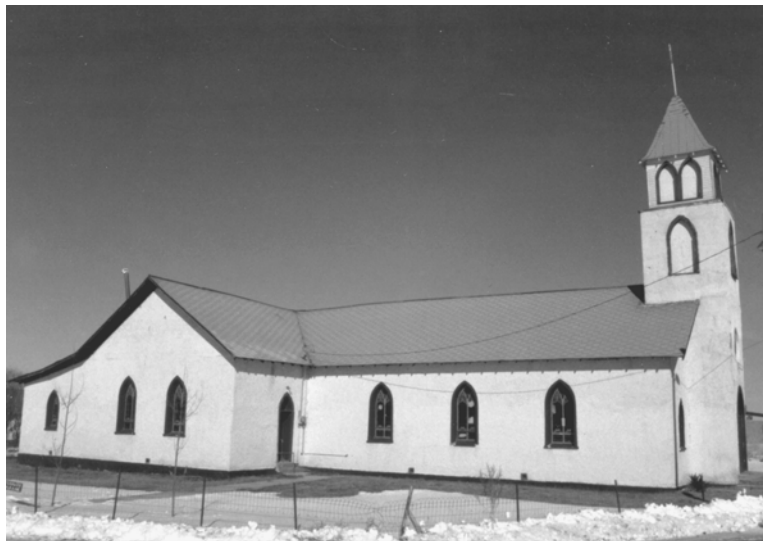


The Culebra River Villages
of
Costilla County
Colorado

Multiple Property Submission



St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Church

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County, Colorado

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County: Village Architecture and Its Historical Context, 1851-1964.

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Maria Mondragon-Valdez

organization Valdez & Associates

date June 1, 2000

street & number Rt. 1 Box 3-A

telephone 719-672-3678

city or town San Luis

state Colorado

zip code 81152

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature and title of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheet in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	1
F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	43
G. Geographical Data	62
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	63
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	64

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society
University of New Mexico
Town of San Luis

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Since their establishment in 1851, the villages of the Rio Culebra of Costilla County and their associated cultural landscapes have been representative of early Hispano settlement in Colorado. Elements of the Culebra village cultural landscape include domestic, religious, and agricultural buildings, long-lot field patterns, or, gravity-based irrigation ditches, or *acequias*, and a community pasture, or *la vega*. The vernacular architecture of the villages incorporated and retained hybridized styles characteristic of the outside influences introduced into the Rio Culebra during its period of significance. The siting of the villages at the southeast margin of the San Luis Valley and the resulting mosaic evolved in four distinctive periods between 1851 and 1964. The formative settlement period from 1851 to 1878 marked the early migration of Hispanos from Taos Valley, the establishment of fortified plazas, and the shaping of the agropastoral landscape. A central characteristic of this era was the introduction of the cash economy. Once this economy supplanted bartering, settlers, or *pobladores*, sold their agricultural surpluses to nearby Fort Garland and early mining camps in Colorado's Piedmont. The second epoch from 1879 to 1918 heralded the arrival of the railroad into the San Luis Valley. Laden with commercially manufactured materials and eastern emigrants with differing perspectives on land ownership and land use, the railroad stimulated the introduction of new building materials and construction styles. The intervening period between 1919 and 1945 marks a period of economic decline and then New Deal efforts to overcome the Great Depression by undertaking road, bridge, and other public works projects. The decades between 1946 and 1964 denotes the Great Society's post-war effort to combat persistent poverty by promoting standardized housing. Ultimately, this period marked the enclosure of the last remaining upland commons after a century of litigation by the heirs of the original *pobladores*. These four periods and their accompanying changes in the landscape and built environment reflect the evolution of Hispano vernacular architecture and cultural landscape in southern Colorado.

Geographic Setting

Situated in a nearly enclosed alpine valley known as *El Valle de San Luis*, or the San Luis Valley, the Rio Culebra settlements are variations of villages established in New Mexico's Taos Valley. Although the geography is similar to Taos, the Rio Culebra Basin is located 50 miles to the north at higher elevations. Nestled high in the eastern foothills of the San Luis Valley, the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range forms the eastern boundary for the Rio Culebra. To the north is Mount Blanca, also known to the Navajo as White Turtle Shell Mountain. Directly south is Taos County, New Mexico and to the west is Conejos County, Colorado. The lifeblood of the region, the *Rio Grande del Norte*, as it flows into the southern edge of the San Luis Valley, is the dividing line between Conejos County and Costilla County (Figure 1).

The waters of the *Rio Grande del Norte* ensured settlement of New Mexico's Pueblos and provided a seasonal habitat for migrating bands of Utes, Apache, and Navajo. Likewise, the river supported the Spanish-Mexican village-colonies after 1598. Colonial administrators conceptualized the *Rio Grande de Norte* as two discrete segments. Historically, they named the lower southern part of the river *Rio Abajo* and the upper northern portion the *Rio Arriba* (Figure 2). Wherever the river traveled in the *Rio Abajo*, its waters turned the desert into an arable landscape. In contrast, in the *Rio Arriba* the river transformed the semi-arid lowlands into a greenway or corridor. Accumulating snowmelt and

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rainwater from the mountains lining the *Rio Arriba* and the *Rio Abajo* sustained the level of the *Rio Grande del Norte*. Historically the Rio Culebra Watershed flowed downward to the Rio Grande. Because streams and tributaries in the basin were over-appropriated by 1935, water from the Culebra Watershed no longer drains into the Rio Grande.

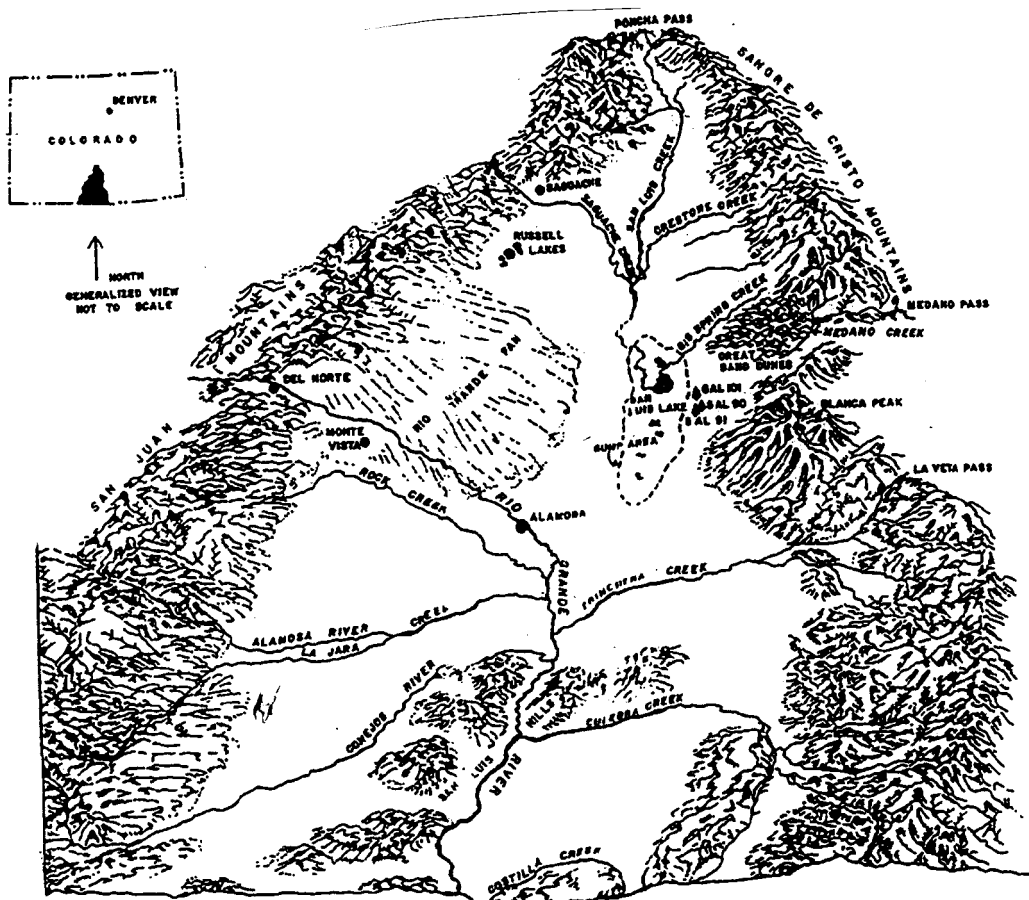


Figure 1. San Luis Valley, Colorado (Adapted from Emery et. al 1971)

The Rio Culebra Watershed was an ideal site for settlement because the riverine and riparian zones along the western flanks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range mimicked the microclimates in the Taos Basin. Endowed with a maximum of sun, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains absorb heat during the spring and summer months. Eventually, the mountains release stored warm air to the cooler, upper elevations where thunderstorms form torrential streams. After eons, run-off and snowmelt coursing off the Sangre de Cristos etched a serpentine form into the landscape. So pounced was the river's shape that early visitors named the site water snake, or *la culebra*. The Culebra Watershed includes Rio Culebra,

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Vallejos, and San Francisco Rivers and the tributary creeks of *El Poso*, *Pedregoso*, *Carneros*, *Bernadino*, *El Perdido*, *Rio Aban*, *Cuchilla Alta*, *El Puertesito*, *North Vallejos*, *Rito Agua Azul*, *Almosito*, *Fragoso*, *Torcido*, *Jaroso*, *Jarosocito*, and *Cuates* (Figure 3).

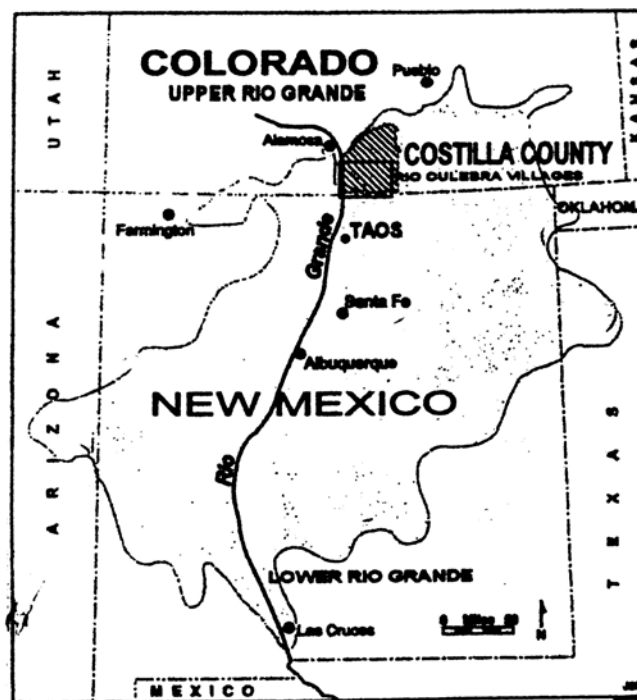


Figure 2. Upper and Lower Rio Grande Region (Adapted from Nostrand 1992)

Reaching above 14,000 feet in elevation, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are composed of Precambrian and Paleozoic igneous and metamorphic rock. In the process of mountain making, thousands of feet of sand, clay, gravel, and silt collected in the Culebra Basin. Geological activity in this region created a diversity of ecosystems. The variety of zones descending from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains include arctic at the peaks, alpine in the flanks and foothills, and semi-arid desert in the western mesa and plateau. In the Sangre de Cristo's subalpine zone high precipitation, low temperatures, and organically enriched black soils support forests stands of ponderosa pine, Colorado blue spruce, Douglas fir, and aspen. Dark soils along the foothills and the mountain rim sustain a woodland and mixed conifer forest. In semi-arid flatlands and on mesas sagebrush and blue gamma grassland intermixed with piñon, juniper, and cedar flourish despite the lack of rain. All along the well-watered and shaded stream banks and lowland meadows are riparian habitats filled with vegetation, cottonwood groves, and willows.

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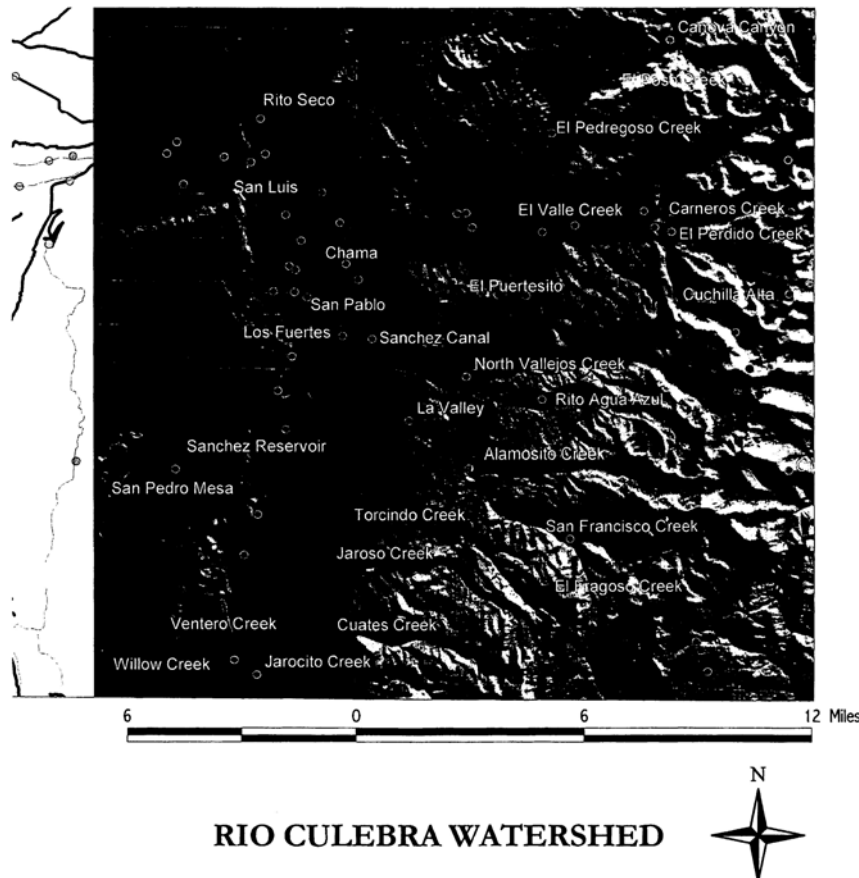


Figure 3. Rio Culebra Watershed (Courtesy of Valdez & Associates)

It is not surprising that the *pobladores* choose to situate their plazas in the Rio Culebra. By locating villages in this specific ecological niche, the *pobladores* demonstrated historical knowledge of the environs of the Rio Arriba.¹ Notwithstanding variations due to altitude, the *pobladores* replicated settlement patterns established by their ancestors in northern New Mexico since the eighteenth century. To accommodate the rise in elevation, cooler temperatures, and limited rainfall the *pobladores* modified construction techniques and planted short season crops. Of utmost importance to settlement was access to familiar resources. Since the *pobladores* were pastoralists (as their ancestors before them), they practiced transhumance. Transhumance required *pobladores* to move their sheep and cattle from the confines of the lower pastures, or *vegas*, to upper meadows for summer grazing. Without access to *la vega* and to the meadowlands of the Sangre de Cristos, there could have been no agropastoral settlement in the Rio Culebra.

