

## OKLAHOMA PIONEERS IN MEXICO: THE CHAMAL COLONY

By John J. Winberry\*

According to the 1890 Census, "the unsettled area [of the United States] has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line."<sup>1</sup> The pioneering spirit, however, did not correspondingly disappear. Visions of new opportunities and expectations of a better living, as well as aversions to taxes and crowding, enticed many to seek new lands. At the turn of the century, they could still look south to Mexico, which under the presidency of Porfirio Diaz was seeking European and American agriculturalists to colonize its territory. American settlement in Mexico was not new. The Austin Colony arrived in the province of Coahuila-Texas in the 1820s; Southerners established themselves in the northwest and along the Gulf Coast after the Civil War; and American adventurers, lumbermen and miners could be found throughout the country.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1850s, however, Mexico remembered the Texas Revolution and the War of 1846-1847 all too well. Nevertheless, the nation, though "favored by God with a wonderfully fertile soil and abundant riches," was faced with "all the difficulties that affect small, poor countries."<sup>3</sup> Population especially had to be increased. In August, 1877, a letter from the minister of development to governors inquiring of potential areas for colonization in their states declared that Mexico would "make every sacrifice to attract worthy, hard-working foreigners."<sup>4</sup> Europeans were pouring across the Atlantic into the United States and Canada, and Mexico wanted to direct at least a small current of this flood southward. The country, however, faced some basic problems. Good, vacant lands had to be found; but most were held in vast haciendas, which would not be broken up for decades.<sup>5</sup> Despite improvements in communication and transport, most areas were still iso-

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Commerce, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. xlviii.

<sup>2</sup> G. D. Harmon, "Confederate Migration to Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. XVII (1937), p. 459; A. F. Rolfe, *The Last Cause* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 92, 110.

<sup>3</sup> Mexico, *Memoria de la Dirección de Colonización e Industria* (Mexico: n.p. 1850), p. 1, translated by author.

<sup>4</sup> M. González Navarro, *La Colonización en México* (Mexico, n.p.: 1960), pp. 1-2, translated by author.

<sup>5</sup> G. Wodon de Sorinne, *La Colonización de México* (Mexico: Secretaría de Fomento, 1902), p. 14.

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lated, and settlers feared for their personal safety against *banditos* or the arbitrariness of *rurales* and other government representatives.<sup>6</sup> Continued opportunity in the United States and Canada, the desire to settle with others of one's heritage and the many concessions offered by the American government and railroads also worked against Mexico's ambitions.

In 1876 Porfirio Díaz assumed the Presidency of Mexico and initiated three and one half decades of economic development. Encouraged by a cabinet of enterprising elitists, the Porfirian regime perceived Mexico's basic problem to be the laziness and disorder of her people. Immigration of Europeans, it was argued, would improve the economy and furthermore reduce the threat from north of the Rio Grande; perhaps their diligence also would diffuse outward and "improve the population qualitatively."<sup>7</sup> Failure to entice Europeans, however, brought a change of policy. In the 1890s Tamaulipas state removed restrictions on the immigration of Americans, and the national government followed suit.<sup>8</sup> Under the ministry of Carlos Pacheco contracts were let, and colonists began moving into Mexico, most committing themselves to agriculture and locating in the north or along the Gulf Coast. In 1895 only a few over 48,000 foreigners were resident in Mexico, but by 1910 there were over 116,000.<sup>9</sup> This total was below what the nation had hoped for, and among them, to Mexico's chagrin, were many Americans. In 1910 they, settling largely in the north, numbered 30,639. In Ensenada, for instance, Americans outnumbered Mexicans 100 to 1; one Mexican newspaper believed this was as ominous as the advance of an American army and predicted "the annexation by the United States of the territories of our frontier states."<sup>10</sup>

Despite such fears, the Porfirian government welcomed the Americans. Under the 1902 colonization laws each individual could claim up to 2,500 hectares—6,177.5 acres—of land and purchase it over a 10-year period, or up to 100 hectares—247.1 acres—for free if one-tenth of it was cultivated for 5 years. Colonists were exempt for ten years from military service, all taxation—except municipal—import and export duties and were entitled to bounties for introducing new agricultural or industrial techniques.<sup>11</sup>

The American colonies in Mexico were diverse. Among the most successful were and have been the Mormons who settled northwestern Chi-

<sup>6</sup> González Navarro, *La Colonización en México*, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> C. C. Cumberland, *Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 194.

