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1

SHEEP COME TO NEW MEXICO

The sheep industry of territorial New Mexico grew up from a foundation laid by Hispanic ranchers and merchants during Spanish and, later, Mexican sovereignty. The sheepmen followed traditional old-world husbandry practices, characterized particularly by open-range grazing. Sheep were well adapted to the land and usually provided a reliable, even essential, food source. Accounts of colonial New Mexico have attributed its survival largely or entirely to its sheep herds. In the words of Charles F. Lummis, sheep "rendered the Territory possible for three centuries . . . [and] made its customs, if not its laws." Over time, the flocks grew, surplus production developed, and sheep growing became commercialized. Sheep, along with some cattle and goats, became the principal basis for New Mexico's limited wealth and commerce until well into the territorial era. Sheepmen undertook large, months-long sheep drives south down the Camino Real to Mexican markets, which in time became part of the annual cycle of colonial life.

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The increasing livestock count, however, began to bring about notable changes in the New Mexico environment. The influence of sheep pervaded every corner of society.[1]

THE CHURRO

From the Spanish colony's founding in the late sixteenth century until well into the territorial period, sheep growing in New Mexico was based on the *churro*. *Churros* had been the common sedentary sheep of southern Spain; their lineage extends back to Roman times. They thrived in Spain, which has a climate and natural environment similar to that of New Mexico, and they were a good choice for the northern colony. Unimpressive in appearance—*churro* means "coarse" in Spanish—they were small, modest wool producers, but easy to feed and easily managed because of their strong herding instinct. Anglos referred to them as the common "Mexican" sheep. They could forage for themselves and withstand hunger and harsh climatic conditions. Most important in the semi-arid environment of New Mexico, they were drought resistant, needing to drink from a stream or pond only every few days. They could survive the rest of the time on succulent plants and the morning dew. The ewes were good mothers, and *churro* mutton was well regarded for its good taste. The *churro's* hardiness, drought resistance, and herding instinct made it well adapted to long trail drives, so it arrived at its final destination in good condition.[2]

Churro wool production was more than adequate for the needs of the *pobladores* (settlers). Because of its low grease content, the *churro* wool could be cleaned by beating, by the wind, or by hand without a great quantity of water, often a scarce commodity. The long, coarse, straight strands of its fleece were readily spun and woven by hand into cloth for clothing. *Churro* fleece was also useful for weaving blankets and carpets, although not for fine wool applications. Until the late nineteenth century, the *churro* flourished and multiplied in New Mexico.[3]

The Navajos came to appreciate the utility of *churro* wool at an early date. Having acquired the sheep by raiding the *pobladores*' flocks, and

possibly also by trade, they had become highly skilled weavers by the late eighteenth century. Writing in 1830 or 1831, mountain man and trader James O. Pattie noted that the Navajos were producing wool products markedly superior to the Hispanic output. Rightfully famous for their wool blankets and rugs, they preserved the *churro* breed and employed, and continue to employ, its fleece for those applications.[4]

THE SHEEP HERDER OF THE OPEN RANGE

While great changes came to the New Mexico sheep industry during the territorial years, the herder's life and work changed little during the entire period of open-range grazing. The herder's life during the Spanish-Mexican period and beyond was hard and dangerous. The herders generally came from the more impoverished rungs of society; in the early years many were captive Indian slaves or peones. A *pastor* had to be robust in body, since his life was, minimally, one prolonged hiking and camping trip. A skilled outdoorsman, he slept under the stars or in a small tent year around—rain, snow, high winds, or oppressive heat notwithstanding—usually trailing his herd several miles every day. He cooked himself two meals a day, at dawn and at nightfall. His small supply of provisions, a frying pan, a coffee pot and coffee, a sack of flour, some salt, a bag of red pepper, were packed on his burro. Herding was most difficult—"very, very hard," according to Abe Sena—during times of drought when the sheep had to be driven long distances to grass and water. Catron County rancher Earnesto Carrejo, who herded sheep with his father before World War II, estimated, from a long lifetime of experience, that a sheepherder's life expectancy was only forty-five to fifty years.[5]

Indian raiding parties were an ever-present danger both to the herder's sheep and to his own life, as he was often alone or in a small group, poorly armed and poorly mounted, far from any village. Occasionally villagers went out in search of a missing herder only to discover he had been murdered and his herd was under the sole care of his dogs. As late as about 1870, Juan Luna of the prominent sheep-growing family was

one of several men killed in an Indian raid on the San Clemente Land Grant. Teenaged herders were sometimes taken into captivity and, in the case of the Navajo, forced to herd sheep. Too poor to own a firearm, generally, the *pastor* defended himself and his herd with a bow and arrows he made himself.[6]