To construct villages in the Rio Arriba, *pobladores* throughout the region required clay for adobe construction and rocks for foundations. Equally essential to the founding of any village was access to woodland forests of spruce, fir, pine, and aspen and stands of cottonwood, piñon, juniper, and cedar. Early settlers found all of these basic-building materials in different locations throughout the Rio

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Culebra Basin. For example, deposits of clay, rock, and sand lay within the basin's alluvial fans. Similarly, softwoods abounded along streams, in the lower foothills, and on mesas. Because softwoods proliferated at 9,000 feet in elevation, settlers used cottonwood, juniper, and pine to construct their first shelters. In contrast, hardwoods like Douglas fir, Limber pine, Engleman and Blue spruce grow above 10,000 feet (Figure 4). Although hardwoods were preferred for homebuilding, because tree harvesting at higher altitudes was very labor intensive, the *pobladores* first used lowland softwoods for erecting basic houses and corrals. Once roads developed and time permitted, villagers journey into the uplands to harvest the hardwoods necessary for managing adobe construction.²

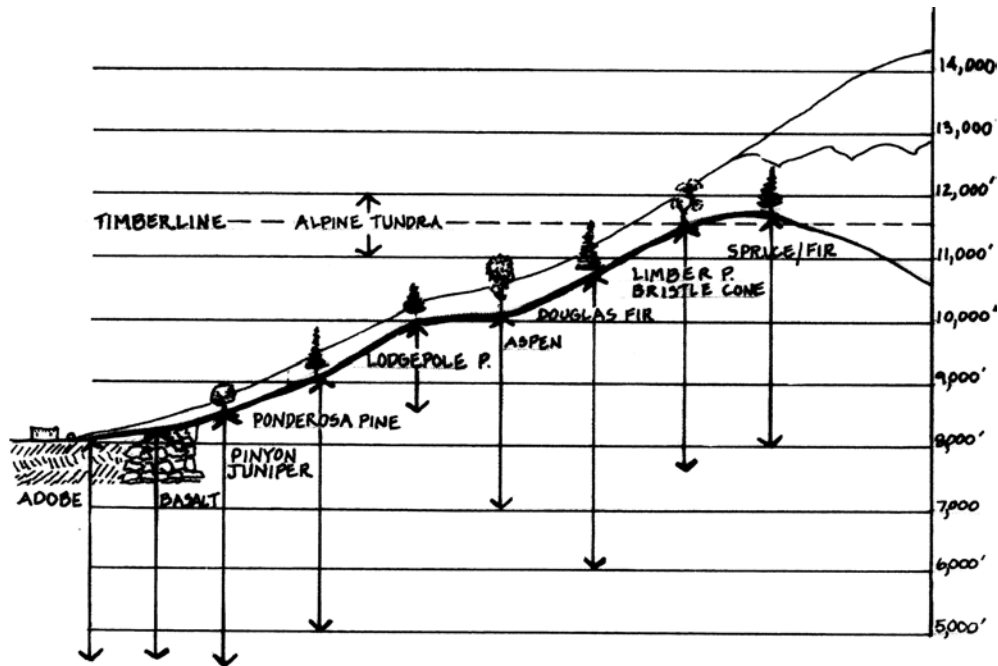


Figure 4. Elevation Zones and Building Materials (Courtesy of A. Valdez, 1992)

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Amerindian Occupants and Early Historical Visitations

Thousands of years before Hispanos attempted to establish the Rio Culebra, the San Luis Valley functioned as a hunting and gathering area for the Upper Rio Grande Culture. Living in small bands in the San Luis Valley's prehistoric wetlands habitat, the Upper Rio Grande Culture left hieroglyphic notations in the basalt outcropping and caves along portions of the Rio Grande. Projectile points, flints, and ruminants of prehistoric kill sites have been located north and west of the Rio Culebra. Remains of a prehistoric turquoise mine located at the boundary between Costilla and Conejos Counties provides evidence of diverse prehistoric activity at this site. In time, climatic changes and related disturbances in vegetation caused large game animals that Upper Rio Grande Culture depended upon to decline. In the absence of large game, smaller animals sustained extended families groups that migrated and perhaps settled in the valley. After a long period of cold, regional habitation patterns changed prompting abandonment of the region. Anthropologists think that the Upper Rio Grande Culture relocated to the Four Corners area, west of the San Luis Valley. Later, their offspring, the sophisticated Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellers, periodically returned to the San Luis Valley to gather feathers for clothing from the myriad of birds that nested in the wetlands. The progeny of the Ancestral Pueblos, the Pueblo Dwellers, used this area as a ritual space and a hunting ground. Sometime in the 1400s, the San Luis Valley was a common space for the Comanche, Jicarilla Apache, and various plains tribes who periodically hunted buffalo and antelope on the valley floor. Both the Navajo and the Southern Ute claimed the region as their territory, and the Campote Ute seasonally occupied the Rio Culebra.³ Despite seasonal habitation by Amerindians, time and development have obliterated much of the archeological evidence of aboriginal occupation. While no known prehistoric human remains have been unearthed in the Rio Culebra, a large number of projectile points, flints, pottery fragments, and grinding stones, or *manos* and *metates*, have been recovered on mesas and along river courses.

Shortly after the onset of the colonization of New Mexico in 1598, the Spanish may have briefly journeyed into the San Luis Valley to hunt buffalo. In 1694, Diego de Vargas made a journal notation after he camped along the Rio Culebra. Although the entry was brief, de Vargas referenced the landscape and wildlife of the Rio Culebra. De Varga's imagery of a place with "extended valleys and many *arroyos* with groves of trees" provides the earliest written glimpse of this site. Even more interesting was his observation that "it is evident from the dung which was found...[that] buffalo pasture here."⁴ Governor Manuel Portillo explored the valley 1761. Four years later Juan Maria de Rivera searched for minerals throughout the region. However, it is unclear if either party visited the Rio Culebra. In 1779, Juan Bautista de Anza cited his stay along the Rio Culebra, but made no mention of the landscape. The same year de Anza ordered cartographer Bernado de Miera y Pacheco to map New Mexico. Not surprisingly, Miera y Pacheco's map included the Rio Culebra by name.

Spanish theoretical claims to the San Luis Valley acknowledged the area as Ute domain. In fact, de Anza's journal referred to the valley as "the land of the Yutas." Violent conflicts and reprisals between Amerindians and Hispanos periodically took place within the confines of the San Luis Valley. Regardless of such dangers, the *pobladores* may have pastured livestock in the rich meadowlands as early as the 1790s. It is not insignificant that the Utes and Hispanos regularly traded horses along the banks of Rio Culebra in the eighteenth century. By creating a tenuous alliance that preserved peace until

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the late 1830s, the Utes allowed the Spanish to periodically patrol the periphery borderland and hunters from the Taos Valley to travel along the eastern rim of the Sangre de Cristos to reach the Great Plains.

The equilibrium between the Amerindian and Spanish did not go unchallenged.⁵ At least four parties of foreigners, or *extranjeros*, trekked into the San Luis Valley between 1740 and 1816. Jules De Mun was the first trapper to record French presence in the Rio Culebra. Like de Anza, De Mun briefly noted that his party camped along the Rio Culebra.⁶ The most infamous and well-documented excursion into Spanish Territory took place in neighboring Conejos County. In 1807, after traversing U.S. held Louisiana Territory, Zebulon Pike entered the San Luis Valley in the dead of winter. After locating a suitable site for an outpost, Pike supervised the construction of a small, well-fortified stockade. Pike kept a journal of his reconnaissance of the Indian-Spanish borderlands now known as the San Luis Valley. While Pike's poetic views of flowers blooming in winter reflected romantic fantasy of the period, he was foremost a soldier, surveyor, and scientist. Pike inventoried wildlife, terrain, and watercourses and described a "large road" leading eastward to the vicinity of the Rio Culebra. In due time fifty Spanish dragoons visited Pike's rude outpost. Despite assertions that he thought this was American soil, the dragoons escorted Pike to Santa Fe to explain his presence. Eventually, Pike gained his freedom. Once released, Pike published a *Tour through the Interior Parts of New Spain*. Pike's self-guided tour was so detailed and encouraging that American and French trappers regularly found their way into New Mexico. Of special interest are Pike's maps which cited the Rio Culebra by name.⁷ By 1819, the Spanish responded to increased American and French intrusion into the borderlands by manning a stone compound a short distance northeast of the Rio Culebra on the Sangre de Cristo Pass.

After generations of internal problems and external challenges, Mexican liberals overthrew Spanish rule in 1821. Shortly thereafter, the nascent Mexican government reversed Spain's closed-door policy on international trade. Following a diplomatic agreement to open commerce, traders forged a rough trail westward from Missouri via the Arkansas River and, crossing Kansas into the southeastern corner of Colorado, traveled south over Raton Pass into New Mexico. Commonly known as the Santa Fe Trail, this trade route provided *Nuevomexicano* with American manufactured goods. Later, an alternative to the Santa Fe Trail, known as the Trapper's Trail, departed from Taos and moved north into the Rio Culebra watershed, east over the Sangre de Cristo Pass, and onto the Great Plains. This regional transportation network not only altered *Nuevomexicano* lifestyles, material preferences, and architectural practices by the middle of the nineteenth century—it triggered a series of political and economic contests leading to the settlement of the Rio Culebra. Equally significant, trade relations in this era stimulated the shift from barter and subsistent lifestyle to a cash driven market economy.

With the opening of trade relations, Mexico allowed a handful of astute foreigners residing in the Republic to apply for land grants. By 1828, three individuals attempted to obtain a land grant on the Rio Culebra. Mexican authorities denied this application.⁸ In the 1843, family members of Carlos Beaubien applied for and received the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, which encompassed the Rio Culebra. To Mexicanize, Beaubien became a naturalized citizen and married into a prominent Taos family. Beaubien's carefully forged political and economic alliances with the New Mexico hierarchy helped him to obtain at least half of the acreage in the San Luis Valley and an even larger tract in New Mexico. Apparently, Beaubien convinced New Mexico's military and political leadership that settling the San

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Luis Valley and the northeast leg of the Santa Fe Trail was essential to occupying and protecting New Mexico's puerperal borderlands.

Settlement of the Rio Culebra Villages 1851-1878

Colossal grants to wealthy foreigners angered many New Mexicans. Fierce opposition was not unfounded. Carlos Beaubien used his son and brother-in-law and other silent partners to obtain the Sangre de Cristo Grant and the Beaubien-Miranda (or Maxwell) Grant. As the eventual owner of nearly three million acres, Beaubien's most strident challenger was Padre Jose Antonio Martinez, the first Catholic priest to minister in Colorado. Martinez was not opposed to settlement by the *pobladores* as he ministered to them. However, Martinez vigorously objected to the monopolization of land grants by Beaubien and other foreigners.⁹ The debate over the legitimacy of Beaubien's grants was a moot point after Mexico's conquest by American occupational forces in 1846.

In 1848 the defeated Mexican Republic signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with the United States, severing half-a-million square miles of its northern territory to retain its core southern provinces. Because of Mexico's losses, land titles of former Mexican citizens throughout the Southwest were brought into question and often abrogated by an American judicial system ignorant of traditional Spanish-Mexican land tenure and legal customs. All too often the process of invalidating land titles involved legal chicanery. Eventually, the courts diminished or denied a majority of the Spanish/Mexican land claims, in contradiction, Congress confirmed Carlos Beaubien questionable holdings.¹⁰ Against the foreground of a financially marginalized and politically paralyzed Mexico and the dominant occupation of American forces, Beaubien commenced populating his takings on the Rio Culebra.

The driving force propelling the old *ranchero* culture of New Mexico to settle the uplands of the Rio Culebra undoubtedly took place with the award of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. In 1843, Governor Manuel Armijo granted Narciso Beaubien and Stephen Lee a nearly one million acre tract known as the Sangre de Cristo Grant. Since Carlos Beaubien, Narciso's father had petitioned for an earlier grant in 1841, he made his second application through his son and brother-in-law to gain control of the northern extension of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. No doubt, these dealings contributed to the Taos Uprising of 1847 when rebellious Hispanos and Pueblos killed Narciso, Lee, and other American traders. The motive behind this outrage stemmed from the conduct of the occupational forces and traders involved in land grabbing. Carlos Beaubien eventually inherited his son's holdings and purchased the remainder of the grant from the executor of Lee's estate for \$100.00. Thus by the last years of the 1840s, Carlos Beaubien held an enormous tract but lacked the settlers to develop it.

To entice *pobladores* to reside on the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, Beaubien donated deeds, or *hijuelas*, to a few individuals and bartered or charged others for their tracts. Pursuing land grant custom, Beaubien offered the *pobladores* a home site, or *solar*, a farming plot, or *suerte*, and access to low meadow, or *vega*, and uplands commons, or *ejido*. Membership in a grant was highly prized because it provided security, group identity, and status as a landed neighbor, or a *vecino*.

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Following the traditions of New Mexico, the Culebra villages were riverine-oriented with the siting of settlements and field patterns determined by the proximity to water. Long lot fields, or *extensiones*, were parcels of land divided into parallel strips that ran between and at right angles to streams (Figure 5).

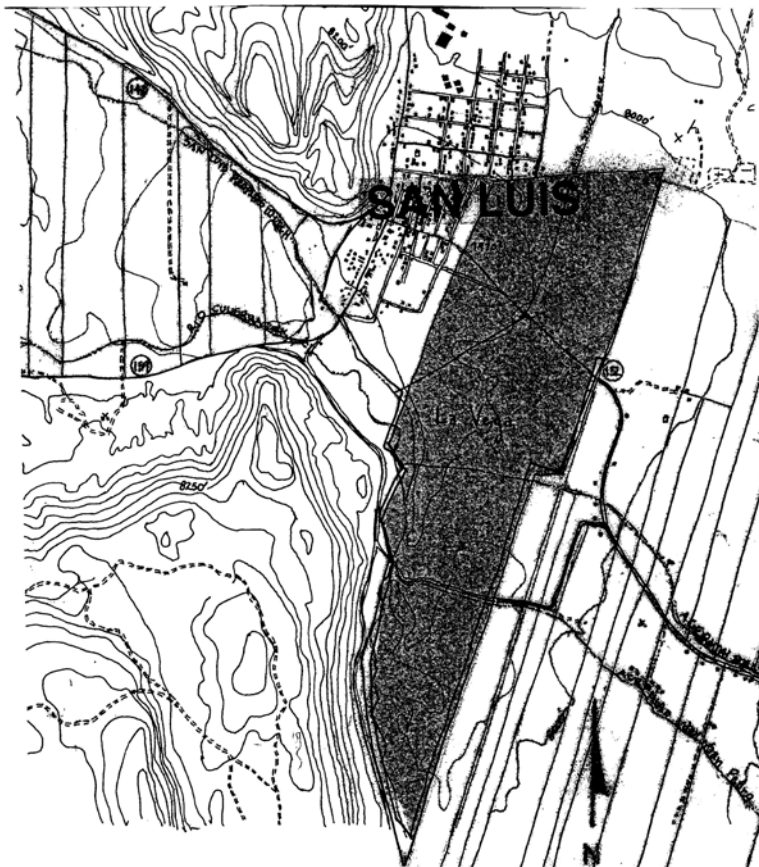


Figure 5. Long Lot Fields (*Extensiones*)(Courtesy of Valdez & Associates)

Aside from allowing all *rancheros*, or ranching classes, water frontage, *extensiones* provided a diversity of land types from marsh-like river bottoms, pastures, through irrigated plowed fields, to houses sites and, finally, dryer woodlands all the way to mountainous uplands.¹¹ Although some *extensiones* were for as little as 25 *varas*, some extended families purchased multiple parcels of 100 *varas* each. (A *vara* is a Spanish unit of measurement equaling approximately three geometrical feet). The distinct pattern created by *vara* measurements sculptured the landscape into long, narrow lots, defined on the north and south by the half distance between two rivers. Some properties were miles in length. However, since large portions of these holdings were in areas that were not suitable for agriculture or pasturing, the actual amount of usable land was much less. In keeping with Spanish/Mexican tradition, Beaubien dedicated a lowland *vega* for *pobladores* to use as grazing land in common. In a document recorded in 1863, Beaubien authorized “rights of pasturage, pastures” for

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“inhabitants of these villages.” The Beaubien document (recorded in Book 1, page 256 of Costilla County Records) was a legal formality as some *pobladores* periodically used sections of this pastureland before settling the grant. The Beaubien Concession specified that the *vega* wetland “remain uncultivated” since each family was entitled to graze four cattle, horses, and mules. By custom, *pobladores* did not graze sheep, goats, and pigs in the meadowland. Beaubien further promised *rancheros* common access to the uplands to pasture animals in summer, to gather wood for heating and building, and to hunt and fish. Without access to these natural resources, the *pobladores* would not have risked moving families into the uplands. Taken together, the settlement patterns along with the *extensiones* and *la vega* shaped the cultural landscape into a form that persists today.

By 1851, the *pobladores* commenced constructing plazas along the banks of Rio Culebra, San Francisco, and Vallejos each with their own saint-protector. At the east of the Rio Culebra was the small village of *San Pedro* (ca 1850) in honor of Saint Peter. A short distance to the south was the *Plaza de San Pablo* (1852) dedicated to Saint Paul. *La Plaza Medio* (ca 1851) renamed *San Luis de la Culebra*, under the protection of *Santa Anna* and *Santo Santiago*, was the center of village establishment. At *La Culebra Abajo*, or the lower Culebra, was the smallest village of San Acacio (ca 1850-53), named in honor of Santo Acacio. At the high fork of the Rio Culebra was *Nuestra Senora del Rosario* or Chama (likely established after 1863). *La plaza de San Francisco* (ca 1853-4), was located along *El Rio de Francisco* (also known as *El Rito de Gregorio*) and dedicated to the spiritual care of Saint Francis. The final village, *Los Fuertes*, was situated midway between Chama and San Francisco, near *Rio de los Vallejos*. *Los Fuertes*, meaning little fortress, fell to the guardianship of San Isidro (the patron of farmers). The *pobladores* place naming favored saint-protectors because the villagers were overwhelmingly Catholic as their ancestors before them. Denoting the landscape and villages after important religious symbols mirrors the religious and social values of the *pobladores* of the Rio Culebra and the Hispano culture of the Rio Arriba.

At each of the first three villages constructed along the floodplain of the Rio Culebra, *pobladores* sited their small, fortified plazas on high ground. Initially, mud-plastered log construction known as *jacals* formed the plaza. Roughly fabricated using 4-6 inch diameter logs placed side-by-side vertically in a trench and chinked with mud, *jacals* offered temporary housing for the harried settlers. Builders added multiple layers of mud plaster to the interior and exterior to cover cracks and as a thick finish. To strengthen the walls laterally and to support the wood beams, or *vigas*, *pobladores* laid a horizontal wooden bond beam at top of the wall. For roofs, builders placed thin logs, or *latillas*, across the top of the *vigas* finally layering the skeletal frame with grass and willows and added a firmly packed dirt base.

The *pobladores* created the plaza by constructing individual structures side-by-side. Single file rooms, shaped into a rectangle plan and unified with a contiguous flat roof created a fortress-like outpost. All doorways faced an inner courtyard. To protect the plaza from attack the structures were windowless, encased with two or three feet thick walls, and topped with an earthen roof. A parapet, or *pretil*, raised a foot above the edge of the roof offered further protection during raids. To restrict access from the outside into the compound *pobladores* constructed fortified wooden gates.

Each structure had a single door, an inner corner fireplace, or *fogon mexicano*, and an earthen floor that was well tamped, sprinkled with water, and swept daily to keep it smooth and even. The interior of *jacals* functioned as a multi-purpose space for preparing and eating meals, socializing, and

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sleeping. With the plaza compound creating a rectangular form, there was a common inner courtyard shared by all inhabitants. The self-sufficient courtyard had adobe ovens, or *hornos*, small gardens, a stockade for animals, a well, and, most likely, an outhouse. *La Plaza Medio* was fortunate to have a naturally occurring artesian spring in the plaza to avoid having the water supply dammed during an attack. To evade over-crowding, *pobladores* built inverted “L” or “U” shaped patios within the plaza courtyard.