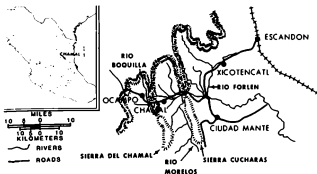
<sup>8</sup> González Navarro, *La Colonización en México*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Cumberland, *Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity*, p. 196.

<sup>10</sup> González Navarro, *La Colonización en México*, p. 89 and quote on p. 55, translated by author.

<sup>11</sup> Mexico, *Colonization and Naturalization Laws of the Republic of Mexico* (Mexico: American Book and Printing Company, 1905), pp. 1-3.

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A map showing the location of the Chamal Colony of Oklahomans in Mexico

huahua between 1885 and 1900.<sup>12</sup> Other colonists had no religious or cultural bond but simply wanted to pioneer successfully a new land. They arrived in Mexico around the turn of the century, prospered until the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and then were forced to abandon their new-found homes, never to return. Theirs were stories of dreams, commitments, hard work, disappointments and an overpowering will to succeed. The Chamal Colony, or Blalock Mexico Colony as was its legal name, was one such group; their chronicle was one repeated by virtually all those pioneering colonists of Mexico at the turn of the century.

The Chamal colony was located in the southwestern corner of Tamaulipas, just northwest of Ciudad Mante. The Chamal Valley is the northern part of a verdant basin a little over 450 feet above sea level within the eastern ranges of the Sierra Madre Oriental. To the east is the rather unpretentious Sierra de Cucharas, 750 feet, and to the west is the more formidable Sierra de Chamal, over 1,800 feet. What the colonists found when they arrived can be discerned partially from early descriptions. In the early 1820s Joel Poinsett, travelling north to Tampico, passed "the hacienda of *Chamal* belonging to the wealthy order of Carmelites, and then entered on an extensive plain covered with palm trees."<sup>13</sup> In 1826 G. F. Lyon descended the Cerro de las Cucharas "to a plain covered with fan

<sup>12</sup> N. L. Whetten, *Rural Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 155-158.

<sup>13</sup> J. R. Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico* (Philadelphia: n.p. 1824), p. 199. There is no mention in the title history that the Carmelites ever owned Chamal, but they may temporarily have acquired it because of a mortgage default. Mrs. M. A. Bateman to John J. Winberry, March 10, 1977: Author's personal collection; *Ibid.*, March 18, 1977.

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palms and acacias, [and] in about twelve miles reached a few huts called 'Chamal'.<sup>14</sup>

In 1902 Sheriff George Blalock of Greer County, Oklahoma, tracked a fugitive into Mexico. Whether he brought back his man or not, he did return with a favorable impression of the country south of the Rio Grande. His enthusiasm infected others in southwestern Oklahoma, and later that year Blalock and five other men journeyed to Tampico in search of land. Learning of the old Carmelite property of Chamal, the men visited the valley and decided forthwith to buy it as the site of a new colony.<sup>15</sup> They took an option from the Banco Hipotecario Internacional on the Chamal Ranch, a tract approximately forty-five miles by thirteen miles containing 314,000 acres. Returning to Oklahoma, the men formally incorporated The Blalock Mexico Colony and sold shares of stock. The land was purchased for \$55,000—\$30,000 in cash from stock sales and mortgage liens to the Banco Hipotecario Internacional of Mexico and the International Bank and Trust Company of the United States for the remaining \$25,000. The title deed was transferred to the colony on March 21, 1903, and all outstanding debts and accrued interest were paid off by March 6, 1905.<sup>16</sup>

