in order to bolster Texas’s territorial claim, the state legislature created Santa Fe County, which embraced most of present eastern New Mexico. To establish Texas’s administrative presence in the new county, Baird was dispatched as judge of a Texan Santa Fe District Court. In the town of Santa Fe, Baird met a cool, if not hostile, reception. Frustrated in his attempt to open a Texas court in Santa Fe, Baird devoted some time to assessing the natural resources of the region.³²

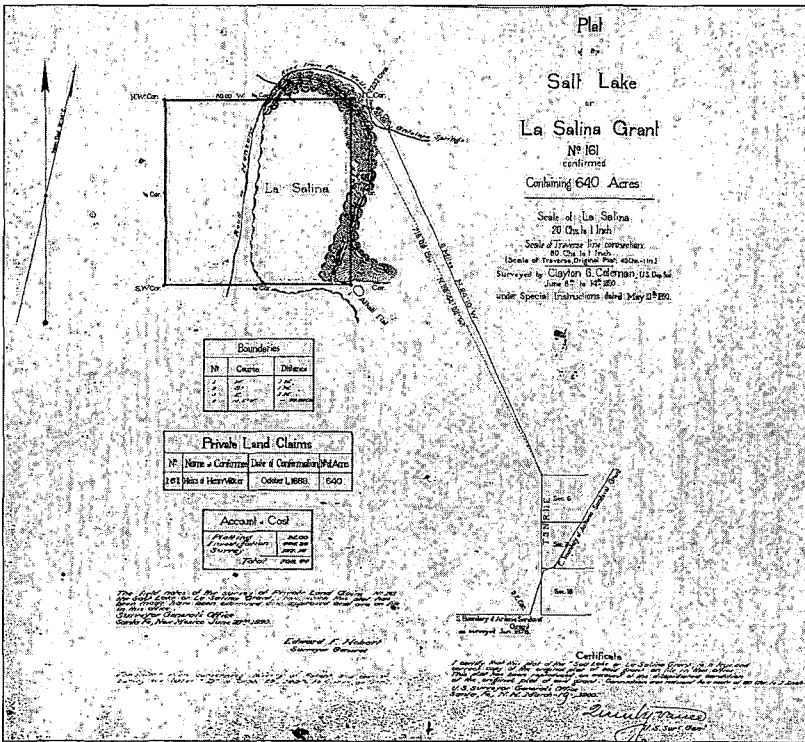


FIG. 2. PLAT OF THE SALT LAKE OR LA SALINA GRANT (Courtesy Archive of the New Mexico State Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management)

On 7 December 1848, he and seven associates addressed a letter to Texas secretary of state Washington D. Miller, applying for a concession to operate salt extraction from “some salines or salt lakes which the undersigned are induced to believe might be made a source of considerable income . . . situated between the Rio Grande and the Puerco [Pecos].”³³ The aspiring entrepreneurs did not know the precise locations of the salt lakes at the time, but it is extremely likely that what they had heard included La Salina and the Guadalupe Peak salt lakes much farther south. They noted that “there are other salines yet we are informed they cannot compete with the salines referred to in the facilities of making and the quality of salt.”³⁴ The group felt justified in their request to take control of the lakes because “under existing circumstances they [the salt lakes] are almost entirely useless to the population of the United States but are used extensively and almost exclusively by the citizens of Mexico and hostile Indians.”³⁵ Furthermore, “they [the Mexicans and Indians] get it [the salt] without paying any consideration whatever by going in companies sufficient for self protection against the Indians.”³⁶ Although Paschal was not one of Baird’s associates in the proposed venture, it seems likely that he first learned of La Salina either directly from that group or through the circulation of their correspondence.

Baird soon reconsidered his proposal concerning the salt lakes. He wrote a letter to Texas governor P. Hansborough Bell on 27 February 1850 with recommendations:

There should be laws declaring and perpetuating the Mexican laws in regard to irrigation, mining, and herding cattle. These things seem small and unimportant to us; but with a people who cultivate by irrigation, have no fences, and are fond of mining, they are all important. . . . The salines should also be declared free to all citizens of Texas, for they likewise have always been so [in Mexico]. These and the wood are perhaps two matters of more importance to them than all others.³⁷

Baird had realized that Texas appropriation of the important and widely used La Salina resource would only further antagonize the people of New Mexico and negate any chance that remained to confirm Texas’s claim to Santa Fe County. He detailed his position:

I was induced in connection with some gentlemen to apply to the government of Texas for a contract, to be regulated by the legislature,

for those salines. I was not apprised at the time of the importance of these salines to those people, and how dear they held the privilege of using them. . . . There is nothing that those people would rather surrender, than the free use of the wood and salines . . . the deprivation of their free use would have been sufficient to have raised a revolution in that country under the Mexican dominion.³⁸

His change of heart was too late, however, as the Paschals were already moving to convert La Salina into a private salt mine.