To ensure the stability of the villages beyond the plaza, Beaubien encouraged the U.S. Army to establish a military fort to protect his grant. As an inducement to contain the Utes, Beaubien offered the Army a 25 year lease on the grant, including the right to “pasture, cut grass [and gather] timber and firewood.”¹² In 1852, the military constructed Fort Massachusetts. Located high on the flanks of Mt. Blanca this remotely sited garrison was ineffectual in preventing attack by the Utes. By 1856, the Army relocated its base of operations, renaming the larger compound Fort Garland and situating it closer to the villages and near pathways favored by Amerindians. Fort Garland eventually led to the pacification of the Utes and their removal to western Colorado by military treaty in 1868. In return for their ceding the San Luis Valley, the government offered tribal leaders \$33,000, land on the Western Slope and in western Utah, and livestock. In sharp contrast to the Utes who actively rebelled against military presence, the Rio Culebra settlers co-existed because of their dependence on the fort for protection and resigned themselves to the presence of military force after participants of the Taos Rebellion were hanged. Villagers intermingled with the military culture residing at Fort Garland through the fort sutler. The resulting exchange influenced their material culture, promoted a cash economy over bartering, and exposed the *pobladores* to new building plans.

Once secure from attack, the fortified plaza compound became a village space. With gates no longer needed for protection, villagers added window openings and constructed freestanding structures. Often times *pobladores* personalized the front entrances to their *jacals* by adding a patio or enclosed fence-like adobe wall four to five feet high known as a *tapia*. After the plaza was opened the *jacal* form continued to be replicated in additions, outbuildings, or as temporary housing. Currently the remnants of *jacals* are evident in many older properties. However, the popularity of *jacal* construction declined late in the nineteenth century after the introduction of milled lumber.

With the opening of the plaza, *pobladores* replicated two important settlement patterns common to New Mexico. First, the “L” and “U” plans shaping the areas in the plaza evolved into an extended family compound known as a *plazuela*. Second, when individuals felt secure they tended to disperse construction outward, in close proximity to *extensiones* and *acequias*, or irrigation ditches. This resulted in a corridor of houses and farms on opposite sides of the road commonly referred to as *corrilleras*. Likewise, the wealthiest *pobladores* constructed *plazuela* compounds outside of the plaza. Although the *corrillera* pattern continues in the Rio Culebra and the plaza form is distinct at San Luis, only a vague outline of two *plazuelas* at Chama remains. Between 1970 and 1980, the last fragments of the early plaza structures were destroyed at San Luis. Today, we can only speculate that a few outbuildings, or *dispensas*, and inner walls of the oldest structures may retain remnants of early plaza construction.

Once farming started the time-consuming process of adobe construction also commenced. Since there was little need for defense, the wall thickness decreased to sixteen inches. Buildings were simple affairs, usually square or rectangular, flat-roofed, consisting of one or two room plans. Initially,

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construction configurations were linear, single-file rooms, with dominant south-facing axis and multiple exterior doors. As more resources were acquired and the family expanded, additional rooms were added, each a replication of the first. On occasion expansion would form a “L” or “U” shape with south-facing wings. Separate households each had a single exterior door. If the adjoining rooms shared the same household, the owner cut a doorway through the interior wall.

Adobe masons, or *adoberos*, fabricated structures by laying unfired clay bricks directly on bare ground. Bricks were made of a combination of clay, sand, water, and straw. After mixing these elements into a stiff mud, the mason poured the earthen batter into individual rectangular wooden forms. Once the mixture set-up, *adoberos* slid the block out of the form and set the bricks to bake in the sun and to dry in the wind for two weeks. In the interim, builders constructed a simple foundation from rocks or firmly packed an earthen trench. To create the wall the mason laid dried adobe bricks on the rock or earth foundation using a thick mud mortar. To cover cracks and spaces between brick *adoberos* added layers of mud to seal the exterior and interior walls. A final application of thin clay created a smooth plaster-like finish. After the bricks and mortar dried, the builder inserted hand-hewn wooden frames into the walls creating window and door openings. Generally structures had a single exterior door with little or no fenestration and shuttered window openings. Sometimes *pobladores* stretched a translucent sheep membrane, or *pergamino*, around window openings to bring light into the interior. Like *jacals*, adobe structures had a wooden bond beam to support *vigas*. To fabricate the roof *adoberos* laid *latillas* in a herringbone pattern across the *vigas*. Builders firmly packed the framework with layers of earth. To protect against moisture roofs had multiple wooden drains, or *canales*. Every home had a *fogon mexicano* for heating and for cooking. To further warm their homes the *pobladores* constructed raised threshold entryways to prevent drafts. Animal hides and woven cloth rugs, or *jergas*, ensured that floors were warm during the winter. In keeping with their basic form most homes had simple furnishings consisting of bedrolls, cupboards, and an adobe bench, or *tarima*, constructed along the sides of the inner walls.¹³

While we do not know what implements were used to construct buildings during settlement of the Rio Culebra, we speculate that *pobladores* had access to manufactured carpentry tools since Taos merchants carried a variety of supplies. We can also surmise that tools used in the Mexican Period were similar to those used in the Spanish Colonial Era. For example, to harvest trees *pobladores* would have used a hand ax, or *azula de mano*, a two-handed ax, or *azula de dos manos*, a whip saw, or *sierra de trocear*, and a bow saw, or *sierra de carpintero*. Once cut, the timber was split open with a wedge, or *cuna*. To measure and size the wood carpenters used calipers, or *compas para guesos*, dividers, or *compas de puntas*, and a square, or *escuadra*. If a builder wanted to square-off interior *vigas* he would use a carpenters ax, or *hacha de carpintero*. To make planking and for small woodworking a carpenter's hacksaw, or *serrucho de serrar hierro*, and a hand saw, or *serrucho*, were essential.¹⁴

One of the goals of the villagers after they moved out of the plaza was to construct central irrigation ditches, or *acequias*, and an interrelated network of laterals, or *sangrias*. Like building techniques, the *pobladores* transferred *acequia* traditions from northern New Mexico into the highlands of southern Colorado. While the origins of the *acequia* nomenclature and some practices are rooted in the Moorish occupation of Spain, the techniques and infrastructure were hybridized by Roman contact with the Spanish and Spanish contact with Pueblos in the Rio Arriba.¹⁵

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According to an early census, laborers, or *peones*, lived in extended households in the Rio Culebra. In all likelihood, *peones* helped the *pobladores* to hand-dig the first shallow and narrow *acequia* in the floodplain a mile west of San Luis. Later, oxen pulling a plow extended and enlarged the mother ditch, or *acequia madre*, to the southeast. To divert water, *pobladores* made permanent dams, or *presas*, and small temporary holding dams, or *atarques*. Irrigators fabricated headgates, or *compuertas*, to regulate the stream flow. However, they used individual outlets, or *regaderas*, to divert water into the fields of each *poblador*. The end point of each *acequia* was a channel, or *desague*, to funneled excess water back to the stream, to another ditch, or to pastureland. Initially irrigators used mud, logs, brush, and rocks to control water. When milled lumber became available irrigators favored wood to make *compuertas* and *regaderas*.

Colorado water law is founded on the concept of priority of appropriation, or first in time first in right. Simply, the first to use water has first rights to the water. In 1879, Colorado created water districts to mediate the growing demand for water. At that time, the Rio Culebra *acequias* fell under the jurisdiction of Water District 24 of Water Division 3. Decried by the District Court in 1889, water rights in the Rio Culebra were declared first in time and the first in right. Consequently, Water Division 24 holds the oldest water decrees in Colorado. Of the eighty-three *acequias* in the Rio Culebra Watershed currently in operation, the earliest are: the San Luis Peoples Ditch (1852), the San Pedro Ditch (1852), the Montez Ditch (1853), the Vallejos Ditch (1854), the San Acacio Ditch (1856), the Cerro Ditch (1857), the Francisco Sanchez Ditch (1858), the Maestas Ditch (1858), the San Francisco Ditch (1860), the Little Rock Ditch (1873), the Torcido Ditch (1874), and the Abundo Martinez Ditch (1874).

Hispano custom dictated that the water be divided equally among all users by an over-seer, or *mayordomo*. In 1866, the Territorial Legislature acknowledged Hispano irrigation traditions by authorizing Costilla and Conejos County to conduct annual elections to select a *mayordomo* to mediate water use and disputes. *Acequia* users elected a commission. The *comisionado* supported the *mayordomo's* work and collected dues for over-seeing the ditch and for improvements to the *acequias*.¹⁶ Because tradition dictated water use, irrigation customs were unwritten. Since each *acequia* irrigated *suertes* in a specific site, affiliated water users, or *parciantes*, bonded together to maintain the *acequia* servicing their area. *Parciantes* were required to help repair their *acequia* according to the number of acres owned. Additionally, *parciantes* communally cleaned and repaired *acequias* every spring. Of utmost importance to *parciantes* was rotated use of the water, as allotted by the *mayordomo*. Simply, to maintain harmony the *mayordomo* ensured that the *parciantes* took turns using the water and no one took more than his fair share. The final task of the *mayordomo* was to ensure that a *parciantes* did not build dams nor place obstacles that might obstruct the flow of water to his neighbors, or *vecinos*.

These earthen ditches did not merely function to deliver water to *parciantes*; they also nurtured a riparian habitat teeming with medicinal herbs for treating everything from colic to respiratory ailments. The corridor of cotton woods characteristic of the Rio Culebra provided shade in the summer and wood in times of hardship. Although changed, *acequias* continue to foster community cooperation and interdependence among *vecinos*. The cultural landscape created by the need to provide water and the resulting networks are historic hallmarks of the Rio Culebra settlement patterns.

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Using seed carried from similar climates in the Taos Valley settlers planted staple crops to ensure their survival. In the interim between plaza construction and the first crops, *pobladores* received flour and corn meal from Taos. Despite the labor-intensive process involved in raising crops at this altitude, the ability of the *pobladores* to cultivate fields in an arid and inhospitable environment did not go unnoticed. In 1853, during a reconnaissance mission to locate railroad routes through the San Luis Valley, Gwinn Harris Heap observed that “grain was sowed by hand and plowed under [...] using crude implements.” Heap also noted that “...numerous farms [are] skillfully irrigated [with] corn, wheat, oats, and other usual crops of a New Mexican farm.” He concluded that farmsteads had “lambs, kids, pigs [...] and numerous herds of cattle and horses.”¹⁷

For centuries agropastoral pursuits in the greater Rio Arriba Bioregion relied on the informal economy of bartering, or *cambalache*. The customary trading of agricultural produce, goods and services without an exchange of cash promoted self-reliance. The villagers who resided in the Rio Culebra continued this practice. One element of village self-maintenance was the production of foodstuffs. Settlers planted staple crops adapted to short growing season including beans, or *frijol bolita*, fava beans, or *havas*, white corn, or *maiz blanco*, onions, or *cebolla*, field peas, or *aberjon*, and pumpkins, or *calabaza*. White corn, or *chicos*, smoked in *hornos*, husked, sundried for a week, and kernels removed from the cob and cooked provided the basic dietary staples for families. Like *frijol*, *chicos* were the basic staples used throughout the year. Climatically adapted apples, or *manazana de agosto*, and plums, or *ciruelo de indio*, grew from starters carried from Taos. To augment this diet the women gathered young lamb quarters, or *quelites*, purselane, or *verdolagas*, pinon nuts, rosehip, or *champe*, choke cherry, or *capulin*, and gooseberry, or *garembullo*. Herbs, vegetables, meat, and grains were dried and stored in outbuildings, or *dispensas*, adobe cellars, or *soterranos*, and granaries, or *granados*.¹⁸

Initially *pobladores* used hand mills, or *metates* and *manos*, to grind Old Taos Corn, which was the mainstay of the community. Once the villages were permanent, *pobladores* established gristmills near rivers. In 1859, Albert Richardson noted: “Nearby was a Mexican grist mill [...] it was simply a horizontal water wheel with a millstone one story above the stone revolving no faster than the wheel, grinds but slowly, and having no bolting apparatus turns out very course flour.”¹⁹ Basalt used for millstones described by Richardson, as well as those at San Luis and San Francisco gristmills came from San Pedro Mesa.

With the movement of *pobladores* outside of the plazas and into the out-lying areas, *La Plaza Medio* or San Luis de la Culebra became the central village because of its proximity to the central roadway leading south to Taos and north to Fort Garland. Carlos Beaubien forged the importance of San Luis by designating this site for the flourmill. Later, in 1863, he deeded the mill site to Ceran St. Vrain. St. Vrain was key to the success of the San Luis Mill because he was a flour contractor for the military and one of the earliest suppliers of foodstuffs to Denver mining camps. Through his partnership with Harvey Easterday, St. Vrain constructed the first modern mill in the San Luis Valley before receiving a deed from Beaubien. Although the *pobladores* harvested wheat with a scythe and hand-rake, St. Vrain modernized processing and commercialized wheat production when he imported a modern mill from St. Louis. In 1859, he advertised for a millwright who could set-up the modern cleaning and bolting machinery. Later that year, St. Vrain escorted 26 ox-driven wagons loaded with 1000 sacks of flour to

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the Denver gold fields. In January 1860, St. Vrain delivered another 1000 pounds of flour to Auraria. Eventually, flour from the San Luis Mill supplied mining camps at Golden, California Gulch, and Cañon City. This caused the Rocky Mountain News to proclaim the San Luis Mill's ability to provide "American mill flour [...] for miners in the mining district."²⁰

With the commercial processing of wheat into flour, San Luis matured into a regional trade center. Although most families raised staples such as beans, peas, potatoes, lentils, and chili at subsistence levels, wheat emerged as the means to obtain credit from merchants. Since St. Vrain's mills provided the bulk of flour to military forts north of El Paso, some of the larger ranchers over-planted wheat. For example, when St. Vrain received premium prices for flour delivered at Fort Garland wheat surpassed traditional corn production.²¹ The shift from growing subsistence crops to marketing surpluses was evident in an 1870 agricultural summary. This census cited 157 farms producing a total of 5,583 acres of wheat, corn, oats, and barley on improved land (i.e. tracts with irrigation). Since the troops at Fort Garland depended on horses, it is not surprising that oats topped the list of products at 22,801 bushels. Wheat, corn, and barley combined totaled 17,747 bushels.²² Regardless of the new economic boom, the vast majority of *pobladores* were small-scale producers. Even those who owned "larger stock ranches" were "little more than large subsistence farmers."²³

As a rule, Hispanos delivered produce and livestock to merchant subcontractors working in alliance with the fort sutler. In the years between 1866-1883, two non-Hispanos monopolized contracts at Fort Garland. Together these individuals controlled one-third of contracts for hay, corn, oats and even firewood. Antonio A. Mondragón was the sole Hispano to receive a firewood contract for one year. However, he was paid eleven percent less per cord of wood delivered than Anglo contractors.²⁴

The process of constructing the villages and *acequias*, of ranching and farming, and secular concerns over commerce all revolved around spiritual necessities. The ranching classes, or *rancheros*, were overwhelmingly Catholic, like the people of the villages of northern New Mexico from which they descended. Padre Antonio Jose Martinez and Mariano de Jesus Lucero from Taos Valley periodically ministered to the Rio Culebra inhabitants during the first years of establishment. To this day, their original notations of marriage, birth, and death records from the Rio Culebra are located in New Mexican archives. Later, priests stationed at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish at Conejos County served the villages of Rio Culebra. It was not until 1886 that San Luis became a parish.

Until the founding of the parish with resident priests, the villagers self-enforced moral order through their religious customs. In this manner, the members of *La Sociedad de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno* (the Society of Our Father Jesus the Nazarene), also known as *los Hermanos Penitentes* (fraternal brotherhood), transferred Catholicism from Taos Valley into Colorado. *Los Hermanos*, or the brothers, organized the community through the replication of their annual ceremonies and by providing services for the sick, dying, and material assistance to families in need.

Los Hermanos constructed meetinghouses, or *moradas*, in remote areas at the outskirts of villages. Nearly all *moradas* are located in proximity to a site that functioned as a pathway, or *calvario*, for Lenten processions. Despite their domestic-like appearance, *moradas* are distinguishable from residential structures as they typically have shuttered windows for privacy and a small belfry with a simple cross on the exterior. Constructed of adobe, *penitentes* favored a linear plan as activities required separate interior spaces for a chapel, meeting area, kitchen, and storage.

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In the first years, private chapels in homes, or *oratorios*, functioned as religious spaces for the community. When manpower permitted and the plaza was stable, villagers harnessed their communal energy to construct churches, or *iglesias*, and chapels, or *capillas*. In all likelihood, these structures were simple *jacals*. Soon after, labor intensive adobe construction replaced the temporary *jacals*. The oldest surviving non-Amerindian religious space in Colorado is *San Acacio*, constructed sometime late in the 1850s. Religious spaces were not only places for rituals, they functioned as a social setting for important family and community activities. Because *iglesias*, *capillas*, and *moradas* continue to function as central community spaces, they are important symbols in the cultural landscape of the Rio Culebra.

Once the initial settlement was completed and the plazas became permanent villages, the Rio Culebra had its first census taken as a precinct of the Territory of New Mexico. Of the 1,724 non-military residents documented by the Eighth U.S. Census in 1860, 96 percent had Spanish surnames; over-whelming majorities were agropastoralists (i.e., farmers, farm laborers, and herders); and, most households consisted of extended families. The census taker documented a variety of occupations from hunter, teamster, blacksmith, silversmith, and shoemaker to a miller, millstone maker, and even a fiddler. The census also listed *peons* and servants, which may indicate Amerindian captives and/or indentured laborers. Between 1858 and 1865, approximately 65 Apache, Ute, and Navajo resided within *rico* households in Costilla County.