The colonists embarked for Mexico in the last week of 1902 on two special trains, one for the thirty-three families and scattering of bachelors and the second for the animals and equipment. Southward across Texas they journeyed to the dusty border town of Eagle Pass, where they remained two weeks while Mexican and United States customs authorities went through their property to determine taxes and charges. The colonists were forced to pay import duties, which violated colonization regulations, but they subsequently were remunerated. Across the Rio Grande and on the Mexican Central Railway, they made their way to an isolated little station called Escandón, arriving there on March 3. After a few days unloading the trains, they set off overland on the last leg of the journey to Chamal. It "seemed then that the distance was twice as far as it really was, on account of the roads being so rough, they being merely trails where the burro and mule pack trains traveled from one village to another."<sup>17</sup> Finally, the party worked its way over the mountain on the eastern side of the valley; "the promised land lay just before us, in fact, our vision could rest on the palm valleys stretching out in front of us."<sup>18</sup> Even the thirst most likely was forgotten

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<sup>14</sup> G. F. Lyon, *A Journal of Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in the Year 1826* (London: n.p. 1828), p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> M. A. Bateman Interview, McAllen, Texas, November 1, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> *The Chamal Record* (Chamal, Tamaulipas, Mexico), July 16, 1912.

<sup>17</sup> *The Chamal Record*, March 16, 1912.

<sup>18</sup> *The Chamal Record*, March 16, 1912.

temporarily as the wagons descended the mountains and headed for the ranch headquarters of old Chamal. It was March 7, 1903, almost three months since their departure from Oklahoma.

Some 150 colonists were in the first group; they moved temporarily into the houses of the old ranch or set up tents along the Rio Boquilla. The land had not been surveyed, and the men explored and hunted in the valley.<sup>19</sup> Their commitment, however, was to agriculture; one family, for instance, imported the following:<sup>20</sup>

One carload of household goods and furnishings, and one team of good mules, two registered Durham milk cows, and one registered Durham bull, together with approximately thirty chickens, and three registered Berkshire hogs.

A second group of colonists left in November, 1903, and after their arrival, the division of land began. Each individual held twenty shares of stock from his initial investment and, as a result, was allowed to draw for one first-class quarter section, a second-class section and one third-class quarter section. In addition, he was entitled to one twenty-acre block just outside town and a building site in town. Although the twenty-share limit was to insure that "no man [would] monopolize the proposition . . . there was no rule whereby a stockholder had to stop purchasing; . . . the laws of trade were not let down on him and some had more than they needed and others more Dollars than shares."<sup>21</sup> To purchase ten shares might cost up to \$1,000. Drawings took place, and each shareholder acquired his land piecemeal. "Then trading commenced in earnest, each man trying to trade so as to block his land—many of them soon succeeded, while others did not."<sup>22</sup>

The town initially was to be located on a slight rise south of the Boquilla River. An alternative site was found soon after the initial decision and, after much argument, was agreed upon; "Chamal" was chosen as its name.<sup>23</sup> Work began on the homes; at first most were crude dwellings of local materials. Forked posts were set up at the corners and a single tall fork in the center of each of the two end walls. Horizontal bamboos, tied on by palm leaves, made the walls; bamboo poles were used for the rafters and purlins; and palm leaves provided the roofing material, being tied to the purlins by

<sup>19</sup> *The Chamal Record*, April 16, 1912.

<sup>20</sup> "Memorandum of Claim Before General Claims Commission, United States of America and United Mexican States, January 3, 1925." Agency File 97, Inc. 5, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> W. E. Frasier, "Colony Contract," (transcribed copy from private collection of Mrs. H. C. Stoups, Corpus Christi, Texas).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *The Chamal Record*, April 16, 1912.