Sheep owners charged their herders with keeping their stock watered and fed, of course, but also with protecting the animals, which have no survival instincts, from predators, poisonous plants, accidents, freezing winter storms, disease (notably scab in later years), and prairie fire, as well as Indian raiders. After the annexation, Anglo thieves and murderous cowboys were added threats.[7] A successful herder had to be able to sense in advance the full array of dangers and take appropriate action when needed, and he had to deal with field conditions that were changing from day to day. Isolated as it was, his life was not monotonous. As South Dakota herder Archer B. Gilfillan described the life, "the sheep rarely act the same two days in a succession. . . . No one herding day is exactly like any other day."[8]

Herders learned their profession from their forebears, the children of sheep-growing families often taken out to the sheep camps from an early age. Abe Sena recalled that in his family, during the summer months when school was out, the children were put to work as "assistant herders" in charge of about ten sheep with new lambs, starting at the age of about twelve. Ninety-two-year-old Thomas Cabeza DeBaca remembered herding with his older brother on the Baca Ranch during the early twentieth century, at age six. And on the Navajo Reservation in the early twentieth century, where raising sheep was the purview of women, Mary Chischillie presented a flock of thirty lambs to her nine-year-old daughter, who became a successful flock mistress at a very early age.[9]

The herder's financial responsibility was large. Prior to the annexation, a 1,000-head flock under his care might be worth $500–$1,000, four or more years of his usual compensation, possibly $10–$20 per month at most. A single unfortunate incident could be devastating and turn an ambitious *partidario* into a peon if he was unable to cover

his patron's losses.[10] The best strategy in the face of an Indian raid was often for the herder to quickly flee but to send his dog to scatter the flock so as to render the theft of more than a few head difficult. Sheep rustling was otherwise easy and involved minimal risk.

Another shortcoming of the herder's life were the hardships endured by his family in his absence. His wife and daughters might have to assume, in addition to their traditional tasks, all the family responsibilities ordinarily performed by the man of the house, including fending off Indian attacks. Furthermore, they would be unduly subject to assault, rape, or seduction while their men were away, according to Gutierrez, a threat whenever men spent extended periods away from home, the case with soldiers, muleteers, and hunters as well as sheepherders.[11]

The profession of sheepherder in the West demanded more than physical stamina, skills and knowledge, and a sense of financial responsibility. A specific mental disposition, including but not restricted to stoicism, was required. The ability to work hard and responsibly in isolation was essential. In the words of Towne and Wentworth, who devoted years to the study of the western sheep industry, the successful sheepherder needed "the unique temperament which sends a man forth to live alone for weeks on end, devoid of human contact, but weighted with full responsibility." The herder's only companions, besides his sheep, might be his dog and burro. In the words of one Texas *pastor*, "*pastores* have very lonely lives. Sometimes they go for weeks with nothing to talk to during the day but sheep and goats . . . the voice of the coyote is company in the night's stillness."[12]

The sheep herder was not always completely solitary, since he sometimes worked together with a boy, possibly his son, or with another adult herder if the flock was large. And his *vaquero* would visit every few weeks. But his human contact was indeed minimal. Ranchwoman Agnes Morley Cleaveland might as well have been describing sheepherders when she noted of her cattle-ranching community in the Datil area, "We were all uncompromisingly self-contained."[13] Considering the array of requirements, it appears that the best herders must

have been men of a sort of mental acuity, although they were largely illiterate.

The Navajo followed a somewhat different practice from the Hispanic herders in the post–Civil War period. After the Navajo returned to their sparsely settled homeland following their wartime imprisonment at Bosque Redondo (Hweeldi), the women came to own family herds and assumed a central role in sheep growing on what became the Navajo Reservation, as described below. Although they had been raising sheep since the early eighteenth century, little is known about the extent of their ownership or their herding practices at this time. Living in extended family groups on the reservation, the women herders drove their sheep out from their semipermanent homes to nearby forage for the day, heading out in a different direction each morning to best preserve the grass. They sometimes drove the animals back home at noon and returned them to the grazing area later in the afternoon; they always drove them home at the end of the day. Under this system it was safe for unarmed women and children to manage the flocks. When the forage nearby was exhausted, the families relocated, in a systematic circuit, to a fresh, distant area determined by the season to reoccupy previously constructed hogans and to allow the forage land they had just left to regenerate. Instead of grazing their sheep on long treks far from home, following the availability of forage, they grazed their sheep close to home and periodically moved their homes as the nearby forage was consumed.[14]

Hispanic herders, as described by Abe Pena, took "pride in the profession." The men who "had the fattest lambs, who had the less losses" earned good reputations.[15] The herding profession could provide a decent life for those possessing the required attributes.