The census also listed a dozen adobe masons, or *adoberos*, a carpenter, or *carpintero*, and a mason, or *albañil*. Typically, settlers were familiar with the variety of indigenous materials available in the Rio Arriba and its uplands. These occupational listings demonstrate that the *pobladores* continued construction practices traditional to New Mexico's highlands. As there is a direct relationship between the local materials and the architecture of villages, it is little wonder that vernacular traditions of the Rio Culebra mirrors northern New Mexico. The choice of construction materials, spatial preferences, and designs are indicative of environmental influences and older patterns rooted in the Spanish Era and modified in the Mexican Period. To replicate patterns *carpinteros* traveled nearby river courses, mountain slopes, and foothills to obtain a variety of woods needed for *jacals*, roofing, furniture, doors, and window frames. *Adoberos* and *albañils* instinctively knew that colored clay deposits, soils for adobe making and plastering, and stones could be found on mesas. Builders cited in this census, in conjunction with historic photos, indicate that the architectural characteristics and cultural landscape established in the settlement era by *adoberos*, *carpinteros*, and *albañils* made a lasting and significant imprint on the built environment of the Rio Culebra.

By 1861, the northern half of Taos County (which included the entire Sangre de Cristo Land Grant) became a part of the Territory of Colorado. Once designated, the grant was one of Colorado's first seventeen counties. Notwithstanding this newly acquired legal status, the villagers maintained extended kinship ties, social networks, and religious bonds with New Mexico. Although the vast majority of the populous had no indication as to what the new boundary demarcations meant, it marked the beginning of radical changes yet to come. To establish the villages *rancheros* endangered their lives and those of their families. Often risking what meager resources they possessed, settlers believed Beaubien's grant would replicate old patterns. Unbeknownst to the vast majority of the *pobladores*, Carlos Beaubien divided the million-acre grant between his family and business associates while they were still struggling to settle the land. By 1860, Beaubien took the necessary steps to have the title to the

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grant confirmed by Congress. Between 1862 and 1863, he formalized 135 deeds to *pobladores* in the Rio Costilla, Rio Culebra, and Rio Trinchera watersheds. Correspondingly, Beaubien penned a conveyance outlining rights and responsibilities of settlers. In 1863, an ill Beaubien (and the partners he controlled) agreed to sell the grant to William Gilpin, first territorial governor of Colorado, for four cents an acre. Beaubien filed a document requiring Gilpin to fulfill his promises, inducements, and commitments to the *pobladores*. This contract was important in two ways. Foremost, it conveyed to Gilpin all covenants and agreements undertaken by Beaubien. Second, it clearly established his obligations to maintain the status quo of Mexican land grant tradition and custom by allowing the *pobladores* to use resources in the uplands in common with any future owner of the grant.

To amass the necessary \$41,000 to purchase the grant Gilpin obtained a loan from New York investment bankers and a core of European and eastern speculators. Overnight he transformed his million acre “ranch” into a speculator’s paradise. Gilpin and his partners incorporated the United States Freehold Land and Emigration Company (USFLEC) and established offices in Colorado and London. Key to this undertaking was William Blackmore, an English capitalist who dabbled in mining, railroads, and marketing of American properties to British investors. Backed by the Amsterdam banking firm of Wertheim and Gompertz and Blackmore’s “pool of friends,” the board of directors of the USFLEC divided the landscape in half. By forming the Costilla and Trinchera Estates, the USFLEC facilitated the sale of the grant. In the interim, Blackmore and Gilpin distributed promotional pamphlets to investors and hired geologist Ferdinand Hayden to produce a highly exaggerated survey to market the grant’s mineral potential. The eventual goal of the USFLEC was to settle German and Dutch emigrants in European modeled new towns, to develop manufacturing, and to promote mining.²⁵

Company agents posed a serious challenge to the Mexican villagers who had worked the land they claimed by Beaubien’s promise, by legal conveyance, and through twenty-five years of adverse possession. Beginning in 1871, the USFLEC undertook an aggressive campaign to remove the *pobladores* from their holdings. As a member of USFLEC noted: “I think that as soon as the tract is open for settlement [...]the Mexicans will be gradually crowded out. At present nothing could be more painful to them than to be obliged to leave their beautiful settlements.” To accomplish this objective the company assembled representatives from the central villages. The village leadership could not read English and they were easily duped into signing a company prepared agreement that undermined the communal rights of *pobladores* to the uplands and lowlands. Subsequently, the USFLEC attacked legitimate titles, forcing villagers into expensive legal proceedings. Many were intimidated into repurchasing their holdings, the court ordered others evicted, and a few sold their holdings and left.²⁶

While the USFLEC did not plan to colonize until a commercial irrigation infrastructure was in place, a pitfall to attracting eastern investors, European venture capital, and emigrants was the lack of an efficient means of transportation. From its inception, the UNFLEC had railroad financiers seated on its Board of Directors. The ultimate goal of their collaborative effort was to increase the value of land and export of natural resources, both necessities to absentee bondholders who sought a high return on their investments.

The railroad was the essential feature in the development of Colorado. Within a decade of the state’s first lucrative mining strikes, the Denver rail terminal supplied mining camps with foodstuffs, livestock, and implements. Even more profitable to the railroad was the quick manner by which

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Westerners became dependent upon exportation to eastern markets. When Colorado achieved statehood in 1876, the capital already had three railroads and the city was a thriving center of commerce and manufacturing. However, to bring raw materials and products from the southern periphery to Front Range outlets required a linkage between Denver, Pueblo, and the San Luis Valley.

Railroad Influences on the Culebra Villages: 1878-1918

To propel his ambitions to create a land-locked metropolis, Gilpin offered one-third of the grant to General William Palmer, owner of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG). By 1872, the D&RG reached Pueblo. To accomplish the Herculean feat of laying track over the Sangre de Cristos Gilpin and his associate agreed to allow the D&RG to claim fifty feet of land on both sides of tracks, offered land for depots and machine shops, and, as an additional incentive gave an acre for every five miles of track. By 1878, Palmer's D&RG arrived at the outer limits of the grant. Once the D&RG reached Fort Garland, some 16 miles north of the village of San Luis, the railroad would forever alter the architecture, cultural landscape, and land use patterns of Costilla County.

The D&RG's engine and box cars (although traveling on a three-foot narrow gauge rail) out-ran stage lines and ox-driven wagons, making the 250-mile trek to Denver in 14 hours. Initially, freight, not passengers, was the primary interest of rail promoters. The D&RG's investors had a three-pronged strategy. Foremost, they sought to monopolize transportation of minerals from the San Luis Valley. Second, they planned to reroute merchandise and trade from the Santa Fe Trail. Third, they intended on dominating all freight. With the entry of the railroad into the San Luis Valley, southern Colorado products reached into the Front Range for routing north to Wyoming or east to Kansas City and Chicago. Locally, the railroad transported a half million dollars worth of supplies from the San Luis Valley to mining sites in the San Juan Mountains.²⁷

In the succeeding decades after the arrival of the railroad, Costilla County became an underdeveloped peripheral colony, subservient to the needs of the Front Range. As the value of the land accessible to the railroad increased, many *pobladores* could not pay rising property taxes. Litigation further complicated finances as villagers continually fought for their rights in court throughout this era. The cycle of credit, debt, and litigation diminished the capability of Hispanos to compete with aggressive Midwestern argonauts and European immigrants who applied their business savvy to livestock raising and agricultural production. The type of displacement experienced by Hispanos in the Rio Culebra during this period is not an exception but rather common throughout the Rio Arriba Bioregion.²⁸

Well before the arrival of the railroad, the cash economy forced many villagers to seek employment outside of the farm. Small landholders or sons of poor *pobladores* found employment at the fort as freighters, teamsters, or day laborers. A few sold agricultural produce and livestock to military contractors. With the arrival of the railroad, itinerant laborers migrating from urban areas displaced Hispanos who worked at the fort. Correspondingly, the military policy of purchasing local agricultural surpluses changed to a preference to purchase products from eastern suppliers.²⁹ To mediate their economic losses Hispanos became seasonal agricultural laborers, found employment as section hands for the D&RG, or hauled freight to the mines. A number worked on large cattle ranches in Costilla County or traveled to Wyoming to work as shepherders and shearers. Aside from the fact that the railroad was a

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means for financially strapped Hispanos to obtain cash on a regular basis, it furthered the commercialization of agriculture and industrialized livestock production.

With the advent of the D&RG, the regional market skyrocketed and Costilla was catapulted to the forefront of sheep production, second only to its neighbor Conejos County. The 1880 agricultural census noted a total of 22,676 sheep, a dynamic increase from the 1,010 recorded in 1870. Lamb production continued to rise to 35,479 in 1910. A similar trend occurred with the sale of raw wool. Before the railroad, ranchers destroyed wool because of the high costs of freighting and lack of outlets. By 1880, the wool clip increased by 45 percent. Soon wool production offset the cost of raising sheep. Clearly, there is a direct correlation between the railroad and the accelerated the scale of livestock production in Costilla County.

In the decades preceding the railroad, most extended village families raised sheep for their own subsistence, producing surpluses for barter or for credit. A core group of stock raisers operated on *partido*, a share system whereby the poor or young would-be *rancheros* obtained a starter flock by caretaking the stock of a *rico* or *patron*. The *patron* lent a portion of his stock out in *partido* to individuals, partners, or to extended families. In return, the caretakers received half of newborn sheep. The *patron* usually supplied food and clothing for shepherders and shearers. At the end of the contract period, the *patron* received his original starters, plus the other half of the newborn sheep. The central problem with this system is that all losses whether due to illness, bad weather, predators, or theft were the responsibility of the shareholder.

The Railroad Era altered the old *partido* system as sheep production continued to climb. Foremost, *partido* contracts were no longer informal agreements. Now, merchant moneylenders, rancher-politician, and *ricos* standardized *partido* agreements into legal contracts. A sample *partido* contract recorded in 1891 in Costilla County required a return of “double” the livestock borrowed. The contract further stipulated that livestock must be of the “same kind and number [...] with “20 percent annual [increase per] five head.” One early historian writing on the San Luis Valley stated:

“Later [when] sheep fell into the hands of other nationalities [...] men with money loaned freely [to] owners who were generally poor. When the time for payment fell due and the money was not forthcoming the original owner took all the sheep. In this way the former owners sank into a state of peonage, always in debt to the money lenders.”³⁰

Generally, *partidos* assumed that they would always have unhindered access to meadowlands to fulfill their contractual obligations. However, as the rate of demand for sheep and wool increased, competition over pasturelands accelerated. This situation generally pitted merchants and large extended families against small stockholders. After the lowlands became over-grazed and land companies enclosed a large portion of the uplands, many small stockholders defaulted on their *partido* contracts for lack of access to quality pasture. Others were perpetually in debt, especially if in addition to their *partido* obligation they purchased goods on credit in anticipation of a profit. In the event that a *ranchero* was unable to repay his *partido* losses or to retire his debts, he lost land to the creditor or sold his water rights to merchants.

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Cattle ranching experienced similar trends to sheep raising. Since *partido* contracts governed the livestock economy of southern Costilla County, the share system for cattle mirrored sheep agreements. Often the same core of merchant-ranchers who controlled the majority of flocks also had large cattle interests. When sheep and wool prices leveled off, merchants continued to prosper as they shifted their emphasis to cattle. Between the 1870 and 1880 census, cattle production increased by 36 percent. By the 1890 census, beef exports rose another 55 percent. In 1900, output leaped an additional 59 percent.

With the railroad stimulating livestock production, wealthier farmers at the northern end of the grant started to mechanize agricultural production. During the first decades of settlement, manual labor and oxen cultivated small plots. The *rancheros* were so dependent on oxen that the 1870 census noted 223 beasts of burden in the county. However, once the railroad arrived, oxen declined to 137 as horse-drawn threshers became available at Alamosa, the main terminal for the D&RG in the San Luis Valley. By 1890, only 26 animals remained. In 1900, oxen disappeared from census tabulations. Mechanization correlates to the introduction of the steel beam-plow, mower, thresher, and reaper. Because these innovations did not require oxen power, an animal indispensable to the earliest settlement of the area became an obsolete remnant of the past.

Nineteenth century agricultural census data not only indicated the impacts of technology but also economics by location and by ethnicity. An 1885 summary of "Agricultural Production" documented 157 farmers operating in Costilla County. Of those listed in the census, 98 had Spanish surnames. All the Hispano farmers cited by the census resided in the Rio Culebra and the majority owned land under Beaubien deeds. An estimated 61 percent of Spanish-surnamed farmers owned less than 50 acres where they raised small surpluses of hay, alfalfa, and field peas. Ninety percent of these farms had assessed valuations under \$1,500. In contrast, over a third of Anglo farms in the northern part of the county were between 500 and 700 acres, with some 27 percent having land assessed between \$2,000 and \$12,000. Most of these farms grew commercial levels of barley, oats, and wheat. In the final analysis, this census indicated a significant disparity in land ownership, gaps in wealth, and the differences between commercial and subsistence economics.

Because of the low levels of cultivation, the Rio Culebra did not experience soil depletion. Unlike their neighbors in southern Costilla County, Midwestern transplants at the far northwest of the county ruined their land as subirrigation experimenting produced black alkali. In combination with soil depletion resulting from commercial monocropping and failed water supplies, massive farm abandonment transformed two agricultural centers at the far northeast of Costilla County into ghost towns. Over-grazing by a handful of ranchers who dominated the entire Sangre de Cristo Range—from the Rio Culebra, Rio Trinchera, into Mount Blanca—significantly altered vegetation by the 1900s.

Regardless of the emerging ecological crisis, the flow of capital transformed the landscape. The most obvious arena for gauging the influences of commerce and technology on human communities is to examine changes in the material culture through time. Beginning in the 1880s, the railroad lay at the center of the transformation of the built environment of the Rio Culebra. To establish the critical mass required to support rail services and to sell real estate, land companies promoted population expansion. The foundation for rapidly creating new settlements was the availability of standardized building materials. Although early settlers accessed natural resources to construct their shelters, the railroad exposed the villages to industrial innovations. Correspondingly, the use of indigenous materials such as

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adobe and basalt gradually gave way to a rising demand for specialty items such as milled lumber, wood ornamentation, glass, and hardware (including barbwire). Accompanying the change in material preferences was the introduction of Eastern and Midwestern floor plans and designs.

The compound at Fort Garland provides a good example of a material culture transported first by the military and later by the railroad. Although different in scale, function, and located outside the Culebra Basin, the fort was a dominant feature in Costilla County. At its height, the fort contained up to 22 structures including a hospital, mess kitchen, laundress quarters, and ice house. No doubt Hispano who frequented the fort were exposed to new materials, use of specialized rooms, and design influences such as exterior wood trim around doors and windows. Likewise, village builders influenced the fort as it contained “*jacal* remains” and “adobe wall construction”: both construction techniques unfamiliar to military men during the early years.³¹

The building at Fort Garland that best typifies the new floorplans emerging during the Rail Era is the Commander’s Quarters. In all probability the Commander’s Quarters was not fully elaborated until after the railroad arrived as an old floor plan indicates two separate buildings constructed in a side-by-side fashion. Eventually remodeled into a center passage plan, this structure contained an exterior door placed in the middle of the building. The entryway opened to an interior hallway with rooms off to each side. The earliest non-military example of the center passage plan is the 1883 Costilla County Courthouse at San Luis. The courthouse hallway organized the recorder and court chamber to one side, and the office of the assessor and treasurer to the other side.

Building materials specified for courthouse construction reflect the dependency on railroad imported materials. As an example, while the walls of the Costilla County Court House used “two feet thick and two feet wide adobe,” the 1883 specifications mandated “Chicago lumber” for doors, flooring, cornice, lath, and shingles with “dimension lumber [...] of good quality [...] for joists and rafters.” The requisite for window arches, some interior floors, and chimneys called for “Chicago brick.” Glass for sixteen windows, each with four lights, and over-head door transoms was a novelty in the Rio Culebra. To maintain security, doors had catch and bolt latches and a fireproof vault with inner and outer metal door. The cross-gable pitched roof of the courthouse was nothing short of revolutionary as it was likely the first of its kind in the county.

The San Luis Roller Mill provides another example of railroad introduced techniques, Midwestern architectural designs, and manufactured materials. The orientation of the mill site, its proximity to the main roadway and the Rio Culebra, and the scale and verticality of the buildings symbolized the economic dominance of the mill owners. From his vantage point atop the mesa, O.T. Davis may have been the first person to photograph San Luis. Taken sometime between 1886 and the early 1890s, the Davis photo provides a snapshot of the relationship between the mill and the village. The siting of the mill near a prominent bridge and a distinct image of a smokestack rising an estimated 30 feet in height is emblematic of industrialization. In a later photo (ca. mid-1890), the mill was now a two-story wood structure, constructed in a square plan, with a loading dock at the lower level. A wooden stairway leading to the second-story door with an overhead glass transom seems to lead to an office space. Double-hung multi-paned windows at the upper and lower levels, gabled roof with metal panels, twin gabled dormers with glass windows, and a brick chimney are most impressive. At the time it was constructed, metal roofing and dormers were one-of-a-kind accents in a village dominated by single-

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story, flat, earthen roofs. There is a second two-story barn at the rear, with a gabled roof, horizontal wood siding at the ends, double-hung windows, and wood shingles.