The type of corner-timbered, palm-log house built by the colonists after settling in Chamal. The houses, following a typical American pioneer pattern, were of two rooms separated by a central hallway but were traditionally roofed with palm branches. Some were enlarged "and fixed up till they make real nice houses"

their stringy edges. Floors initially were dirt, but soon flat rocks were roughly fitted together to make stone floors. These crude dwellings soon were replaced by more substantial structures of palm logs. These were built in traditional log cabin style, the logs placed horizontally one over another with the ends notched and interlocked. Chinked and daubed, they made quite comfortable homes. Palm leaves still provided the roof, but later men ventured into the mountains to cut and make oak shakes used on some houses. Floors of pine wood became common in time. In 1912 the log houses were still dominant because only one stone building, the school house, and eight or nine houses of lumber were reported in Chamal.<sup>24</sup>

Upon their arrival the colonists began planting gardens but found that seasons were different than in the states. Crops planted in late spring, for instance, failed because the rainy season did not begin until about the middle of June, although its onset varied from year to year. Corn became the valley's major crop; land was broken in June with the first rains and in July, usually, seed was planted. Frequently more than one harvest was realized from a single field. The other two standard Mexican crops, beans and squash, also were grown. Another crop adopted by the colonists from the Mexicans was

<sup>24</sup> *The Chamal Record*, May 1, 1912, p. 1.

ajonjoli, a millet-like small seed plant, which was sold. Gardens included peas, butterbeans, tomatoes, turnips, radishes, onions, okra, peanuts, water-melons, beets, sorghum and cane. Orchards held banana, orange, lemon, pineapple, grapefruit, fig, mango and avocado trees.<sup>25</sup> Stock-raising also played a major role in the colony's economy.

For ten years Chamal prospered and grew. In 1906, according to a Mexican government report, the colony harvested over 56,000 bushels of corn, over 8,500 bushels of beans and about the same volume of potatoes. The colony also produced sorghum and various vegetables for its own consumption. There also were some 4,000 fruit trees of various types. Livestock included 50 American and 149 Mexican bulls; 3,000 cattle; and 70 American and 50 Mexican horses. A water-powered corn mill, one blacksmith shop and two general stores completed the inventory. In 1907 the population was set at 261 Americans and some 1,000 *indigenes* or Mexicans. In 1909 fifty-seven American families resided in the colony—fifty had been reported in 1907—and over 3,700 acres were cultivated. There were 100 head of American cattle, 30 mules and 300 hogs. There were as well 200 Mexican horses and 100 Mexican mules. The report also noted that the colony included one lawyer, one doctor, one surveyor and four school teachers. Roads had been built to Valles to meet the railroad; and a new bridge spanned the Rio Boquilla.<sup>26</sup>

In 1911 eighty-eight families resided in the colony.<sup>27</sup> A 1912 report listed fifty-four landholders whose property was valued at \$285,427.<sup>28</sup> The "village of Chamal" was described as:<sup>29</sup>

situated in the north end of the valley. It has: About 250 population; a Public Square set out in citrus fruits, shrubbery and shade trees and a public well on same; 4 Stores; 2 Blacksmith Shops, a Drug Store; a Meat Market; a Shoe Shop; a Grist Mill and a Saw Mill, both run by a steam engine; a Printing Office and a Paper; a 2-story rock School House 24 x 66 feet, nicely finished and furnished; a Post Office and 3 Mails a week; Doctors, Interpreters, Translators, Real Estate Dealers, etc., and a Church Building under construction. There are also several little Mexican settlements at different places over the valley.

<sup>25</sup> *The Chamal Record*, July 16, 1912; June 16, 1912; March 1, 1912; October 16, 1912; October 1, 1912; January 16, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> González Navarro, *La Colonización en México*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>27</sup> "Historical Statement," General Claims Commission, United States of America and Mexican States, Agency File 86, Inc. 29, Annex 1, Washington National Records Center, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Dispatch No. 530, "Value of Property, in this Consular District, owned by American Citizens, May 12, 1912," Box 3701/536, Decimal File 1910-29, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

<sup>29</sup> *The Chamal Record*, March 1, 1912.