THE SPANISH PERIOD, 1540–1821

Domestic livestock were first brought to the land that became New Mexico in the sixteenth century by the first European explorers, the Spanish conquistadores. The earliest and most ambitious of their

explorations, the Coronado Expedition, 1540–1542, a search for gold and silver numbering over 1,000 individuals, included herds of cattle and sheep in the line of march, forming a traveling commissary. The conquistadores successfully drove some of the livestock all the way to central Kansas and back again to the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, proving the animals' robustness and utility under the semiarid southwestern conditions. In the ensuing years *conquistadores* mounted additional expeditions, important for the information they gathered about the Southwest and for their extending the Camino Real north into New Mexico. Hernán Gallegos, an astute observer on one early exploration, described the Galisteo–Pecos River area as "suitable for sheep, the best for that purpose ever discovered in New Spain."[16]

The Spanish established their first permanent settlement in New Mexico in 1598 under Governor Don Juan de Oñate at the confluence of the Rio Grande and the Rio Chama. The soldier-colonists, accompanying friars, and their retinues brought with them large herds of livestock. The colonists established a subsistence economy based on stock raising and farming, and they soon discovered, perhaps not unexpectedly, that their newly claimed lands were well suited for sheep. In the small villages, which grew up over the following years, sheep provided not only meat but also wool for clothing as well as milk and tallow.[17]

The prominent role of sheep in village life is perhaps not surprising since many of the Spanish emigrants to New Spain in the sixteenth century could trace their roots back to the Sevilla area, which was notable for livestock production, sheep being the favored stock. And many of these New World settlers had a background in farming and stock growing; some of them or their descendants became the leaders of the New Mexico colony.[18]

The colonists favored sheep over cattle because of their superior adaptability to the land. Sheep were also more difficult for Indian raiders to steal than cattle and horses, which could be stampeded and readily driven away. Sheep move slowly and cannot be stampeded like cattle. A quick raid often only scattered them, enabling the herders to recover the animals, or most of them, after the raiders were gone. Additionally,

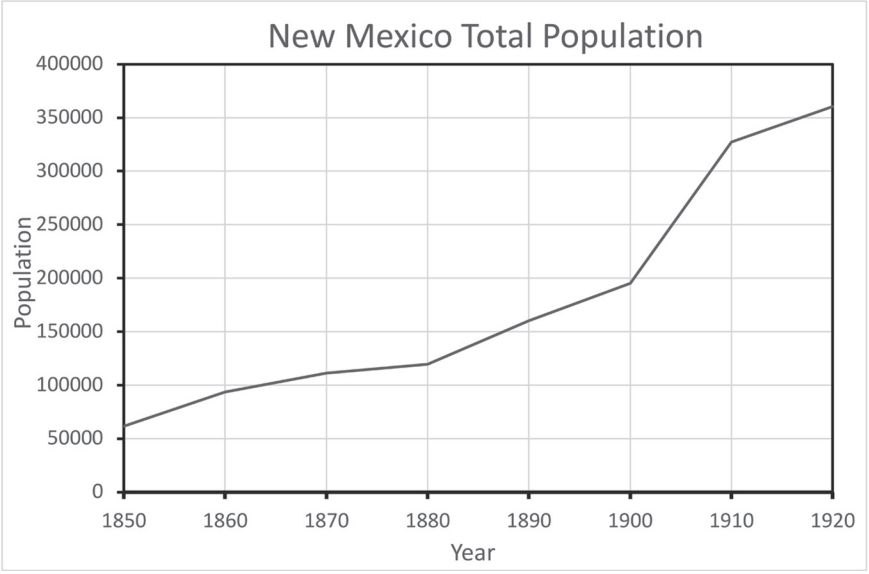

FIGURE 1.1. Total population of New Mexico versus year by decade, 1850–1920. The population increased at an accelerated rate after 1880 and the arrival of the railroads. The increase was even more rapid after 1900 due to the arrival of homesteaders from the East. Data are taken from US census reports, 1850–1920.

New Mexicans preferred their *churro* mutton to the beef produced by the cattle of the day, for which they substituted buffalo meat, obtained in organized hunts.[19] From the colony's founding onward through the US territorial era, New Mexico's sheep population greatly exceeded both its cattle and human populations (figures 1.1 and 1.2).

The church was a major factor in sheep growing prior to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. The friars established missions taking up large tracts of land near several of the Pueblo villages, land that they devoted to agriculture and grazing, exploiting Pueblo labor. They were supported by the encomienda system in which leading colonists, the *encomendaros*, were awarded grants of tribute imposed on Pueblo households, payable in maize, cotton cloth, animal hides, and sometimes labor. The *encomendaros* provided the missions with military protection from nomadic raiders and assistance in converting the Pueblos