Merchants operating in Costilla County during the nineteenth century constructed small business establishments first at Costilla, soon after at San Luis, and by the 1890s in the villages. Generally, these structures were linear or rectangular plans and faced well-traveled public roads. The oldest continually operated and best documented family grocery and hardware business in the Culebra Basin is the Gallegos Mercantile (later Gallegos & Salazar and now R & R Market). The earliest depiction (ca. 1887) is of a simple 16ft. X 20ft. linear structure with five multi-paned front facing windows and a pitched roof. Despite its adobe core the structure burned in 1895. A second photo (ca. 1900) shows a recessed story and a half-linear form juxtaposed with a two-story rectangular structure that juts out from the center. The two-story centerpiece has a false wood front with two asymmetrically placed windows and decorative cornice at the top. A pitched roof unifies the entire structure. The plan, massing, and design were significantly altered and modernized when it burned for a second time in 1947.

Outside of the courthouse and the mill, the new parish compound at San Luis was the most elaborate departure from traditional construction practices. The Sangre de Cristo Church (formally known as the Most Precious Blood) radically departed from the simple mission church. Completed by 1886, under the auspices of Reverend Juan B. Pitaval (who later became the Archbishop of Santa Fe), the central church at San Luis was the first structure to introduce the Gothic Revival style into Costilla County. *Adoberos* laid 16-inch thick adobe blocks to form a simple 27-foot wide nave. Gothic Revival detailing such as pointed arched glass windows, a circular rose window, and a transom with tracery created an architectural emphasis decidedly European. To reflect light into the interior, decorative metal sheeting covered the twenty-foot high vaulted ceiling. Pitaval's successor, Reverend Jose Garcia, finished the elaboration of the structure sometime after 1893. Padre Garcia expanded the single nave plan by adding transepts to both sides of the nave. The cruciform plan created a new dimension and accented the predominance of the church. In 1913-1917, Garcia ordered wooden latticework, impressive central and side altars, and plaster statues from a Midwest supply house to complete the interior.

In 1904-5, the Padre commissioned a two story, 3,350 square foot adobe convent-school using his own resources and donations. The convent, or *convento*, used a classic center passage plan. Like other center passageways, a hallway organized the chapel, classrooms, kitchen, and common dining area at the lower level. A wooden stairway led to an upper level sleeping area. The *convento* with its elaborate wooden porch, paired double-hung windows, mansard roof with wooden shake shingles, and belfry is a landmark and a reflection of the central importance of the school.

The O.T. David photo, as previously mentioned, provides us with a panorama view of the village in a transitional period. While the mill is distinct as it is in the foreground, the church, courthouse, and the northern end of the village are less clear. Close examination indicates possibly five structures with pitched roofs. Aside from the mill and a related outbuilding, one or two structures are residences, and one is possibly a mercantile establishment with a rear storage area. While the photo shows few pitched roofs, there is evidence of windows.

By the mid-1890s, the changes occurring in institutional buildings also affected domestic architecture. The first to use the new center passage plan in the Rio Culebra were *ricos*. Since many affluent residents lived in San Luis, buildings located along Main Street reflect these influences.

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Evidence indicates that homeowners remodeled linear and rectangular plans to create homes with a center passageway. Typically, these structures were two-rooms wide, one-room deep, and some were one and a half stories in height. This plan made it possible to use specialized rooms (kitchen, parlor, and bedrooms) with the central hall functioning as an entryway. The second-story addition encouraged pitched roof construction, with multiple dormers and windows and tongue-and-groove wood siding. The most elaborate of homes belonged to politicians who imported nationally popular designs and floor plans from Denver by the turn-of-the-century. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the outlying farmsteads of prosperous *rancheros* also reflected railroad induced changes. The following two examples of deeds penned in the 1890s, provide a glimpse into the emergence of materials and plans prompted by the railroad. The first deed describes two typical building types in the Rio Culebra. First, is a vernacular residence with a three-room traditional plan and a *jacal* (outbuilding) with four compartments for surplus produce. In addition, the first deed specifies that the property is enclosed by two miles of fence with “cedar and cotton posts.” This clearly indicates that land companies and goods freighted by the railroad were causing people to concern themselves with demarcating property boundaries with barbed wire, or, in this case, with “cedar...posts.” Although the second example notes the use of a “hallway” in the residence, the adobe bunkhouse, *horno*, twenty small fruit trees, and an *acequia* running through the property demonstrates that Hispanos adopted new innovations without losing sense of the traditional form or landscape.

Notwithstanding the material prosperity reflected in new construction, the commercialization of agriculture, and the expansion of livestock production, census data between the 1870s and 1890s indicate instability in land holdings. In 1870, the census recorded 157 farmsteads. By 1880, the number of farms plummeted to 73. This decline was a result of legal challenges by the USFLEC before the Colorado and U.S. Supreme Courts. The USFLEC fabricated a legal challenge to its own title (using a strawman claiming homestead land) to perfect the grant and to resurvey the boundary. By 1880, the company obtained a patent and a new survey. Although part of this survey was fraudulent, many residents abandoned small homesteads and mining claims and left the region. To resell the land the company consolidated the small-developed holdings into large ranches. By 1890, the number of farmsteads climbed to 207 with an average size of 313 acres. The increased acreage at the northern end of the grant indicates the trend by non-Hispanos to commercialize ranching and farming.

Well before the end of the century, the village collective had not expanded beyond the areas occupied and cultivated at the onset of settlement. While there were a few short-lived colonies, or *colonias*, on the Rio Trinchera, Rio Culebra, and Rio Costilla, most disappeared by 1910. Censuses rarely reflect the root cause of population stagnation. However, the level and the intensity of litigation explains why Hispanos could not continue to replicate villages outside of the Rio Culebra basin.

The last decade of the 19th century signaled the end of the USFLEC’s domination over the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. Despite predictions of gold, there were no bonanzas. After thirty years of recruitment, Mormons founded the sole colony established on the grant. In 1891, Mormons purchased a 2,000 acre parcel southwest of the Rio Culebra known as Eastdale. Eastdale was a grided townsite, arranged in twelve blocks, with four lots per block. Despite the construction of irrigation ditches, a reservoir, school, general store, and a church, a series of devastating crop failures, high infant mortality rates, and water conflicts prompted the colony to relocate to Conejos County.³²

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After years of habitual tax delinquency, the USFLEC relinquished its remaining holdings via a county tax sale. The tax sale served two purposes. First, it relieved the board of directors of its responsibilities to the bondholders, to foreign investors, and to the tax collector. Second, USFLEC representatives attempted to use the tax sale to remove the cloud over the grant title. By purchasing and reselling the tax certificate multiple times, the USFLEC theoretically rid the new owners of any responsibility to Beaubien claimants. In 1902, the USFLEC sold the last of its holdings to Colorado Springs investors. Unlike the USFLEC, the Costilla Estates Development Land Company planned a sophisticated water infrastructure to market 70,000 acres of prairie as agricultural land. In its first decade of existence the new land company increased real estate values and stimulated sales by improving roads and offering telephone service.

Like its predecessor, the Costilla Estates focused on constructing an efficient transportation network. In this instance, the tracks of the San Luis Southern Railroad linked company land holdings in the south to the D&RG's central track at the north. One of the early tasks of the San Luis Southern was to transport would-be real estate investors to company hotels. After an overnight stay in the precursor to a modern bed and breakfast, prospective buyers received a guided-tour of agricultural sites and then signed sales contracts. Between 1908 and 1910, the four subdivisions platted by the Costilla Estates Company were slowly populated. Blanca, the first of what were collectively labeled the New Towns, was strategically sited three miles west of Fort Garland in close proximity to the D & RG. Because Blanca was the model New Town, the company sold lots and farmland through a lottery and auction scheme. By 1910, the Costilla Estates platted three additional towns. South of Blanca (towards the New Mexico border) was New Hamburg. By naming this town New Hamburg the company hoped to entice farmers recruited from New Hamburg, Iowa. However, the town was renamed New San Acacio in the aftermath of anti-German sentiment of World War I. South of New San Acacio, was the town of Mesita. The furthest southern point was Jaroso (formerly *El Bosque de Los Caballos*) an agricultural colony of Seven-Day Adventists (Figure 6).

In anticipation of establishing the political dominance of New Towns, the Costilla Estates Company undertook several steps to limit the villagers' influence. Like their predecessors, Costilla Estates attempted to stop the *pobladores* from exercising their traditional use rights to La Sierra. Not only did the company post signage prohibiting wood gathering of the uplands, it legally challenged the title to the lowland *vega* and water rights of villagers. By 1910, growth in the New Towns and in Fort Garland equaled demographic growth rates between 1870 and 1900. Dramatically altered, the sagebrush-filled flatlands became a grided townscape served by modern reservoirs, canals, and a railroad. Architecturally, the wooden trestles, section and engine houses, and the dispatcher's office helped to transform the New Towns into a Midwestern landscape.

By this time, the level of commercial crop production throughout the San Luis Valley affected the flow of the Rio Grande. Because commercial ditch companies over-appropriated water throughout the San Luis Valley, the United States placed a moratorium on all reservoir construction on public lands. The 1896 Embargo did not apply to Costilla County since the area was under private ownership. Between 1911 and 1920, land companies in Costilla County constructed eight reservoirs, the largest and most technically advanced being Sanchez Reservoir. Completed in 1913, Sanchez Reservoir submerged approximately 3,000 acres of the *vega* commons under water. During this period, Sanchez Reservoir was

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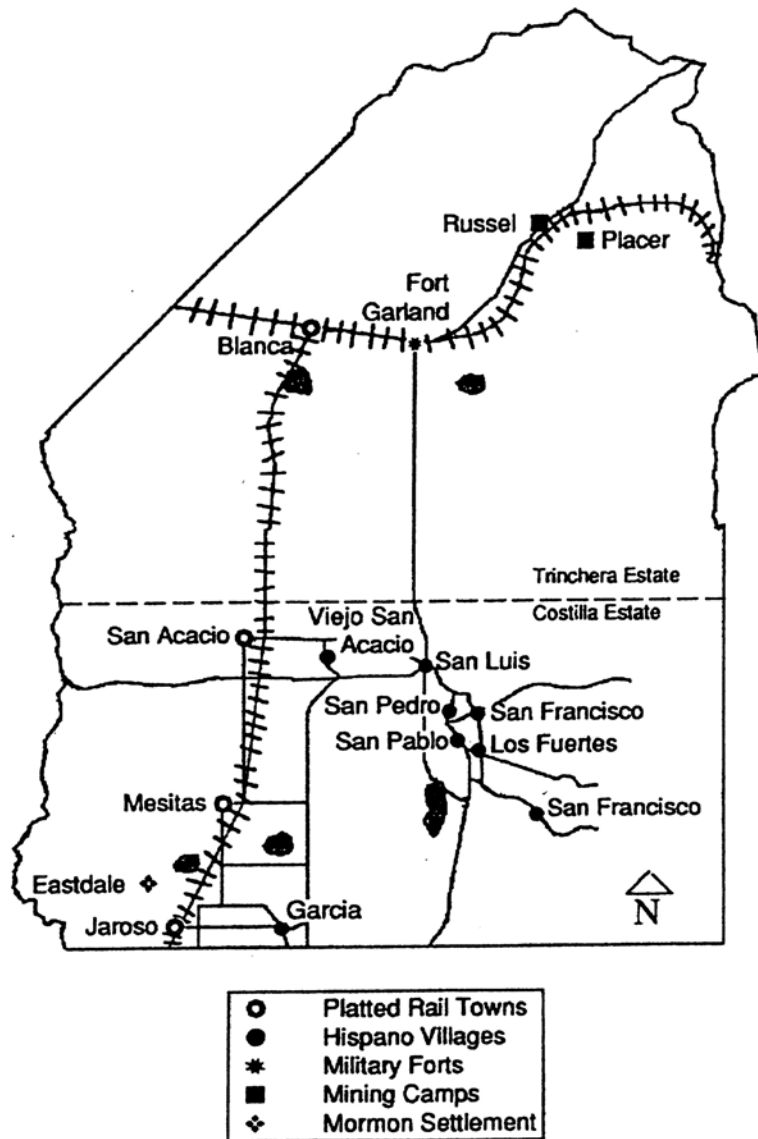


Figure 6. Early Settlements and Platted Towns (Courtesy of Valdez & Associates, 1990)

the fifth-largest earthen and stone dam in the world. Rising some 120-feet high, with 17.5 miles of shoreline, the reservoir could theoretically hold 104,000-acre feet of water. To fill Sanchez Reservoir the Costilla Estates challenged village water decrees. Before this action, the court adjudicated 24 additional *acequias* in the Rio Culebra Watershed between 1880-1917. However, the company was able to obtain six decrees for their holdings in the Costilla Estate, far exceeding those of traditional *acequias*. In this era the amount of water used in *acequias* ranged from a high of 13.16 cubic feet of water per second, or c.f.s., to a low of 0.61 c.f.s. In contrast, the company expanded its water rights in one reservoir from 20 c.f.s. in 1903, to 228.075 c.f.s. in 1908. Ironically, court decrees to the Costilla Estate Company

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contradicted Colorado's water policy of prior appropriation. After a prolonged legal battle, village water rights decreased by one-half. Once adjudication was completed, water coursed through three hundred miles of commercial canals toward the New Town farms at the western edge of the grant. As New Town fields bloomed, portions of village farms withered from the lack of water.

Aside from the decrease of the *vega* through reservoir construction, a second devastating case to the *vega* was a quiet title action brought by the Costilla Estates Company over ownership of the commons. In this 1916 case, the court ruled that although the community had grazed in the *vega* since the 1850s and Beaubien had conferred the land to the villagers in common, the company held the title. In an obvious attempt to ignore communal rights the judge gave the community an easement and reduced the estimated 18-mile long *vega* to a mere 633.32 acres. Despite the bias against usufructuary rights, the community retains ownership of the *vega* by adverse possession and by Beaubien's commitment.

The outcome of water and land loss during the Railroad Era devastated pastoralists and small shareholders. Many became service providers rather than producers. Others were tenants and sharecroppers, not farm or ranch owners. Ultimately, the villagers were subservient to the needs of Midwestern agronomists. Despite the diminution of the usufructuary zone and the USFLEC's claim to the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, the *pobladores* continued resisting.

Changes in the Cultural Landscape: 1919-1945

Well before the onset of the 1920s, population declined in the Rio Culebra after northwestern Costilla County became a part of the newly formed Alamosa County in 1913. With the establishment of Alamosa County as the geopolitical center of the San Luis Valley, the Costilla County seat at San Luis experienced a significant out-migration. In contrast, the number of farms located in the New Towns increased by fifty-six. Undeniably, real estate sales, road improvements, and rail service played a central role in directing population shifts toward these platted areas. Expansion likewise correlated to the completion of five reservoirs and the installation of concrete head gates for New Town residents.

In comparison to the New Town boom, the outlying villages of the Rio Culebra were patterned into distinct Hispano enclaves, partly because of the racial attitudes of newcomers. In reaction to the hostility of New Town residents, Hispanos tended to create a cultural boundary around the villages. By keeping villages spaces off-limits to outsiders, Hispanos conserved their natural resources and maintained their traditional land holdings. However, the village was not a total barrier to new development because those who worked as wage laborers in New Towns, as farmers who grew fresh produce, and those who served in the military imported some new materials and building practices from the outside into the enclaves. In the nearly quarter of a century between World War I and World War II, broad national trends chiseled away at the settlement core. By the 1930s, the economic bust of the Great Depression reduced the ability of the villagers to supplement their wages. Like northern New Mexicans, the Rio Culebra populous tended to remain within the security of the villages near their extended families and mutual aid groups. In contrast, failed banks and water shortages in the New Towns prompted massive farm abandonments in three of the four platted communities.

The first changes in this era came as the shifting dietary habits of urban consumers created a demand for fresh vegetables. As a result, Costilla County became an important commercial vegetable

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production and distribution point. Prior to the emergence of this commercial vegetable market, post-World War I inflation dropped wool and grain prices, and the villagers experienced a loss of income even as prices for manufactured goods rose. To counter this decline, the Costilla Estates Company and the railroad collaborated to establish commercial vegetable production in Costilla County in order to boost sales and increase railroad traffic to the New Towns. Because of its cool summers, Costilla County was ideal for cultivating cool weather crops like spinach, lettuce, cauliflower, and broccoli. To take advantage of the favorable climatic conditions, the company and the railroad recruited Japanese horticulturists and, later, agricultural laborers from Mexico to fulfill its organizational goals. Early in the 1920s, Nisei, first generation Japanese-American, tenant farmers were persuaded to emigrate from California into Costilla County to start commercial vegetable operations. Because of their horticultural successes in California's Central Valley, the Nisei were critical to agricultural development. Foremost, the Nisei diversified agricultural production by successfully cultivating spinach, lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and radishes for commercial markets. Equally important, Nisei accomplishments allowed promoters to acclaim the productivity of the land, increase property values in the New Towns, and stimulate real estate sales.