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In 1910 opposition to Porfirio Diaz flamed into revolution. American authorities in Mexico realized the danger to American citizens. In April, 1912, the American consul at Tampico reported that the Chamal colony, "about 40 miles distant from the railroad, . . . would be in the most critical position of any in case of an uprising against Americans but about 100 fighting men can be mustered and would give a good account of themselves."<sup>30</sup> Chamal, however, was affected only indirectly in the early years. In May, 1911, bandits were in the vicinity of Chamal, and the governor of Tamaulipas dispatched *rurales*.<sup>31</sup> In early 1912 an election in Ocampo, the municipal seat in which Chamal was situated, resulted in the "outs" taking "the field on the side of the revolution." Troops were recruited, and some minor confrontations occurred, "but, so far, neither side have bothered the Americans here. The Americans don't take sides with either faction."<sup>32</sup> By the end of May, however, the situation worsened. W. E. Frasier, then president of the colony, wrote the American consul in Tampico, "we are infested with the different combatants of the Republic and it is hard to tell which is the worse. Those claiming to be Federals having passed through here yesterday from Morelos to Ocampo having taken enroute and borrowed altogether about eight or more horses that I hear of [know of?]." The consul advised the colonists to "refuse assistance of any kind to either party" and if animals are taken "to obtain receipts for same" or "affidavits of witnesses."<sup>33</sup> Some of the colonists began to feel their lives threatened, and in the summer of 1912 abandoned the colony.<sup>34</sup> Most stayed on, but the situation was deteriorating. Armed bands attacked, stole and destroyed colony property. To provide some protection, "a large fort or stronghold so-called" was built "around the schoolhouse . . . in which the women and the children were placed for safety," but at times they still had to flee into the mountains.<sup>35</sup>

Through 1913 bands of armed men attacked nearby towns as well as the colony lands. Requests by the colonists for protection were futile, because in

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<sup>30</sup> Dispatch No. 487, "Clarence A. Miller to Secretary of State, April 5, 1912," Box 3698/232, Decimal File 1910-29, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Services, Washington, D.C.

<sup>31</sup> Dispatch No. 279, Clarence A. Miller to Secretary of State, May 26, 1911, File 812.00/2025, Records of Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico 1910-1929, National Archives Microfilm Publication M-274, roll 13.

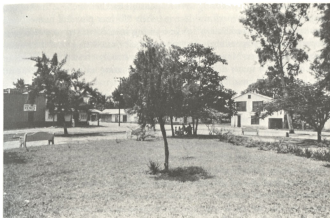
<sup>32</sup> *The Chamal Record*, May 16, 1912.

<sup>33</sup> Dispatch No. 547, Clarence A. Miller to Secretary of State, June 1, 1912, Box 3702/591, Decimal File 1910-29, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico.

<sup>34</sup> "To stay or not to stay, to run or not to run, that is the question. As for our part, we think we will stay, at least until something a whole lot worse than anything we have yet seen comes up. It seems, however, that some have decided to pull," *The Chamal Record*, May 16, 1912, "Memorandum of Claim before General Claims Commission, January 9, 1925," Agency File 102, Incl. 5, National Archives and Records Services, Washington, D.C.

<sup>35</sup> "Memorandum of Claim," Agency File 97, Incl. 5.





A view of the northwestern corner of Chamal's plaza or public square. It was 100 yards square and surrounded by business lots as evidenced by the old store across the street to the right of the photograph. During the time of the colony, the plaza was "fenced and in a splendid state of cultivation and put out to trees and shrubbery," including orange trees, "some lemon trees and two or three kinds of shade trees." The public well was located in the square's southwestern corner

many instances the bands and the local authorities were in collusion. In April a Chamal family was attacked, and in May an American at Xicotencatl was seriously wounded when trying to protect his family from armed marauders. In desperation the colonists appealed to President Wilson, citing the numerous assaults on themselves and their property; they concluded, however, that "to leave at the present time would mean the loss of our life's savings." In response the American consul at Tampico asked the American ambassador to intervene for federal troops to be stationed in the Chamal area. Once more, the request was futile.<sup>36</sup>

By the summer of 1913 not even a semblance of governmental authority remained in the area as armed groups threatened Chamal with death and destruction. The colonists were unprotected, and the American authorities

<sup>36</sup> "Historical Statement," Agency File 86, Incl. 29, Annex 1, pp. 2-4, National Archives and Records Services, Washington, D.C.