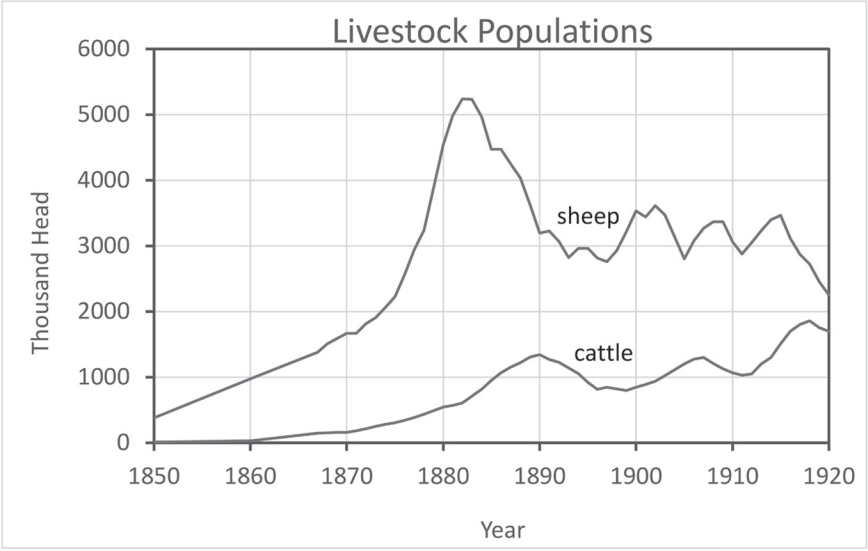

FIGURE 1.2. New Mexico livestock populations versus year by decade, 1850–1920. Series 1: Sheep. Series 2: Cattle. The sheep population reached a maximum peak of over 5 million head in the early 1880s, largely churros, and decreased thereafter to around 3 million as smaller herds of bred-up stock became favored. The sheep population always substantially exceeded the cattle population. Data for 1850 are taken from *Seventh Census, 1850*, which is not considered particularly reliable. Data for 1860 are taken from *Twelfth Census, 1900*, which revised the data from the 1860 census. This is probably reasonably reliable. Data for 1867–1920 are taken from New Mexico Department of agriculture, *New Mexico Agricultural Statistics* 44. This report contains the most reliable data now available.

to Christianity. The friars reported having fed many Pueblo Indians and Spanish colonists from their livestock reserves in times of famine, using this as a justification for the arrangement. The growing mission sheep herds proved the viability of large-scale, open-range sheep raising in New Mexico employing peasant or slave labor.[20]

The colony grew slowly but steadily, numerous small settlements and haciendas being established along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, mostly in the lower Rio Abajo, the lower-river stretch. The colonists located their capital at the site of Santa Fe around 1610. Mexican

officials sent occasional mission-supply caravans north to help sustain the fragile colony, which never became self-sufficient. In time, the colony's herds grew to a point where church and some civil officials, notably Governor Francisco de la Mora Ceballos and Governor López de Mendizábal, began rather sporadically to export sheep, driving them down the Camino Real for sale in Mexico.[21]

By the mid-seventeenth century, the caravans had expanded and assumed a more commercial character. The principal market for the sheep at the time was Parral, Mexico, 700 miles south of Santa Fe. Silver had been discovered in 1631, a boom ensued, and several mines were quickly opened, drawing together a considerable population of miners. In a scenario that would recur in future years under American sovereignty, local produce was insufficient to meet the increased demand for meat to feed the miners, and the shortage was alleviated by imports from New Mexico. The colony's sheepmen, for their part, found that large-scale, long-distance sheep drives across harsh, dry expanses to distant markets were commercially viable. The drives would multiply in importance in later years. The livestock population of the colony increased considerably in the years 1620–1670, as indicated by the magnitude of this trade. Large trail drives remained a fixture of the territory's sheep industry until the arrival of the railroads in the late nineteenth century.[22]

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 caused only a temporary setback for the Spanish colonization initiative. The survivors fled south to the small Spanish outpost of El Paso, where they remained in exile for twelve years until the Reconquest. Thereafter, the Spanish under Don Diego de Vargas, now governor, reoccupied Santa Fe, the haciendas, and several outlying villages in both the Rio Arriba and Rio Abajo regions. They established the villages of Santa Cruz and Albuquerque at this time. And by the year 1700, the population of the colony is believed to have been about 3,000 individuals. The colony assumed a more secular character, missions were abandoned, and church leaders' authority was reduced. The settlers repopulating the colony were largely private subsistence farmers and stock growers rather than soldiers. Government authorities

replaced the abusive encomienda system, a major cause of the Pueblo Revolt, with the less onerous repartimiento, in which tribute labor was imposed on individuals, rather than households, on a weekly basis.[23]

In the aftermath of the Reconquest, many Pueblos fled west to the Navajo lands, bringing along sheep abandoned by Spanish colonists fleeing the revolt. In a poorly understood cultural exchange, the Pueblos may have passed on sheep to the Navajos by some mutual arrangements. In any case, the Navajos took up sheep husbandry and wool weaving with alacrity around this time, along with Pueblo ceremonies and farming methods. By the mid-eighteenth century, they had developed considerable herds, although they had had little peaceful contact with the colonists. In fact, the Navajos continued raiding Spanish and Pueblo herds.[24]

From this time on, the colonists began to address their labor needs by the acquisition of captive Indian slaves acquired through a slave market that long predated their arrival in the Southwest and was conducted by the nomadic tribes of the region. The captives offered up for sale to the colonists had been taken forcibly from enemy tribes by nomadic war parties. After the arrival of the Spanish, the tribes at times extended their slave raids to the colonial villages. The *poblador* families generally absorbed the Indian slaves they obtained into their extended families, baptized them, and brought them up as Christians. They held the captives until they had worked off their cost of acquisition or longer, often many years. The captives intermarried among themselves or into the lower rungs of Spanish society, and, unable to return to their birth tribes, they and their descendants formed what became the large *genizaro* class in New Mexico society.