When the Nisei first arrived they were tenant farmers for the land companies, and their families functioned as laborers, planting and harvesting commercial quantities of cauliflower. Once established, Nisei families purchased land and became avid competitors, challenging the longer-settled Anglo farmers. Eventually, other Nisei farmers from Colorado's Front Range relocated to Costilla County. By 1940, there were fifty-five extended families living at Jaroso, San Acacio, and Blanca. As the Nisei expanded their colony, they increased their agricultural holdings from 53 acres in 1919 to 10,500 acres within a decade.⁴² Early-on, Nisei farmers hired Culebra villagers and, later, Mexican nationals as laborers to thin, weed, and harvest their crops. While some Rio Culebra farmers learned from the success of their Japanese-American neighbors and a few Hispano families raised vegetable surpluses, the Nisei were unsurpassed in productivity. For example, in 1925 the Nisei farmers shipped 44 rail cars filled with cauliflower.⁴³

By modifying the knowledge they had gained in California, Nisei truck farmers obtained two cuttings of spinach per season and produced firm heads of lettuce and cabbage. Although head lettuce could withstand shipping, other products could not. Because of the great distance between the San Luis Valley and urban markets, there was a significant time that elapsed between harvest and the arrival of produce as its destination. Farmers packed vegetables in ice to reduce spoilage. Doing so required the construction of packing sheds, ice houses, and crate-making facilities. Like the railroad-induced architectural changes of the 1880s, the new types of auxiliary structures of the 1920s continued to modify the landscape. Only a few of these changes appeared in the Rio Culebra Basin, mainly near Viejo San Acacio and in parts of San Luis. While only a few villagers replicated New Town designs, Hispanos did have access to wood produced by sawmills owned by the land company. A local merchant obtained a contract to construct wooden shipping crates for vegetables using a water-powered mill on the upper Rio Culebra. Since the merchant-contractor owned a hardware store in San Luis, it is highly probable that the availability of rough lumber encouraged ranchers and farmers to construct wooden outbuildings.

A corresponding agricultural trend in this era was commercial potato production. After soil depletion prompted by decades of over-production of wheat, farmers welcomed an opportunity to

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participate in the World War I potato market. Once again, growers faced significant obstacles. Due to the high cost of rail transportation, potatoes were not economical to cultivate because of the distance to the market. As automotive travel made its appearance by the 1920s, the railroad had to lower freight rates to compete with trucks. Despite the growing cost effectiveness of transportation, farmers sold potato surpluses into the spring to avoid flooding the market during the fall. An important consideration involved storage. When Anglo growers first marketed potatoes they stored surpluses above ground in circular wire-frames encased with hay or in straw-covered trenches. However, the Rio Culebra farmers preferred to store potatoes in a large, underground cellars, or *soterranos*. Because Hispano used earth, not sod, for walls, their structures maintain an even temperature that kept potatoes from freezing. Hispano subterranean structures were so efficient and cheap to fabricate that Anglo farmers throughout the San Luis Valley adopted double-wall adobe construction for their above-ground storage facilities. Although potato prices have declined and most Rio Culebra farmers no longer raise potatoes commercially, nor construct cellars, there are fine examples of *soterranos* in the basin reflecting the importance of the crop during the period of significance.

Between 1890 and 1912, Colorado experienced a population boom. Correspondingly, the state's well-organized railway linkages helped to increase agricultural production three-fold, doubling the need for farm labor.⁴⁴ The mushrooming demands of World War I prompted disputes over labor and wages and worsened ecological conditions. In the case of the San Luis Valley the national origin of farm workers was a point of contention. With the onset of World War I, labor shortages in Colorado's farming and ranching regions accelerated as Hispanos throughout the *Rio Arriba* left for the military. Farmers throughout the San Luis Valley depended on the labor pool from the seven counties of the *Rio Arriba* (two in Colorado and five in New Mexico) to maintain high levels of production. To supplement the loss in manpower the D&RG and agricultural industries actively recruited Mexican migrant laborers to deal with shortages. In the post-war period, the railroad and agricultural industry pitted Hispano day laborers against their migrating Mexican brethren. As wage cutting increased, animosities grew. Labor competition in combination with technological innovations like the tractor, edged out of the local job market a significant number of Hispanos reared as agriculturists. For example, in 1919 there were 19 tractors in the New Towns. By 1921 the number increased to 52.⁴⁵ Because of the widespread use of mechanized farm equipment and low-paid immigrant laborers, at least one-third of the resident Hispano population in the San Luis Valley remained unemployed.⁴⁶ Wage inequities from this era exerted other far-reaching consequences on the villages. Labor disputes not only encouraged younger villagers to seek low-paying urban jobs in southern Colorado's steel mill operations, substandard wages destabilized the extended family farms in the Rio Culebra. For young Hispanos who remained in the villages the only recourse was to accept stoop-labor wages from New Town farmers.

San Luis Valley Hispanos had always suffered the stigma of racial stereotyping. Twentieth century racial attitudes toward Colorado's Hispanos mirrored prevalent attitudes in Southwestern states with large Spanish-speaking populations. Chronic bigotry grew acute after World War I. In the 1920s and 1930s, nativist sentiment intensified in Colorado. By 1936, racial unrest peaked after the governor attempted to stop all Spanish-speakers from entering southern Colorado. With two checkpoints at Fort Garland and Antonito, Hispanos were targets for discrimination. Eventually, this action was deemed unconstitutional. To counter these trends, Hispanos in the Rio Arriba formed anti-defamation leagues.

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The first league to protect the interests of Spanish-speaking laborers in the San Luis Valley emerged in 1900. The founder of the Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers, or *Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*, Celedonio Mondragón of Antonito established the organization after traveling in the Southwest where he became acquainted with similar organizations. The intended purpose of the *Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*, commonly referred to as the SPMDTU, was to combat racism against Hispanos. Incorporated under the laws of Colorado, the SPMDTU formed a Superior Council, or *El Concilio Superior*. The *Concilio* at Antonito coordinated San Luis Valley chapters, including those in Costilla County. To expand the SPMDTU, members obtained insurance and were offered assistance when unemployed or after a death in the family. Functioning much like the *Penitenties*, the SPMDTU members referred to each other as brothers and focused on acts of compassion. However, unlike the *Penitenties* SPMDTU members raised funds via dances and recreational activities. The SPMDTU's response to the regional crisis among Hispanos not merely created an organization to combat socioeconomic injustices, it prompted the introduction of new architectural designs. The Superior Council's 1926 building at Antonito, and a variation of it at San Luis, are icons of this period. Constructed in 1927, many of the features at the San Luis SPMDTU building mirrored the Antonito headquarters. Both are two-story, adobe-walled super structures with steel trusses, and curvilinear fronts. The San Luis chapter building began a trend in Southwest vernacular design in gas stations and auto body shops along Main Street. Today, there are two SPMDTU halls in Costilla County. One very small structure at Chama is vacant, and the other in San Luis, although privately owned, continues to function as a gathering space for dances and receptions.

More common effects on village architecture between 1919 and 1945 related to the intermittent prosperity of agriculture. Main Street, San Luis, offers the best example of the influences of agribusiness on the adobe vernacular architecture in the Rio Culebra Basin. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, hybridized commercial-residences began to replace the old hardware and grocery stores with wood false fronts and large fixed display windows. Commercial construction in this period refined the streetscape of San Luis, altering part of Main Street into a small town business center. Likewise, moneylenders, merchants, politicians, and large ranchers constructed several one-of-a-kind residences. Because of these drastic changes, San Luis is the best location to view the economic influences on new floor plans and styles. Eventually, design trends set in the county seat were replicated in village areas during times of economic stability.

The best way to envision the cultural landscape is through the examination of photos. A 1929 panoramic photo of San Luis, taken from atop the most northern part of San Pedro Mesa, shows a working landscape of gabled barns, corrals, and wooden fences intermixed with single- and two-story, flat and pitched roofed adobe structures. The quintessence of the 1929 photo is the predominant Hispano vernacular typology. Less discernable are national building types that emerged in Alamosa and other rail centers in southern Colorado during the economic boom of World War I. Between the 1920s and 1940s, foursquare and bungalow plans became popular in San Luis. The simple foursquare adobe dwelling had few embellishments, aside from wooden porches. In comparison, the massing of the bungalow-like dwellings incorporated inset or extended porches decorated with California Mission, Mediterranean, and Spanish Pueblo Revival accents. Distinguishing features included paired double-hung windows, arched porches, and clay tile accents. The design trends in San Luis emulated regional styles and new

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construction in residential areas around Adams State College in Alamosa. There are many homes and public structures from this period with Spanish Pueblo Revival features, also known as "Santa Fe Style." The trend developed after a local hardware owner appropriated a design for his home from a publication sponsored by the Santa Fe Builders Supply Company.

The largest body of construction in this period was accomplished under the auspices of the Catholic Church. By this time the late 1880s San Luis parish church needed repairs and was difficult to heat. Likewise, the priests who served the Rio Culebra did not have a formal rectory until the parish purchased and remodeled a structure into a residence early in the 1900s. The resulting self-sufficient compound was one of the best examples of a large domestic-scaled garden space integrated with a myriad of small agricultural outbuildings, a grain bin, and an *acequia* traversing the yard. The old rectory (now a private residence) is one of the last remaining examples of a "U"-shaped adobe structure in the Rio Culebra. The priest's basalt carriage house with its gambrel-roof is likely the sole example of its kind and date remaining in the San Luis Valley. By the 1920s, the priests retrofitted a small day chapel onto the west wall of the rectory to avoid heating the larger church in cold weather. Constructed entirely of adobe, this story-and-a-half linear chapel has a rose window at the entrance with pointed arch windows along one side. Like its domestic counterparts, church construction correlates to regional and local economic booms in agriculture.

Corresponding to the economic fluctuations stimulated by war and continued population growth, the small government center at San Luis and the surrounding village nodes started to feel the effects of seventy-five years of human-induced changes on the landscape. In the eastern uplands, accelerated livestock production by a handful of large stockmen prompted over-grazing and soil erosion. Throughout the San Luis Valley (including northern Costilla County), over-production of wheat, mass privatization of the uplands by absentee investors running massive cattle herds, and misuse of water greatly exceeded the carrying capacity of the land and productivity declined. Colorado experienced two droughts between 1900 and 1940. The longest dry spell recorded in Colorado spanned the entire decade of the 1930s. With the land stressed to its ecological limits and the Great Depression in full motion, the agricultural market plummeted. The Blanca Bank declared bankruptcy in 1931, paying depositors 48.5 cents on the dollar.⁴⁷ Many New Town farmers simply abandoned their holdings and left the area and some of the Nisei moved north to Blanca. To this day the deteriorated remains of many farmsteads litter the landscape around the southern end of the New Towns, reflecting the financial downturn precipitated by the crash of Wall Street, the unreliability of land companies, and the replacement of the railroad by auto transportation.

For the villagers, the Great Depression transformed chronic underemployment into mass unemployment. Unlike the New Town residents who moved elsewhere, Hispano villagers tended to remain near their ancestral homes.⁴⁸ Operating between the 1933 and 1944, President Roosevelt's New Deal programs mediated problems arising from decades of economic neglect. One of the most cost-effective federal programs to attack local poverty and county underdevelopment operated under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA undertook several construction projects in Costilla County including the building of a county garage to store equipment required to maintain county roads. Constructed of adobe, the county garage is a simple rectangle plan with large front-facing stepped parapets. More important projects in this era involved bridge construction.

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Generally bridges from this period are non-descript engineered designs. However, the WPA Rito Seco Bridge (5CT 47.110) has noteworthy vernacular features including hand-laid basalt arches and base. Additionally, the WPA erected basalt retaining walls along the banks of the Rito Seco and undertook a drainage project. A distinguishing feature of WPA construction was the extensive use of basalt rock gathered from the San Pedro Mesa. One of the smallest undertakings to use basalt consisted of arranging white-washed rocks mid-way across the slope of the San Pedro Mesa. Completed by a self-taught artist and muralist, Rafel Lucero, the rock inscription reads "San Luis Oldest Town in Colorado." This lettering is pivotal to the cultural landscape of San Luis because of its prominent location and the message it bears.

The largest and most expensive New Deal projects involved the widening and oiling of roads. One ambitious and unsuccessful road construction project, known as Whiskey Pass Tunnel, proposed to connect the San Luis Valley with Trinidad via a toll road through the village of Chama. Less grandiose projects sprang from the desire to create a modern transportation infrastructure. The trend resulting from WPA road modernization projects stimulated the development of service industries catering to the automobile. The oldest filling stations and later auto body shops from this period are located along Main Street in San Luis. A majority of these structures emulate features introduced by the SPMDTU building, in particular trusses, vaulted ceilings, and curvilinear parapets. The oldest auto-oriented property reflects the commercial adobe vernacular of the Depression Era. Later in the 1940s, construction tended toward cinder block structural cores with Southwest vernacular accenting. This period marked the introduction of fixed glass windows in metal frames and multi-paned doors. Trends set by early gas stations continue to influence commercial buildings from hardware stores and grocery stores to restaurants. Regardless of the variations in materials and functions, the continuity of sidestepping and front parapets, the use of flat or barreled roofs, and the dominant Southwest vernacular and Pueblo Revival features continue to unify the streetscape of San Luis.

A second WPA emphasis involved school construction. The 1940 census listed 40 percent of the population as being under the age of 14. Because 84 percent of the adult population were cited as being unemployed, most children lived in poverty. Upgrading the historically marginal educational system logically attacked the fundamental roots of poverty. According to oral accounts, the upper-classes undertook basic education of their children in their homes. Late in the 1880s, unused rustic rooms in the old plazas functioned as schools. Poorly funded and operating a few months a year in San Luis and in San Pedro, schools had few books and untrained teachers. Children rarely achieved an education beyond the fourth grade.⁴⁹ In 1905, the Catholic Church established a larger elementary school, and four years later the only high school in the Rio Culebra. It took until 1913 for publicly financed schools to appear in the villages. The first school, San Luis District One, had a center-passage plan, symmetrically placed arched windows, hipped roof, monolithic 13 ft. X 13 ft. bell tower, and a total of 13 exterior and interior steps. The extensive use of concrete and basalt in this structure was likely influenced by technical scaled construction in the first decades of the twentieth century (e.g. bridges, San Luis Roller Mill, and Sanchez Reservoir).

Typically the State of Colorado underfunded Costilla County schools. In 1922, the county received the lowest allowances per student in the state. In 1926, there were 25 districts but only 17 had buildings. What the statistics do not reflect is that the villages had no high school, other than the one

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operated by the Catholic Church. Between 1937 and 1954, a few of the nuns at San Luis taught at the public grade schools in the villages because of a shortage of certified teachers. In 1957, the Colorado Department of Education banned religious orders from teaching in public schools. The inability to generate outside income eventually caused the Catholic school to close. However, a public high school did finally open in San Luis.

The dismal state of the education system prompted a series of New Deal school construction projects in the Rio Culebra. Although San Luis had the most elaborate of WPA projects, at least three of the villages obtained schools. Until it burned in 1999 a good example of area projects was the school located in the village of Chama. The Chama School was a two-story adobe building with a simple square plan, center passageway, and sidestepped parapets. Located in the heart of Chama, the structure's large multi-paned wood sashed windows and concrete stucco no doubt influenced families to use modern materials.

As a consequence of its size and importance as a commercial center and county seat, San Luis had several WPA school projects. Constructed in 1940, the San Luis Junior High is a "U"-shaped south-facing, single-story structure, with an over-head clerestory and large south facing windows to light the interior. Emulating national construction trends in this period, the school was a model with its indoor plumbing, central heating, and electricity. Sited to the rear of the junior high is a two-story, 30,000 square-foot gym. Built of concrete pilasters with hollow clay tile infill, the gym has steel bow trusses and a barrel roof. The gym's rectangular-plan used asymmetrically placed windows at its upper level and dual entryways at the lower level. Interior wood bleachers, hardwood floors, and a kitchen continue to be used for sports functions and local gatherings.⁵⁰ The second more complex educational structure constructed as a WPA project was a training center. Built entirely of adobe the center was "L"-shaped with ground level wings, rising two-stories at the center. An annex located to the side of the compound was also "L"-shaped and functioned as a tractor repair shop. A special feature of the training center was the extensive use basalt rock in fire places, the exterior wall base, and the surrounding fence. As a complement the structure had Pueblo Revival detailing, flat roofs, and exposed *vigas* on the interior and exterior.

While construction of the center was completed early in the 1940s, the unfinished interior was very difficult to heat and light. Eventually, a citizens group approached Adams State Teachers College in Alamosa to encourage the school to open an extension in San Luis. In the decade between 1943 and 1953, Adams State Teacher College operated the San Luis Institute of Arts and Crafts. By 1944, the Institute, which was the equivalent of a junior college, offered in-service training for rural elementary teachers from Costilla, Conejos, and New Mexico's Taos Counties. The Institute had a curriculum laboratory, a visiting teachers program, and a community outreach component including health education, art, and recreational activities. Veterans from World War II learned woodworking, farm equipment repair, and agricultural skills via the GI Bill. The Institute closed in 1953 and the building was given to the San Luis School District. Sometime between 1953 and 1980, the school district added a side wing to the building. In the 1980s, the entire compound underwent remodeling to house the San Luis Museum and Cultural Center. Ironically, while the museum houses historical displays, the work undertaken in the 1980s obliterated the prominent Pueblo Revival facade and altered the flat roofline of the 1940s.

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By the end of the third period of significance the architecture profile of the surrounding villages continued to reflect the adobe vernacular traditions established during the previous century. The agricultural fields and accompanying *acequias*— in combination with farmsteads, *soterranos*, *dispensas*, corrals, and simple wood fence lines— formed a working landscape distinct to southern Costilla County.

Despite the fact that the county seat had some plan and design variations, grid streets, modern bridges, and an oiled roadway, San Luis was still distinguishable as a Hispano enclave with an overlay of New Deal projects.