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ordered them to leave, refusing to be responsible for their welfare. In August, 1913, therefore, the Americans deserted their "former peaceful homes" and returned to the United States.<sup>37</sup> A few young men remained to watch over property, but they spent a good portion of their time fleeing into the mountains for their lives. Many of the colonists eventually crossed into Texas to remain there for many difficult months, anticipating an eventual return to their homes in Chamal.<sup>38</sup>

In August, 1914, the American government believed that the Mexican situation had stabilized and so advised the Chamal colonists. Many returned, eager to reoccupy and protect their property. One colonist, however, "found that more than one half of my cattle were no more and one third of my stock likewise; found houses and burned fences and orchards destroyed and in every way despoiled."<sup>39</sup> Fighting still raged between Constitutionalist and Villista forces, and the colony was threatened with sudden loss of property at the hands of one or the other faction. It got through 1915 successfully, however, and one colonist, buoyed by "one of the best crops," returned his family to Chamal in January, 1916, "hoping against hope that we were making our last move."<sup>40</sup>

Such optimism was soon thrashed. Villista forces continued to control southern Tamaulipas into 1916 and confiscated property at will. "Armies came through our valley at times, taking our horses from under our hands."<sup>41</sup> In April, 1916, one colonist was imprisoned by Villista forces, and a 4,000 peso ransom was paid to free him. Another colonist was murdered as he tried "to save as much as possible of his life times labor from the destruction of the Enemies to Civilization and of progress in that section of the country."<sup>42</sup> In May, 1916, the American consul at Tampico "said for us to take our women and children to places of safety," and some men took their families to Tampico. The cost of maintaining them there was prohibitive, however, and the American authorities offered no assistance.<sup>43</sup> The constant threats and terrorism visited on Chamal by both Villista and Constitutionalist forces increased, and the warring troops cut off escape routes to the north. As a result, beginning about the twentieth of May, groups began making their way into the mountains as a temporary refuge. Their goal was

<sup>37</sup> Frasier, "Colony Contract," p. 8; "Memorandum of Claim," Agency File 97, Incl. 29, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> An indication of the suffering experienced by some colonists is found in W. E. Frasier, "From a Bounteous Living to Poverty," (transcribed copy from private collection of Mrs. H. C. Stoups, Corpus Christi, Texas), pp. 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> Frasier, "Colony Contract," p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> "Memorandum of Claim, January 19, 1925," Agency File 97, Incl. 9.

<sup>42</sup> "W. E. Frasier to Secretary of State, June 3, 1917," Box 37408, Decimal File 1910-29, Record Group 59.

Lonesome Cove, about twenty miles north of town. The route was precipitous and difficult, and the colonists left family by family to minimize suspicion among the Mexicans. In late June the culmination of terrorism occurred when Constitutionalist forces surrounded the valley, plundered the colonists' homes and arrested all the men. Twenty-one were lined up to be executed, but the order was countermanded.<sup>44</sup>

After this a large number of colonists and virtually all the women and children began the long climb into the mountains. One group of fifteen, ranging in age from one to sixty-four, began the climb with a wagon and two pack mules. Steep ascents and water shortage faced them as they "tottered with children crying, women looking pale and men and boys badly worried." After two days, they had covered fifteen miles but were so exhausted that on the second night they "did not feel disposed to even venture on in the hunt for water."<sup>45</sup> On the third day they finally reached Lonesome Cove. From this refuge, sorties were made back to the valley for provisions to support the eighty men, women and children. They blocked the entrances to the cove and were resolved to protect it against any intruders.