Later in the eighteenth century a system of peonage was introduced to address a continuing need for laborers. The more prosperous families contracted with desperate *pobladores* for their labor in exchange for taking on their debts. Such arrangements could lead to a lifetime of servitude for a debt of only a few hundred dollars in today's money when the patron arranged for a continuous succession of loans to the peon that could never be paid off.

The bound women and children were generally put to work as domestic servants or sometimes as weavers, captive Navajo women being valued for their weaving skills. The men were generally assigned to field work, including herding sheep, making them a factor in the sheep industry that extended until well into the territorial period. When offered their release, some captives and peones chose to remain with their masters. Southwestern peonage and captive servitude would persist for over two centuries.[25]

Sheep growing resumed quickly in the Spanish colony. The invading army confiscated some 900 head from Cochiti Pueblo as spoils of war, and the church imported an additional 1,500 sheep and some cattle to reestablish mission herds. The governor recruited additional colonists. The Spanish government provided in 1697 a large consignment of livestock from Mexico, which the colonial officials allotted to the settlers on the basis of need, most families receiving from ten to twenty-five ewes and two or three cows. Captain Fernando Duran y Chaves received thirty-eight ewes, which he drove to Bernalillo, where his family had settled before the revolt. This herd was the seed for a considerable family fortune. Chaves's descendants would distinguish themselves as soldiers, political leaders, merchants, and sheepmen through the territorial period.[26]

Besides livestock allotments, secular authorities adopted a land policy with long-term repercussions. Several officers in de Vargas's force received large tracts of land in compensation for their military service, while every family received a land allocation of some size. In later years many additional land grants were awarded to prominent, well-connected individuals for services to the state and also to communities.[27]

By 1715 the new social structure, headed by a small, emergent class of wealthy, patriarchal, land-owning families, was well defined. Several New Mexican families destined to be influential in later years, besides the Chaves family, began their rise at this time. The large land grants some families received provided the wherewithal for raising livestock on a commercial basis. The elite intermarried almost exclusively

among themselves, maintaining their pure "Spanish" identity, true or fictional, while building a tight, closed web of mutually beneficial commercial alliances. Never constituting more than a small percentage of the population, they came to possess most of the colony's wealth, which was largely in the form of livestock. These *rico* families thus dominated the sheep industry while the overwhelming majority of the populace, mixed-race *mestizos*, filled out the lower socioeconomic rungs of society, although many owned or had access to land and possessed a few head of sheep. At the very bottom of the social order were the *genizaros*; these detribalized, Christianized Indian slaves—largely Apache, Ute, and Navajo, forcibly removed from nomadic tribes—were estimated to constitute one third of the colony's population by the late eighteenth century.[28]

A new allocation of labor took place, with most of the colony's physical work falling to *mestizos* and *genizaros* living under the protection of a wealthy patriarch. They were engaged largely in subsistence farming, working irrigated fields along the river bottoms. Some were occupied tending the growing sheep herds of the *rico* families, which within a few decades surpassed the size of the pre-revolt mission herds.[29]

The colony stabilized and grew during the eighteenth century. The census of 1757 gave a population of over 5,000 individuals and nearly 50,000 sheep and goats.[30] Over half the population congregated in and around the towns of Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Santa Cruz, and El Paso; the remainder lived at the river haciendas, now grown to settlements of more or less interrelated families and usually dominated by one or two comparatively wealthy, sheep-growing patrones. The *ricos* lived predominantly in the Rio Abajo, ever the more prosperous part of New Mexico, where many of the private grants were located. In contrast, community grants, smaller land holdings, and comparatively dense populations of small farmers characterized the Rio Arriba. Political authorities viewed these grants as buffers against nomadic raiders.

By the mid-1730s, New Mexico's flocks had multiplied significantly, and the new class of sheep-growing *ricos* began, at least sporadically, to export sheep and wool to Mexico. The trade caravans resumed.

Chihuahua, settled around 1707 and now the metropolis of New Spain's northern frontier, was the principal trading destination, important silver deposits having been discovered in the area. Again a relatively concentrated population of miners materialized quickly, and local produce was insufficient to feed it. New Mexico mutton helped reduce the shortfall. The size of the colony's sheep exports apparently rose more or less steadily, and by the late eighteenth century a sheep trade with Mexico was firmly reestablished.[31]

Living conditions in New Mexico seem to have improved somewhat by the late eighteenth century. A measure of economic advancement in the colony during the eighteenth century is provided by the 1785 probate records for Don Clemente Gutierrez, known as the King of the Chihuahua Traders. His estate included 7,000 yearlings and two-year-olds being held for sale, 6,600 more sheep purchased from neighboring ranchers for fall delivery, and another 13,000 ewes held under *partido* contracts with twenty-four Rio Abajo citizens. The population of the colony in 1802 was reported to be 35,751, mostly farmers in the Rio Grande Valley. Sheep exports increased markedly after about 1785. Some sheep were driven as far as Mexico City, where the price doubled between 1794 and 1809. Markets in the towns of Sonora, Coahuila, and Durango opened.[32]