Concluding Phases of Development: 1946-1964

In the final phase of development, the landscape and built environment of the Rio Culebra basin underwent further alterations because of increased exposure to the outside world brought about by returning military veterans and, in the last years, Great Society Programs. Although the former prominence of the New Towns could never be regained after the Depression, the few Anglo agriculturists who survived the economic downturn tended to consolidate deserted farmsteads into large farms. In 1946, a small group of farmers initiated a new business of mining pumice, or volcanic rock. Now farmers had a mine operation to supplement agricultural production. To salvage the vegetable industry the Nisei moved north to Blanca to take advantage of a reliable water supply and rail service. Once again, the Nisei's ability to deliver high quality produce maintained their reputation as outstanding producers of such cool weather crops as spinach and lettuce.

The shifting economics of this period impacted the Rio Culebra villagers in an altogether different way. It was only through post-World War II training programs that villagers begin to address health, housing, and educational problems. The deteriorated economics experienced by the Rio Culebra villagers mirrored the condition of Hispano enclaves throughout the Rio Arriba. Despite a decade of WPA oriented assistance, counties with large Spanish speaking populations could not change the concentrated poverty in post-World War II. Economic problems involved a complexity of issues including repressive wages. As it had been in the past, agricultural pursuits were divided along ethnic lines. Namely, Anglos tended to be large commercial farmers; the Nisei continued to dominated the vegetable market; and Hispanos either produced small surpluses of hay, alfalfa, green peas, and livestock or were laborers. Labor disputes begun during the First World War reemerged after the Second World War. Once again, farmers cutting labor costs put Hispanos into an oppositional stance against low-paid seasonal workers from Mexico.

Generally, the bleak economic profile of most residents of the Rio Culebra during this period did not apply to a few very prosperous businessmen who supported the parish in the construction of new missions and a rectory addition on the main church at San Luis. During this time the church erected four mission churches, a grade school, and a rectory/day chapel. In the spirit of old Padre Garcia (1894-1921), Reverend Humphrey Martorell (a member of the Order of the Theatines, pastor, and supernatant) revolutionized religious spaces in Costilla County. Under Padre Martorell's pastorate (1933-1962) the majority of missions were adobe, single-nave, linear plans, with Southwest vernacular style. However, Martorell, a native of Spain, also introduced cinder block and brick, with Iberian and Mediterranean detailing. The only church erected in the Rio Culebra at this time was the Mission of San Francisco.

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Constructed of cinder block, this mission is one of two religious spaces in the parish with dual towers. The asymmetrical towers, one slightly recessed to the rear and lower than the other, have crenellated detailing at their peaks.

By 1948, Father Martorell constructed a new rectory and a small day chapel at San Luis. Possibly designed by Thomas & Sweet Architects, the rectory and day chapel reflect classical Mediterranean Revival with red clay tile roofing. A second project employed student laborers to construct a small training center of adobe using a Spanish Pueblo Revival motif. In the 1950s, the parish added a grade school of cinder block construction as an annex to the old Mercy High School. Despite departing from adobe construction, the Southwest vernacular style, traditional linear form, and front stepped parapet maintain the continuity of the parish compound.

As the Rio Culebra moved into the middle of the twentieth century, marked differences defined the cultural landscapes of villages from the milieu of the county seat. Neither villages nor the commercial center at San Luis escaped time. Undeniably the characteristics of the outlying villages were stronger than San Luis as their settlement patterns and vernacular traditions survived the influence of new roads and New Deal construction. In comparison, the county seat lost ground because a series of fires (between the 1930s and 1960s) consumed the four-story concrete flourmill (ca. 1908) and several commercial buildings along Main Street. Not unlike other small towns anxious to modernize, homeowners and the county demolished some important historic resources, including the last remaining sections of the plaza walls and remnants of its core structures. During reconstruction builders used concrete block, not adobe, or vacated the site altogether. In the final analysis new construction along Main Street hastened change. Now, hardware stores, the sole hotel, large and small grocery stores, a drugstore, doctor's office, cafes, liquor stores, gas stations, auto body shops, and a theater begin to look like the railroad towns in northern New Mexico. The saving grace for San Luis was the overall tendency to use Southwest vernacular and Pueblo Revival accenting, so that even when new materials such as glass block, metal window frames, and plastered cinder block became popular, design features maintained the continuity of the streetscape. Even the most radical departure in style—a streamlined modern structure—continued to hold the aesthetics of the streetscape together. Influenced by the modernistic streamline style, this two-story building has outward canted showcase windows, asymmetrically placed glass doors and an overhead transom, and aluminum curvilinear accents at the sides. Nonetheless, sidestepping parapets, flat roof, and rectangular form mimicked Southwest vernacular features that the builder had encountered when he studied art at the University of New Mexico in the 1940s. Because outlying communities did not develop an equivalent to Main Street, San Luis is the sole village to absorb the contemporary look in its commercial facades during the last period of significance.

Between 1940 and 1950, Costilla County lost 19 percent of its population. The trend continued in 1960, as out-migration accelerated by 25 percent. With the largest population decline in Colorado, Costilla County had the lowest per capita income in the state. The dismal statistics related to the fact that two-thirds of the residents earned less than \$3,000 annually. With half the households having no telephone, water, or toilets in their homes, the census profile clearly demonstrates why so many people relocated to the city. Of those remaining, many continued to farm and raise livestock at subsistence levels. An even smaller number worked for the county, were employed by the school district, or operated

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small businesses. However, a majority were children, elderly, or disabled and lived in the security of their extended families. Generally, most who stayed lacked the funds to leave.

This fragile equilibrium changed after a North Carolina timber speculator purchased the 77,000-acre *La Sierra*, or mountain tract, for \$7 an acre. The new owner fenced his property boundaries and erected gates at all entrances to *La Sierra*. Once the land was enclosed, the owner went to court to barricade county maintained roads. The remaining task was to clear the disputed title to the land inexpensively purchased because it was "subject to the claims of local people" to pasture, gather wood, and lumber. To avoid the issue of historic settlement rights, the new owner hired a team of attorneys to attack Beaubien's compact with the ancestors of residents. The land was secured only after removing the proceedings to Denver and through the application of an obscure process called the Torrence Title Action. Many community members believed the village's constitutional rights to due process had been violated. Once the judge issued the legal pronouncement denying community access, sheep grazing, wood gathering, and other activities were severely curtailed and the frail economy was dismantled.

In the mid-1960s, the position of Costilla County was emblematic of the common experiences of Hispanos in the Rio Arriba. Throughout the region, animosities peaked during this period because of losses like *La Sierra*. To calm growing social unrest nationally and to improve the condition of socially and economically disadvantaged groups, President Johnson embarked on his Great Society program. In part, the program looked to alleviate poverty by addressing substandard housing and issues related to water and sanitation. Costilla County was among seven counties in the Rio Arriba targeted for a massive infusion of federal aid. However, many of these programs prompted alterations in domestic architecture and ignored farm and ranch infrastructure. Because of this urban emphasis, agricultural structures lay idle, deteriorated, and some eventually collapsed. Although homes received new aluminum frame slider windows, the small single-light replacements were energy inefficient and destroyed Territorial Era ornamentation and altered window configurations. Other projects remodeled facades, changed rooflines, and changed massing to the point of obliterating historic features and traditional plans. Affordable housing initiatives likewise promoted standardized styles employing 2 in. X 4 in. frame construction as government building codes prohibited adobe and required contractors to use standard materials. This led to the decline in the art of adobe laying. Consequently many families abandoned their adobe homes to obtain modern housing. Meanwhile, homeowners who did not participate in the War on Poverty program, slowly remodeled their adobe dwellings adding new windows, doors, roofs, and frame additions.

The final blow to the cultural landscape came when the county received federal funds for centralized water and sanitation in the outlying villages. Because the award of funds required the county to red-tag structures on private property, many of the oldest buildings were deemed as "blighted," including the last fragments of the San Pablo plaza, and were systematically destroyed. War on Poverty programs did assist many families to obtain a basic standard of living enjoyed by most Americans. Unfortunately, an unintended consequence was the diminishing of the historical integrity of the villages. In the final analysis, the federal emphasis on turn-key construction, built-in utilities, and modern conveniences forced the adoption of American ideals of comfort and social prestige at the cost of abandoning much of the community's heritage.

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The architecture of the Rio Culebra villages through the four periods of significance demonstrates the strong influences of an agrarian society on the landscape. Even as the village settlements fell within the orbit of the railroad and the new material culture, the effect of these new influences was not representative of the American heartland. Rather, the resulting cultural landscape retained its northern Nuevomexicano roots. The history of the Rio Culebra is an on-going process where time, change, and architectural acculturation fragmented the past. The contemporary modes at the end of the final period forewarned of the continued trend to erode the cultural landscape and the architecture of the Rio Culebra. The last vestiges of the Rio Culebra are threatened and their future remain uncertain.

Endnotes

¹ Two concepts are important to understanding the relationship between environmental familiarity and settlement patterns in the Rio Arriba. The first notion is “splinter diffusion.” This term, as coined by cultural geographer Richard Nostrad, describes a process of population movement based on pursuit of pastoral land. Generally, stockmen from a parent village created an offspring village in a historically familiar grazing area. Nostrad notes that the Antonio and Manuel Ballejos (also spelled Vallejos), who helped settle Culebra Arriba, followed the pattern of splinter diffusion when they moved from this region to establish Cuchares in present day Huerfano County. The “budding process” is a second corresponding concept. This type of demographic movement is characterized by resource knowledge through seasonal land use. The budding process is indicative of the land grant communities whereby *pobladores* are organized from established staging areas prior to migrating onto unestablished areas. In the case of the Rio Culebra the first *pobladores* were organized from villages in the Taos Valley. For parallel examples of the budding process, see Chris Wilson and David Kammer, *Community and Continuity: The History, Architecture and Cultural Landscape of La Tierra Armilla* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1989). For a general discussion, see Paul Kutsche and John Van Ness, *Canones* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981).

² Valdez, *Hispanic Vernacular Architecture and Settlement Patterns*, 35.

³ Horn, “Cultural Resources Inventory,” 119-124.

⁴ For details of the de Vargas journey as they pertain to the Rio Culebra, see Manuel J. Espinoza, “Journal of the Vargas Expedition into Colorado, 1694,” *The Colorado Magazine*, vol. XIV, no. 3 (May 1939): 88.

⁵ As the Sangre de Cristo Mountains traversed the western boundary of the Territory of Louisiana the region was a disputed borderland. Despite geopolitical contestations, French trapping parties found their way into the region by the 1740s

⁶ Simmons, *Land of the Six-Armed Cross*, 19-29.

⁷ For a reprint of the San Luis Valley portion of Pikes journal, as originally published in 1810 in Philadelphia, see Carroll Joe Carter, *Pike in Colorado* (Fort Collins: Old Army Press, 1978).

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⁸ Stoller, "Grants of Desperation," 24.

⁹ For more on this regional leader and intellectual, see *Padre Martinez: New Perspectives from Taos*, E.A. Mares, ed. (Taos: Millicent Rogers Museum, 1988). See Fray Angelico Chavez, *But Time and Chance* (Santa Fe: The Sunstone Press, 1981).

¹⁰ See Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). For a specific discussion regarding the Sangre de Cristo Grant, see Richard D. Garcia and Todd Howland, "Determining the Legitimacy of Spanish Land Grants in Colorado: Conflicting Values, Legal Pluralism, and Demystification of the Sangre de Cristo/Rael Case," *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, 16 (Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, 1995).

¹¹ Carlson, "Long-lots of the Rio Arriba," 50.

¹² Taos County Clerk and Records, 120-21; Lantis, *Sequent Rural Occupation*, 106.

¹³ Lopez-Tushar's *People of the Valley* describes construction common to the early Hispano settlements of the San Luis Valley and their interiors.

¹⁴ Names and descriptions of Spanish Colonial tools are from Boyd Pratt and David Snow, *The North Central Regional Overview, Vol. 1, Historic Overview of North Central New Mexico* (Santa Fe: State Historical Preservation Office, 1988). For details on Colonial and Mexican Era materials and construction techniques, see Brainbridge Bunting, *Taos Adobes: Spanish Colonial and Territorial Architecture of the Taos Valley* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1964). Also by Bunting, *Early Architecture in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976).

¹⁵ For a discussion on the origins of *acequias*, see Marc Simmons, "Spanish Irrigation Practices in New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review*, vol. XLVII, no. 2 (April 1972): 135-150. For a historic context tailored to National Register, see David Kammer, "Report on the Historic *Acequia* Systems of the Upper Rio Mora" with illustrations and maps by Arnie Valdez, (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1992) 1-96.

¹⁶ Colorado Water Conservation Board, "Irrigation in Colorado," 26.

¹⁷ Steinel, *History of Agriculture*, 174; 22.

¹⁸ Valdez & Valdez, *Historic and Architectural Context*, 21.

¹⁹ Steinel, *History of Agriculture*, 173.

²⁰ Lantis, *Sequent Rural Occupation*, 137. Steinel, *History of Agriculture*, 174; 34.

²¹ Frazer, "Purveyors of Flour to the Army," 231.

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²² *Ninth Census of the United States*, 108-110.

²³ Brayer, *William Blackmore*, 11.

²⁴ Miller, *Soldiers and Settlers*, 124.

²⁵ All references and citations regarding the promoters of the Sangre de Cristo, the USFLEC, and their dealings in Costilla County are from Brayer, *William Blackmore: The Spanish-Mexican Land Grants, vol. 1*.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 210-11. Lopez-Tushar, *People of the Valley*, 15.

²⁷ Brayer, *William Blackmore*, vol. II, 11. *Lantis, Sequent Rural Occupation*, 232.

²⁸ For a full discussion on the regional pattern of displacement of Hispanos and emerging cultural conflict and class differentiation, see Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²⁹ Fort Garland Nomination to The National Register of Historic Places, 72-3. According to the nomination, “the railroad [...] changed the fort’s economic role in the valley.” Although, “[t]he fort hired local residents, many of whom were Hispanos in the years before 1878”, once the railroad arrives notations regarding Hispano laborers at Fort Garland disappear. This is because “the army found it less expensive to ship preserved foodstuffs from the east to the site than to issue contracts and hire locals.”

³⁰ Spencer, *The Story of the San Luis Valley*, 68.

³¹ Fort Garland Nomination to National Register of Historic Places, 79.

³² For more on the new town populations and religious and farm colonies in the Rio Culebra, see Carleton Q. Anderson, *The Mormons: 100 Years in the San Luis Valley of Colorado* (A LDS Publication, 1983); Judson H. Flower, *Mormon Colonization of the San Luis Valley: 1878-1900* (Published Thesis, Birmingham Young University, 1966); Elma Pagett, “The History of Eastdale,” (Unpublished Manuscript, 1981).

³³ An expanded discussion of Nisei farmers and the rise of commercial vegetable production, see Alvar Carlson, “Rural Settlement Patterns,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 63 (March 1973): 97-108.

³⁴ *Lantis, Sequent Rural Occupation*, 476.

³⁵ Fraser Design. “Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948 Multiple Property Document Form,” (Denver: Colorado Historical Society and Colorado State Parks): Section E, page 60.

³⁶ For more information, see *Board of Immigration, “Miscellaneous Agricultural Statistics, “ Year Book of the State of Colorado*. (Denver: State Board of Immigration, 1922).

³⁷ P.R. Griswold, *Colorado's Loneliest Railroad*, 100.

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³⁸ See Marianne L. Stoller, "Remarks at the Dedication of the San Luis Museum, Cultural, and Commercial Center," (Speech at San Luis, Colorado 1980).

³⁹ For a regional perspective on the impacts of the Great depression and W.P.A Projects, see Susanne Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village Hispanos and the New Deal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ Vigil, "History and Folklore of San Pedro and San Pablo, Colorado."

⁴¹ Into the 1990s the old school compound contained the 1913 grade school, the junior high, and the gym. In 1994, the district destroyed the junior high and the core of the 1913 grade school. Because the 1913 tower is a sentimental reminder of the old school compound and the gym is well kept and used, both structures still stand. The school grounds currently functions as Centennial Community Park.

⁴² An expanded discussion of Nisei farmers and the rise of commercial vegetable production, see Alvar Carlson, "Rural Settlement Patterns," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 63 (March 1973): 97-108.

⁴³ Lantis, *Sequent Rural Occupation*, 476.

⁴⁴ Fraser Design. "Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948 Multiple Property Document Form," (Denver: Colorado Historical Society and Colorado State Parks): Section E, page 60.

⁴⁵ For more information, see *Board of Immigration, "Miscellaneous Agricultural Statistics, " Year Book of the State of Colorado*. (Denver: State Board of Immigration, 1922).

⁴⁶ P.R. Griswold, *Colorado's Loneliest Railroad*, 100.

⁴⁷ See Marianne L. Stoller, "Remarks at the Dedication of the San Luis Museum, Cultural, and Commercial Center," (Speech at San Luis, Colorado 1980).

⁴⁸ For a regional perspective on the impacts of the Great depression and W.P.A Projects, see Susanne Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village Hispanos and the New Deal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

⁴⁹ Vigil, "History and Folklore of San Pedro and San Pablo, Colorado."

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Glossary

Aberjon – field peas.

Acequia –gravity-based irrigation ditches.

Acequia madre – mother or main irrigation ditch.

Adoberos – adobe masons.

Albañil – mason.

Ancestral Puebloan – cliff dwellers of the southwest.

Arroyos – narrow, steep-sided valleys formed by rapidly flowing water from irregular rains.

Atarques – small temporary holding dams.

Azula de mano – hand ax.

Calabaza – pumpkins.

Cambalache – informal economy of bartering.

Cañales – roofs had multiple wooden drains.

Capillas – village chapels.

Capulin – choke cherry.

Carpintero – carpenter.

Cebolla – onions.

Champe – rosehip.

Chicos – white corn, or smoked in *hornos*, husked, sundried for a week, and kernels removed from the cob and cooked provided the basic dietary staples for families throughout the year.