Before the Paschals could enjoy the anticipated benefits of a corner on north-central New Mexico's salt supply, Volcker came forward with proof that he and not Paschal had the legitimate right to Prado's headright certificate. The clerk of the Bexar County Court agreed and, with the stroke of a pen, Volcker became ostensible owner of La Salina. He had no apparent design of his own to acquire that particular property.³⁹

No evidence has yet come to light of any attempt by Volcker to physically take possession of La Salina or to restrict public access to the lake. The annual salt harvest continued as before. In fact people of New Mexico almost certainly knew nothing of the paper transactions that had gone on in San Antonio, Texas. However, when Volcker died, apparently in the late 1880s, his relative Eliza Volcker, acting as administrator of his estate, may have tried to take physical possession, which met with some resistance.⁴⁰ What form that resistance took is unknown, but Eliza Volcker appealed to the U.S. Congress to ratify the title, which would acknowledge the rights of Henry Volcker's heirs to La Salina. On 1 October 1888, a private bill was passed into law during the first session of the Fiftieth Congress, confirming the title of "the heirs, assigns, or legal representatives of Henry Volcker, deceased . . . to six hundred and forty acres of land situated in the Territory of New Mexico, being the tract of land located by virtue of a certificate, numbered one hundred and sixty-nine, of the second class."⁴¹ The New Mexico surveyor general was directed to contract for a survey to relocate the section in question, which was completed in June 1890.⁴²

Still, apparently no restrictions were placed on public access to La Salina, and the Volcker heirs must have taken little further interest in the lake. Or, if they did, they may have learned of the traditional status of the lake as a public resource. At any rate, they seem to have abandoned the property. In 1905, when the property taxes on the La Salina Grant were declared delinquent, A. J. Green paid the overdue taxes and was granted title to the lake.

By 1916 the Willard Salt Lake Company, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Julius Meyer, held title to the grant.⁴³ Again, little if any commercial activity seems to have taken place at the lake, and public use continued unabated. On 10 April 1919, the *Estancia News-Herald* reported the latest activity: "I. C. Sánchez, manager of the New Mexico Salt Refining Company was here Tuesday and made a trip out to the lake. Work will begin soon at the lake, and the prospect is for a very profitable year, as the demand for salt is even greater than was expected."⁴⁴

From 1921 to 1940, German Centers and De Lucio Aragón Swartz controlled the grant, either alone or in partnership. That period ended with ownership of the La Salina Grant embroiled in court proceedings. In May 1941, the legal difficulties were resolved, but the lake continued to change hands frequently. The succession of ownership was H. C. Pogue, W. E. Doolin, Carl B. Custer, and Frank Moser.⁴⁵

The multiple changes in private ownership of the lake between 1905 and the middle 1940s indicate possible chronic difficulties for the owners, perhaps in developing the salt lake as a commercial producer or in barring use of the lake to the many New Mexicans who habitually had annual recourse to it for salt. Apparently not until Swartz in the late 1930s or Pogue in the early 1940s did any owner successfully demand and receive payment for salt from La Salina. This is confirmed by Lucero's statement referred to earlier.

Although violence apparently never developed over the issue of access to La Salina, all evidence points to a widespread and persistent refusal by the mostly Hispanic users of La Salina salt to recognize any private claim to the lake. By the 1940s, commercial block salt, imported from outside New Mexico, was available cheaply from such outlets as Gross-Kelly Company in Las Vegas and the nearby Estancia Lumber Company. The availability of relatively cheap salt combined with changing attitudes of New Mexico's rural populace—now increasingly integrated into an economy based on cash exchange and wage labor—resulted in an essentially peaceful, if protracted, transition to private ownership of La Salina. According to Jacob Langley, who made the week-long trip from his home in La Loma to the Estancia Valley salt lakes in the 1930s, the trips had stopped for several reasons: "cheap salt from Carlsbad after the War [World War II], many fences blocking the way, and a large company bought the land that included the lake."⁴⁶

The transfer of salt lakes into the private domain was not always a peaceful endeavor. For instance within the former Mexican state of Nuevo México, the bloody conflict known as the El Paso Salt War erupted in 1877 when a

lawyer named Charles Howard, together with a number of other newcomers to West Texas, sought to take control of the salt lakes near Guadalupe Peak, east of El Paso. Hispanic residents of the Rio Grande Valley below El Paso were forcibly prevented from hauling salt from the lakes upon which much of their livelihood depended. Several murders resulted, including that of Howard himself. Intervention by the U.S. Army and Texas Rangers finally imposed privatization of the salt lakes and ended the militancy of Hispanos from San Elizario and other Rio Grande Valley towns on both sides of the international border.⁴⁷