Governor Fernando de la Concha estimated that 15,000 New Mexico sheep were sold in Chihuahua in 1788 for about 30,000 pesos ($650,000 in 2020 dollars). Fifteen years later, in his economic report of 1803, Governor Fernando de Chacón stated that 25,000–26,000 sheep were being exported annually. Long of major importance to New Mexico's internal economy, sheep had yet to dominate the trade with Mexico, textiles and hides still being more important. This soon changed.[33]

By the early nineteenth century the trade caravans had become well-organized annual affairs. The New Mexico *commerciantes* congregated with their livestock and other trade goods loaded on *carretas* and pack mules at La Joya de Sevilleta, the last Spanish settlement north of Jornada del Muerto, for departure in November. The caravans now incorporated typically 500 men, later to expand to as many as 1,000,

including a military escort. Sheep and wool blankets were now the predominant export goods. The sheep, however, were owned by a small handful of merchants.[34]

The Chihuahua market could be treacherous because of large, unpredictable price fluctuations that could wipe out a New Mexican's profit margin or worse. Some colonial traders became deeply indebted to Mexican merchants. Additional problems included misunderstandings of business agreements, sharp business practices, and outright theft, all reflected in eighteenth-century litigation described in surviving documents. The New Mexicans, continually buffeted by difficult market conditions, operated as best they could under the prevailing system. Fortunately for them, the demand for sheep increased in the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century. A small group of New Mexico traders, the smartest or luckiest, managed not only to stay out of debt but to realize substantial profits.[35]

By the early nineteenth century, sheep had become an external trade item of considerable importance. About twenty elite families dominated the colonial economy, several being engaged in the Mexican trade. They traded imported goods with the Pueblos and the general colonial population in exchange for their produce. They extended credit to the cash-poor *pobres* against future deliveries of their crops and livestock, which were sometimes pledged several seasons in advance, reducing some of those struggling growers to peonage. The *ricos*' ascent was expedited by the recognition of sheep as a medium of exchange, capital on the hoof, as little hard currency was in circulation. Items of merchandise in the colony took on a value according to the number of sheep for which they would trade. Dowries often took the form of livestock, entirely or in part.[36]

Conditions changed slowly for the remainder of the Spanish period. New Mexico society was conservative, closed to outside influences, and largely ignored by an overextended, declining Spanish Empire. The sharp *rico-pobre* class distinction, believed more extreme than it had been before the Pueblo Revolt, became a defining feature of life in New Mexico from the latter eighteenth century on through the nineteenth

century. Ultimately, against a backdrop of social and economic changes, the colonists of the Spanish period established a substantial livestock population and a strong tradition of sheep husbandry, one of the most important legacies of the period.

THE MEXICAN PERIOD, 1821–1846

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821 after a decade of instability and armed conflict. Little is known about New Mexico commerce during this period. The Camino Real trade did decrease overall, and the Chihuahua sheep market collapsed. Without the outlet provided by the Mexican market, New Mexico's sheep population increased dramatically and seems to have reached unprecedented levels later in the Mexican period. A livestock census conducted in 1827 gave a total of 240,000 sheep and goats in the colony. The Rio Abajo became firmly established as the colony's dominant sheep-growing region.[37]

Under the new central government in Mexico City, the colony, never accorded much government support, experienced even greater neglect than in the past. Political, economic, and military unrest were endemic throughout the Mexican period. Mexican authorities reduced the already inadequate colonial military force to the detriment of public safety. Peace with the Navajos, which had persisted since 1805, came to an end in 1818, a particular blow to sheepmen whose flocks they raided with regularity thereafter. Indian raids intensified generally after 1821 when the impoverished Mexican government discontinued annual annuities to the nomadic tribes.[38]

After Mexican independence New Mexico sheepmen faced the same, or even greater, challenges. On the large drives to Mexico, trail expenses for the herders' food and compensation were significant, as in the past. And losses of stock from poisonous weeds and bad water along the way were likewise expensive. For a period of years starting in 1832, the Mexican government imposed onerous taxes on imported livestock, making matters even more difficult for New Mexico sheepmen. Furthermore, the government exacerbated the business climate

by introducing high import duties on merchandise and a complicated system of internal passports and shipping manifests. Also, large, unpredictable price fluctuations in the Mexican sheep markets remained a serious problem. In bad years the markets might be glutted so that there was no demand at all for New Mexico's sheep.[39]