As late as June 18, however, a few colonists remained in Chamal. Constitutionalist forces again swept into the valley to steal property. Some Americans, told earlier of this threat, tried to remove their animals, but the "soldiers" entered and searched the houses for weapons and other plunder. Villista forces followed this group. Some colonists were able to flee into the woods and fields where with much hardship they avoided capture, but the remaining Americans were arrested and held overnight in a single room expecting execution the next day. The next morning, however, they were told "to vamoose for we were not wanted here no how."<sup>46</sup> After this, all the Americans abandoned the colony and retreated into the mountains.

Into mid-July the colonists held their mountain refuge, rejecting demands from the opposing forces to surrender themselves and their guns. They requested help from the American authorities in McAllen, Texas, who passed word of the situation on to the State Department. Little apparently was done before a second messenger, on July 13, reached the American consul "at Laredo, Texas and informed him that the colonists had been robbed until they had neither food nor money to reach the border, and requested the Department's assistance in enabling them to reach the United States."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "W. E. Frasier to Secretary of State, August 12, 1916," File 812.48/3417, Internal Affairs of Mexico 1910-1929, M-274, roll 159.

<sup>44</sup> "Historical Statement," Agency File 86, Incl. 29, Annex 1, pp. 8-9.

<sup>45</sup> W. E. Frasier, "Flight to Lonesome Cove on Chamalitos" (transcribed copy from private collection of Mrs. H. C. Stoups), quotes on p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> "Frasier to Secretary of State," M-274, roll 159.

<sup>47</sup> "Historical Statement," Agency File 86, Incl. 29, Annex 1, p. 11.

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The stone, two-story school house was built in 1910 and cost between \$5000 and \$6000 Mexican currency. During the troubles of 1912-1913, a "stronghold so-called" was built around it to protect the women and children placed in the building for safety

The consul dispatched a messenger to arrange transport for the colonists. On August 13, almost three months after the first families had sought refuge in the mountains, fifty-three colonists reached Laredo. The remaining forty or so arrived within the following week. Consul Garrett wired the Patriotic Relief Commission: "The destitute Chamal colonists who are now arriving from Mexico . . . have been reduced from comparative plenty to abject poverty by persistent robbery many of them not even having a change of clothing left."<sup>48</sup>

The colonists had lost their homes, their possessions, their livelihoods, and they felt somewhat betrayed by their government. They had always considered themselves American citizens and had looked to the government for protection in Mexico and for assistance as refugees.<sup>49</sup> The government provided neither but did pay transportation to homes of families or friends where the colonists could get a new start. For ten years they had prospered in Chamal, but most would never return. Nevertheless, the same courage

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<sup>48</sup> "Alonso B. Garrett to Maude Wetmore, August 16, 1916," M-274, roll 159.

<sup>49</sup> "He never took an oath of allegiance to Mexico, nor threw off his allegiance to his Native Country, but held and looked to the same for protection and sovereignty." "Petition of James Edward Shafer, January 29, 1917." Box 4752Z20, Decimal File 1910-29, Record Group 59.

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and determination that had underlain their successes in Mexico would fire their drive to start anew. For many, however, the road to recovery would be long and arduous.<sup>50</sup>

My wife, daughter and little Sue went on to Doc Matthews, in Dallas County. Myself and 5 boys from 13 years down, landed at Osceola, Hill County, Texas . . . with forty cents in pocket and a very sick boy who was still sick on August 30th. I was instructed by Consul to write Department of State, at Washington to tell exactly how all this last trouble came about and ask for aid, which I did and was promptly informed that there were no funds set aside to help American Refugees. Now you see that I have been reduced to penury by the pranks of the United States and Mexico. . . . I am no beggar, but I need aid. Just give me all the work you can at living wages, will you, and I will not complain at you, partner.

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<sup>50</sup> Frasier, "From a Bounteous Living to Poverty," p. 4.