Not directly related to salt but much closer to La Salina was the Battle of Estancia Springs. In 1883 principals and employees of the Bonanza Development Company, following a court ruling in their favor, sought to eject Manuel B. Otero from his horse ranch at Antelope Springs, not many miles from La Salina. After one uneventful meeting that followed between Otero and James G. Whitney of the development company, Otero returned from his home in Los Lunas with an armed group of supporters. A gun battle ensued in which Otero and Alex Fernández, brother-in-law of Whitney, were killed. As more and more supporters of Otero gathered, warfare threatened to break out. Due to the growing mob, the development company people were spirited away to Santa Fe. The company, however, maintained possession of the disputed property until the early 1890s, when “the Grant Commission finally threw the Antonio Sandoval Grant [upon which the company’s claim was based] out and settlers were allowed to file on the land.”⁴⁸

The Battle of Estancia Springs, the El Paso Salt War, and other such instances when outsiders controlled land use and access to essential resources doubtless had a chilling effect on those Nuevo Mexicanos who were inclined toward violent defense of their traditional, universal access to places like La Salina. After 1880 an influx of Anglo American farmers and ranchers, steeped in pervasive notions of private property, moved into New Mexico in general and the Estancia Valley in particular. At the same time, Hispanos increasingly migrated to towns and cities.

The combination of those circumstances meant that, over time, fewer and fewer people, as a percentage of New Mexico’s rural population, cared about traditional rights of access to salt. Thus, closing La Salina in the 1930s elicited a very different response than did blocking access to the Guadalupe Peak salt lakes in the 1870s. The threat to La Salina could no longer galvanize organized resistance. For most New Mexicans, private control of La Salina in the 1930s was not seen as either an economic or cultural threat.

Still, Gallegos's statement quoted earlier suggests that individual salt gatherers may have continued for years to surreptitiously gather salt at La Salina, even in the face of attempts at privatization.

The cases of La Salina, the Guadalupe Peak salt lakes, and the Tularosa Basin salt deposits (closure of which was also threatened in the 1870s) demonstrate the wholesale assault made by Anglo American newcomers in the late nineteenth century against what most Nuevo Mexicanos had taken for granted to be natural and self-evident legal institutions for dealing with their resources. The assault was not the product of consciously concerted action; rather it came about through the rapid physical penetration of New Mexico by a group that broadly shared conceptions of land tenure and use of resources that proved to be at odds with those that had prevailed in New Mexico for hundreds of years.

The tension surrounding the salt lakes does not imply an absolute opposition between Hispanos and Anglos in New Mexico on the subject of resources. As the case of La Salina shows, there were Hispanos who espoused and defended privatization of salt lakes. Likewise, there were Anglos, including even Baird, who supported community control and universal access to the resource of salt. Nevertheless, the issue of access to salt was widely seen as one of the raw spots between the ethnic groups. The conflict over natural resources is one of countless examples from around the world that can be connected to the spread of capital economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In New Mexico, capitalism was spearheaded and catalyzed by an entrepreneurial class of Anglo Americans, often in alliance with members of a corresponding class among Nuevo Mexicanos. Deep-seated cultural differences between agents of development and the bulk of New Mexico's population manifested as long-lived and widespread economic conflicts.

Nevertheless, it is rare today to find a person, even in the Estancia Valley or the neighboring communities that depended for centuries on the valley's salt, who knows of the existence of La Salina, much less its history—the persistent attempts to make it a private mine and the resolute, unorganized actions by which it was kept public and available to all New Mexicans for roughly a century.

Notes

1. U.S. Geological Survey, *Mineral and Water Resources of New Mexico*, report prepared for the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), 31.

2. Alden C. Hayes, Jon Nathan Young, and A. Helene Warren, *Excavation of Mound 7, Gran Quivira National Monument, New Mexico*, Publications in Archeology, no. 16 (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1981), 11.
3. Herbert E. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542–1706*, Original Narratives of Early American History series (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 220.
4. Paul M. Kraemer, "New Mexico's Ancient Salt Trade," *El Palacio* 82, no. 1 (1976): 24.
5. Hernán Gallegos, "Gallegos' Relation of the Chamuscado-Rodríguez Expedition," in *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580–1594: The Explorations of Chamuscado, Espejo, Castaño de Sosa, Morlete, and Leyva de Bonilla and Humaña*, ed. and trans. George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, Coronado Cuarto Centennial Publications, 1540–1940, vol. 3 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), 106.
6. Marc Simmons, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Oñate and the Settling of the Far Southwest*, Oklahoma Western Biographies Series (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 125.
7. Hayes, Young, and Warren, *Excavation of Mound 7*, 5.
8. Kraemer, "New Mexico's Ancient Salt Trade," 26.
9. Robert C. West, *The Mining Community in Northern New Spain: The Parral Mining District*, Ibero-Americana (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 37.
10. *Ibid.*, 38–39.
11. In this respect, New Mexico was similar to many other frontier regions in Spanish America. See Ursula Ewald, *The Mexican Salt Industry, 1560–1980: A Study in Change* (Stuttgart, Ger.: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1985).
12. Kraemer, "New Mexico's Ancient Salt Trade," 27.
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