Remarkably, the sheep industry not only survived but flourished during much of the republican period. By the early 1830s, New Mexico sheepmen were delivering 15,000 head annually to Durango alone, selling them at nine reales per head. Mariano Chaves (y Castillo), whose ancestor, Captain Fernando Duran y Chaves, had received a substantial sheep allotment from de Vargas, set a pre-annexation record for a single grower when he drove a reportedly 30,000 head to Durango in 1832. The trade expanded so quickly that in 1835 alone, the colonists exported some 80,000 sheep to Mexico, almost half belonging to the Chaves family. Despite unstable markets during the last decade of Mexican sovereignty, New Mexicans requested *guias* (permits) to export at least 204,000 head to Mexico between 1835 and 1840. And into the early 1840s they appear to have been exporting 30,000–50,000 head in the better years.[40]

The *rico* sheep-growing families were the predominant benefactors from this market. Further class consolidation ensued. About two thirds of the exported sheep belonged to members of the Chaves, Otero, and Sandoval families, while most of the rest belonged to four other prominent families—Ortiz, Pino, Perea, and Armijo. In total, only twenty-eight sheep owners from sixteen families delivered substantial herds during the Mexican period. *Partidarios* and other small producers might on occasion sell a few head of their own to their patron to be driven south. Santa Fe trader Josiah Gregg reported that the patrones paid these men between fifty and seventy-five cents per head and sold the stock in Mexico at 100–200 percent profit.[41]

At the time of the annexation, the Hispanic population was reported to be 50,000 but may have been much larger.[42] No real middle class existed. Since a single skilled herder and his dog could readily tend 1,000 head, year-around employment of only a few percent of the

Hispanic population, likely *partidarios*, peones, or *genizaros*, would have been sufficient. And existing land issues were restricting the further growth of the sheep industry.

Open-range sheep growing was a land-intensive activity. And the grazing lands were owned or controlled in large part by the *rico* families. On the average, about five acres of New Mexico grassland were required to raise a single sheep, although conditions varied considerably throughout the territory and considerably over time. During extended periods of drought, which might last as long as three or four years, the land could support considerably significantly fewer sheep and might suffer degradation if the grazing burden was not reduced. With Individual flocks often numbering about 1,000 head, land was a major consideration for every sheepman.

After the Spanish repopulation following the Pueblo Revolt, most of the populated areas fell within land grants awarded by the state, some of which encompassed hundreds of thousands of acres.[43] Grantees, in collaboration with political authorities, situated their lands along rivers or streams, which served for domestic water needs, irrigating crops, and, critical for sheep, watering livestock. They employed the bulk of the grant areas, the uplands extending away from the water courses and irrigated fields, for grazing. The grants remained intact well into the territorial period and in a few cases into the twentieth century. Sheep growers sometimes also used the unclaimed lands beyond the grant boundaries, public domain under the Spanish and Mexican governments, for grazing.[44]

Sheep raising on grant lands or adjoining public domain persisted after the annexation until the 1870s or later. The narrow ownership base during the Mexican period was a result of government favoritism in the awarding of private land grants to the well-connected elite, while even community grants were often dominated by one or more influential *rico* families. This land policy surely limited more widespread sheep ownership than would otherwise have been the case.[45] This was particularly true in the late Mexican period when Governor Armijo awarded a few immense private grants to a handful of influential citizens.

If the government land distribution policy discouraged more widespread participation in sheep ownership, the all too frequent Indian raids stood in the way of further expansion of the industry under any conditions. Licenciado Don Antonio Barriero saw a solution in government intervention when he wrote in 1832, "It may be said that, if New Mexico can establish a permanent peace with the wild Indians, and if it will provide its people with knowledge of the most advantageous methods of trading in sheep, the province will prosper from the income of this branch of industry alone as much as Chihuahua has profited from that of her mines. Happy the day when the government will extend its protecting hand to this territory; then these fields, at present uninhabited and desolate, will be converted into rich and happy sheep ranches!"[46]

The Mexican government, lacking in revenues and in a more or less continuous state of chaos, never acted on Barriero's suggestions. Later under American sovereignty his conditions were met with the help of the comparatively well-funded, well-equipped US Army, and the sheep industry flourished unprecedentedly.

As New Mexico's sheepmen contended with an array of difficulties, a new consideration materialized, likely a minor annoyance at first for a frontier society that lived with considerable hardship. The first Americans that arrived in New Mexico noted that grass tracts in the immediate vicinity of some villages had been significantly degraded. Climatic factors may have been an issue here. More pertinent, however, the diminished vegetation on these tracts can be seen as an early manifestation of the environmental costs of grazing, the lands nearest the villages having been heavily employed for that purpose. Nevertheless, immense tracts of high-quality rangeland remained in more outlying areas.[47]

Despite its problems, the sheep industry grew, but otherwise evolved slowly, if at all, during the Mexican period and was seemingly destined to persist indefinitely into the future with minimal change. Through the entire quarter century when they controlled New Mexico, distracted Mexican leaders, overwhelmed by serious internal problems, made no attempt to promote the sheep industry. If anything,

the opposite was the case. Onerous trade regulations and restrictions, inadequate military protection, and restrictive land distribution all conspired to suppress the full potential of the industry.

SHEEP AND NEW MEXICAN LIVES

Sheep impacted New Mexican lives in other ways besides providing sustenance and clothing. An immediate problem the colonists faced was the fact that their livestock were a magnet for Indian raiders. In an early repercussion of sheep ownership, according to Southwest borderlands historian James F. Brooks, Governor Pedro de Peralta relocated the initial settlement in 1610 to the more defensible site of Santa Fe, in part, because of continuing Navajo sheep and horse raids at the original location.

In another early development that affected many Indian lives, New Mexico governors Juan de Eulatel (1618) and Luis de Rosas (1637–1641) employed coerced labor, Pueblos as well as Apaches, Navajos, and Utes taken as captives, in their Santa Fe *obrajes* (workshops) to weave woolen goods to be sold.[48]

Later, on yet another front, as the colonial population increased, the availability of irrigable farmland for agricultural production in the Rio Grande Valley became inadequate, and sheep, providing a viable food source, took on increased importance. Ever more men became herders and consequently spent extended periods away from home. The larger growers, owning thousands of head by the late eighteenth century, became entrepreneurs of a sort, employing dozens of herders to manage their stock. The *ricos'* wealth and political influence increased with the size of their herds. The *partido* system expanded, and peonage grew when *partidarios* were unable to meet their obligations. The *rico-pobre* divide became more pronounced.[49]

In a somewhat related development, sheep played an important but indirect role in the nineteenth-century expansion of the Hispanic homeland outward from the Rio Grande Valley. The expansion was driven by a steadily increasing population and the concomitant need

to open new areas of settlement. It began after peace was established with the Apache and Comanche in 1790 and continued for the next hundred years. Sheepmen led the expansion and established new villages throughout much of today's New Mexico and in border areas of four neighboring states.

The expansion proceeded in phases. As the human population increased, the sheep population, of necessity, also had to increase. In the first phase, sheepmen from the larger established towns, parent villages Santa Fe, Santa Cruz, and Albuquerque, managing larger numbers of stock and in search of new grazing tracts, began driving their herds seasonally to summer pasture in more outlying areas. In time, the sheepmen, sometimes traveling in family groups, built more or less permanent dwellings to live in for extended periods in these new areas. They sometime irrigated patches of land for growing crops. Eventually, numerous offspring villages with year-around residents, including San Miguel, Las Vegas, Mora, and Taos, grew up at these sites. These villages in turn gave rise to a larger number of even smaller offspring settlements. Some families relocated from the larger, increasingly crowded towns to these newer villages to claim the larger cropland allotments that became available, inevitably following the paths opened up by the herders. Range degradation near the older, established villages does not seem to have been an issue in the expansion. It was driven predominantly, perhaps entirely, by population growth.[50]

Sheep had a considerable impact on the lives of the sedentary Pueblos. Although the Pueblos were an agricultural people, their crops, dependent on the uncertain, variable New Mexico weather, were insufficient to completely sustain life. Theirs was a hybrid economy. They augmented their agricultural production by hunting and gathering. The introduction of domestic sheep into their society by the Spanish changed Pueblo lives irreversibly. By the 1630s, the friars had established the sheep herds connected with their missions, reportedly as large as 1,000 to 2,000 head, far larger than the herds of most of the colonists. The comparative abundance of mutton that followed provided a significantly enhanced level of food security for the Pueblos. Moreover,

sheep stolen from both Spanish settlers and the Pueblos provided an addition to the diet of the region's nomadic tribes.[51]

By 1640, the friars had established many *estancias* (working livestock ranches) near their missions, employing Pueblo labor. Even earlier, perhaps as early as 1609, the Pueblos had acquired flocks of their own. As the sheep multiplied, the church undertook the export of surplus stock down to Mexican markets with the caravans and exchanged the stock for tools, hardware, weapons, and other badly needed items. The animals were also traded for mission furnishings, including vestments and organs. Sheep also funded religious activities.[52]

Under the influence of the missions and their sheep herds, the Pueblos, who had been growing cotton and weaving it into cloth, the purview of men, into cloth for nearly 1300 years, started converting their looms from cotton to wool. By the 1620s, the wool was apparently clothing the Pueblos as well as the friars. The conversion to wool was almost total by 1680.[53]

The Navajos were arguably more deeply affected by the newly imported livestock than any other group. By the late eighteenth century, sheep had become important to their subsistence also. And sheep ownership brought about important changes in their social structure. In a complex process sheep became unevenly distributed. A network of entrepreneurial headmen, leading groups of as many as a dozen extended families, built up large herds to the detriment of the poorer, dependent families under their protection.[54]

The arrival of the US "Army of the West" in 1846 under Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny ushered in a new political and economic order that, among other things, removed the Mexican government policies hampering the sheep industry. The industry would subsequently be turned on its head by American growers and mercantile capitalists who had begun arriving in New Mexico following Mexican independence from Spain. These men would now expedite an expansion and modernization of the industry at an unprecedented rate as they integrated New Mexico's sheep and wool into a burgeoning American market economy. This is the subject of the following chapter.