Ciruelo de indio – Indian plums.

Comisionado – *Acequia* users elected a commission or *comisionado* to support the *mayordomo*'s work. The *comisionado* collected dues for over-seeing the ditch and for improvements to the *acequias*.

Compas para guesos - calipers used by carpenters to measure and size wood.

Compas de puntas – dividers used by carpenters to measure and size wood.

Compuertas – headgates in a canal or ditch.

Corrilleras - a corridor of houses and farms on opposite sides of a road.

Culebra – water snake.

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Cuña – wedge used by a carpenter.

Desague – at the end point of each *acequia* was a channel, or *desague*, to funnel excess water back to the stream, to another ditch, or to pastureland.

Dispensas – outbuildings.

Escuadra – square used by a carpenter to measure wood.

Extranjeros – foreigners.

Extensiones – long-lot field patterns.

Fogon mexicano – inner corner fireplace.

Frijol bolita – beans.

Garembullo – gooseberry.

Granados – granaries.

Havas – fava beans.

Hacha de carpintero – carpenter's ax.

Hermanos Peñitentes – fraternal brotherhood.

Hijuelas – property deeds.

Hornos – adobe ovens.

Iglesias – village churches.

Jacal – mud-plastered log construction using 4-6 inch diameter logs placed side-by-side vertically in a trench and chinked with mud.

Jergas – woven cloth rugs.

Latillas – thin logs across the top of the *vigas*.

Manos and *metates* – hand-held grinding stones.

Mayordomo – overseer who divides water equally among all users.

Maiz blanco – white corn.

Manzana de agosto – climatically adapted apples.

Moradas – meetinghouses constructed by *Los Hermanos*.

Oratorios – private chapels in homes which function as religious spaces for the community.

Parciantes – affiliated water users.

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Peones – laborers.

Penitentes – also known as *los Hermanos Penitentes*.

Pergamino – translucent sheep membrane.

Plazuela – the “L” and “U”- shaped plans residences which evolved into an extended family compound known as a *poblador*.

Presas – permanent dams.

Pretil – parapet.

Quelites – lamb quarters.

Rancheros – ranching class.

Regaderas – individual ditch outlets.

Sangrias – interrelated network of ditch laterals.

Serrucho – carpenter’s hand saw.

Serrucho de serrar hierro – carpenter’s hacksaw.

Sierra de carpintero – carpenter’s bow saw.

Sierra de trocear – carpenter’s whip saw.

La Sociedad de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno – the Society of Our Father Jesus the Nazarene, also known as *los Hermanos Penitentes* (fraternal brotherhood), transferred Catholicism from Taos Valley into Colorado.

Soterranos – adobe food cellars.

Solar – home site.

Suerte – farming plot.

Tapia – patio or enclosed fence-like adobe wall four to five feet high.

Tarima – adobe bench.

Vara – Spanish unit of measurement equaling approximately three geometrical feet.

Vecino – landed neighbor.

Vega – community pasture.

Vigas – wood beams.

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ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Name of Property Type: VERNACULAR HOUSES OF THE RIO CULEBRA BASIN, 1851-1964

Divided into four subtypes, this property reflects floor plans, design features, and construction materials used in the Rio Culebra Basin. Since the following property subtypes evolved in the same region, contain like features and similar characteristics, periods of significance, integrity, qualifications, and registration requirements are consolidated into one discussion.

Description

Architecturally the Rio Culebra villages are an extension of design traditions and materials used in the earlier settlements of the Rio Arriba. By the 1870s, affluent merchants copied architectural embellishments used by the military. With the advent of the railroad, mass-produced materials reached the San Luis Valley at unprecedented levels. While the railroad introduced imported styles and design features, these architectural revisions were not immediately incorporated into the well-established vernacular construction practices. However, by the last decade of the nineteenth century, rail induced innovations gained a foothold within the villages as the most prosperous *pobladores* incorporated Anglo influenced house plans, stylistic ornamentation, and finished materials into domestic adobe construction. Changes included pitched roofs, second-story additions, dormers, and stairways; all were incorporated into adobe facades. These changes were rooted in the earlier modification of the traditional linear plan into a center passage plan followed by a hybrid plan that combined the two. The hybrid plan was specifically introduced by government sponsored construction (i.e., the fort and the courthouse). New styles coupled with local building traditions resulted in a Folk Territorial Style, which prevailed into the 1900s. Plan and material variations continued into the 1930s. Despite alterations, the vast majority of *pobladores* replicated traditional forms and used adobe into the middle of the twentieth century.

In the decade of the 1960s, out-migration devastated the cultural landscape as abandoned farms and adobe homes deteriorated. Correspondingly, the remaining plaza walls and many of the oldest structures at San Luis were demolished to make way for commercial construction. After the introduction of the War on Poverty programs and affordable housing initiatives, many families abandoned their older adobe homes to obtain modern conveniences. Despite the adoption of American ideals of comfort and social prestige, many homeowners also remodeled their ancestral homes. In the mid-1970s, adobe construction reemerged as fuel shortages prompted an energy crisis. Once again, builders came to rely on the energy efficiency of adobe construction. Regardless of changes, the Vernacular Property Types that characterize the evolution of the Rio Culebra settlements remain as key indication of the contribution of Hispanos to the settlement of Colorado.

Property Subtype: Linear Plan

Jacal construction typifies the earliest residential structures in the Rio Culebra. The single or dual room *jacal* had an interior corner fireplace, an exterior door, and one or two windows. As owners enlarged their *jacales* to accommodate extended families, a series of side-by-side single file rooms with

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separate entryways and privacy walls developed. Eventually, owners added rooms to this core, creating a single file linear configuration. If the site permitted, the adobe structures continued the single file configuration. In areas with site restrictions, expansion would take on the form of an "L" or "U" shape. The preferred direction for the wings was southerly, with a dominant south-facing axis for single wings. The linear room configuration was characterized by multiple exterior doors and minimal window openings.



Linear Plan: Lobato House

If the adjoining rooms shared the same household, a door was cut through the common interior wall. However, if separate households composed the building, exterior doors were the norm. The linear plan was dominant throughout the Culebra villages until about the 1940s. The majority of the houses dating to this period followed a single-file axis configuration with the front facing "L" shaped variation being the next most common plan. A classic example of a linear plan is the Pilar Mondragon residence in San Luis. The "L" variation is typified by the Juan Lobato home (currently the city park building). Aside from ruins, the only "U" shaped residence remaining within the study area is the Jacquez Residence (formally the old parish-chapel compound in San Luis) and two structural remnants at Chama. New adobe construction by residents following the traditional linear plan is currently limited. Arising in place of the customary adobe is the mobile home.

Property Subtype: Center Passage Plan



Center Passage Plan: Valdez House

After the railroad was completed at the northern end of the county and migrating Anglo-Americans arrived, the center passage floor plan appeared by 1883. Since emigrants from the East Coast and Midwest preferred the central passage plan, the emergence of this form coincides with population growth and the arrival of the railroad. It is unclear which building in the Rio Culebra introduced a central (usually narrow) hall or passage as an organizational system for locating the various spaces within the interior. The two possible

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structures that could have introduced the center passage plan are either Fort Garland or the Costilla County Courthouse. While domestic structures such as the Zac Bernal and the Raymunda Aranda residences are examples, a classic plan is the J.R. Valdez home. The Valdez structure is a Late Victorian-Gothic Revival, one and-a-half story "I" house, with an intersecting centered gable. This structure is one room deep, with a centered hallway and ornate wooden porch. Like many of the remaining center passage plans in the Rio Culebra, this home is constructed of adobe and has a symmetrically placed hallway at the entrance of the main facade. Center-passage halls normally are narrower than the other rooms in the building. Typically, builders constructed the hall in 6-10 feet width. In contrast, rooms were 12-16 feet wide. Although the center passage plan is often two rooms deep, in the San Luis Valley it more often combined with the Anglo-American "I" house. This form is usually two-rooms wide (with or without a center passage), one-room deep, and two stories tall. The establishment of commerce and increased agricultural activity in the Culebra villages resulted in economic prosperity for some families who correspondingly improved their houses and farmsteads. The more prosperous families constructed the center passage plan in the latter part of the 1890s. Consequently, living arrangements in the house shifted from the all-purpose common rooms to specialized rooms (e.g., kitchen, parlor, and bedroom). The central hall ordered the separation of uses of each room. These houses also adopted the other innovations of the era such as pitched roofs with dormers, side gable symmetry, one and one half story height, and Greek Revival detailing. Since the distribution of the central passage houses was limited to the wealthier farmers at San Luis, only a few examples exist in villages.

Property Subtype: Hybrid Plan

Hispano and Anglo traditions fused to create a variety of hybrid plan types in the villages. These combination plans were most popular between 1900-1920. Like the center passage plan, most hybrid houses belonged to farmers with large holdings of land and stock. Distinguished by the combination of two or more features emerging from Hispano-American architectural contact, hybrid homes are limited to San Luis, San Pedro/San Pablo, and Los Fuertes. Hispano vernacular features included adobe, *fuerte* or *jacal* construction, linear, one-room-deep forms, and multiple exterior doors. However, in the twentieth century, *fuerte* or *jacal* construction tended to be limited to outbuildings. While Anglo-American construction was distinguished by centered hallway passages, symmetrical facades, pitched roofs with dormers, and second story living spaces, Hispano hybrid forms typically used



Hybrid Plan

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adobe construction and were either one or one and-a-half stories. Unlike the center passage plan, in the hybrid plan the hallway/passage was as wide as the other rooms in the house (usually 12-16 feet) and functioned not only as a passage way to other rooms but as a gathering space, or *sala*. A good example of this form is the Ignacita Rodriguez residence at Los Fuertes. Aside from the previously mentioned features, this structure has intact Territorial woodwork and exterior mud plaster.

Property Subtype: Hipped-Roof Box Plan

In the first two decades of the 20th century, cubic massing of Anglo-American houses emerged at San Luis. Constructed in a rectangular form, the four room house usually had a pyramidal or hipped roof. The centered front door entered into a living room, leading to a rear kitchen with its own separate doorway. The two bedrooms to the other side lack exterior doors. Emerging by the 1920s, a style variation of the hipped roof box plan is the bungalow. In the bungalow style builders divided the kitchen to form a dining room located to one side. In rare cases an interior bathroom was added to the other side. Whatever the ultimate use of the side rooms, the goal was to maintain the square or rectangular form.



Hipped-Roof Box Plan

Late in the 1930s and into the 1940s southwestern revivalism, most often the Spanish Pueblo Revival with a hint of Mediterranean, appeared in San Luis. These structures were flat roofed with cut-out stepped parapets, cement stuccoed exteriors and, sometimes, red clay tile accents over doors and windows. The later examples constructed by well-to-do merchants represented the height of fashion. While the smaller

villages have only a handful of examples of hipped-roof box plan houses, the most distinct example is the Gould-Vigil residence in San Luis.

Significance

Located in the plazas and linear *corrilleras*, and accompanied by long lot properties characterized by *acequia* irrigation systems, the vernacular houses of the Rio Culebra are typical of the Hispano villages of northern New Mexico. By using locally available materials, *pobladores* replicated the early building traditions of northern New Mexico with which they were familiar. Despite the influences of the railroad and the accompanying Anglo-American ideals, the vast majority of Hispanos adhered to these customary building practices and traditional materials. Adobe construction and the traditional linear house plan prevailed well into the 20th century with only minor changes.

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As the agricultural economy grew and the railroad prospered, newly arriving Anglo-Americans introduced new architectural styles. The wealthiest of Hispano landowners began to imitate some of these imported styles. Availability of processed building materials (i.e., milled lumber) and the influx of skilled carpenters led to the construction of housing seen in larger towns within the Rio Arriba and southern Colorado. The greatest impact on the vernacular architecture was the adaptation of pitched roofs and a shift to new floor plans.

Each of the dwelling plan subtypes represents a change in the traditional vernacular architecture, although the cultural landscape remains consistent with the Hispano village setting. The surviving examples of the subtypes stand as evidence of the vitality of a building tradition that adapted new styles with indigenous materials during a period of prosperous agricultural economy. As a group, the variations in plans, imported styles, and materials are reminders of the history of Rio Culebra. Not only do they offer evidence of evolution of the villages from the simple Hispano vernacular to a diversity of national plans and styles, they reveal social, economic, and cultural changes during the entire period of significance. These buildings are historically significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the settlement and agricultural development of the area. They are also architecturally significant under Criterion C for embodying the style, form, and methods of construction that emerged on the nineteenth century Hispano frontier and incorporated elements from Anglo-American architecture that continued into the middle of the twentieth century.

Registration Requirements

Residential types range from the oldest and most numerous of surviving properties, the linear house, to the center passage house, and finally, the hybrid and the hipped-roof box. Although structures using Hispano vernacular are important, the subtypes reflect the history of this area through time. An analysis of the evolution of these structures provides a key resource for understanding the broader evolution of Colorado's rural Hispano enclaves. Considered as a group these structures reflect how homeowners responded to outside influences and adapted them to local building traditions. The vernacular dwellings of the Culebra River Villages catalogue local popular taste over one hundred and forty years.

To qualify for listing, these properties must have been built in 1949 or before and be good and intact examples of the identified subtypes, including linear, center passage, hybrid, or hipped-roof box. In order to be considered eligible, properties must retain their historic integrity. Specifically, they must be recognizable to their period of significance through their retention of original floor plan, materials, and exterior finishes. If later additions reflect the local folk practice of incremental units and employ traditional materials and building techniques, the dwellings are eligible for listing. In the case of adobe dwellings whose walls have been hard-plastered as opposed to retaining their mud plaster, this addition is consistent with the historic efforts to stabilize exteriors and does not diminish the integrity of the building. The addition of wood or aluminum siding or the enclosure of a front porch, however, makes buildings ineligible. The addition of aluminum doors, sliding glass doors, or an excess of aluminum sliding windows or windows that do not fit the original opening detracts from the integrity of the building and renders it ineligible. Because there are only a few remaining examples of the center passage and hybrid houses, the addition of new materials alone will not disqualify them from registration.

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**Name of Property Type: AGRICULTURAL OUTBUILDINGS, CELLARS, AND BARNs OF THE RIO
CULEBRA VILLAGES, 1851-1964**

Divided into three subtypes, the agricultural related property types are essential components of the farmsteads of the Rio Culebra. However, since all or some of these properties are fundamental to the farmstead complex and have many commonalities related to function, the statement of significance and registration requirements apply to all three subtypes.

Description

A fundamental requirement to founding an economy based on agriculture was the ability to store foodstuffs and to house livestock. In the Colonial and Mexican Periods, Hispanos of the Rio Arriba were not commercial producers. Consequently, they did not develop elaborate facilities for produce or livestock. There were of course notable exceptions. Perhaps the oldest surviving compound, now restored, is the Antonio Severino Martinez Hacienda at Taos (ca 1824-7). Severino Martinez, the father of Padre Antonio Jose Martinez, was a wealthy rancher. The hacienda, more properly a *placita*, provides an example of a large, integrated agricultural compound and residence in the Mexican Period. The floor plan indicates special rooms to store foodstuffs at the cool north side of the home. In this example, a room, mostly open, also housed animals at the far rear wall. Although not as elaborate or as large, there were perhaps two or three similar compounds in the study area. However, the majority of the populace did not live within a *placita*, nor did they have vast surpluses. Nevertheless, most families reserved a space for storing food. Written records indicate that Pueblo People used food storage rooms. Hispanos likely adopted this custom. Those with animals constructed simple pole framework with logs for cross beams and hay as an insulator. The more elaborate barn used log notching. On the other hand, *soterranos*, or root cellars, and large formal barns with pitched roofs correlate to commercial agriculture in the American Period. Newcomers from the East, Mormon colonies, and later, the state agricultural service, provided model cellars and freestanding barns. Although Hispanos adopted these forms, they used adobe and *jacal* when they constructed agricultural buildings. Currently, while there are *soterranos*, *dispensas*, and adobe barns, no *placitas* remain in the study area.

Property Subtype: Outbuildings

Every farmstead or ranch contained specialized *dispensas*, all functioning as secondary structures for the agropastoral activities conducted on the farmstead. Some *dispensas* housed dry food staples, seeds, and tools. Oftentimes the *rancheros* would construct several outbuildings for specialized functions. For example, when an outbuilding stored grain it was a *granero*, or granary. *Graneros* were household-sized shelters with individual bins in the interior to separate grains. Other *dispensas* stored coal. Outbuildings ranged in size and height. Although structures were often between 8' x10' and 10' x 12,' the *dispensa* could be smaller or larger depending on the needs of the owner. In some instances, the basic first shelter became the outbuilding once a permanent home was completed. Generally, the *ranchero* constructed *dispensas* as freestanding basic cubes with a low entryway and low flat roof. Examples of adobe *dispensas* are the Margarito Rodriguez, Emelia Gurule, and the Carry Medina

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properties in San Luis. Most outbuildings used *fuerte*, or horizontal logs, or *jacal*, or vertical log construction. The most common log building was the *fuerte*, which used a double saddle notch. To weather proof the *dispensas* and protect its contents against rodents, the owner often chinked the cracks between the logs with a thick earthen plaster and later, with concrete. While earthen roofs were the rule for the earliest shelters, when the roof needed to be replaced, a slightly pitched or shed roof using roughhewn wood became the norm. Currently, *jacal* outbuildings are rare. However, there are several *fuerte dispensas* in the Rio Culebra, including the Sammy Garcia, Charles Mondragon Sr., Willie Medina, and Luis Garcia outbuildings at San Luis.



Agricultural Outbuilding

By the 1940s, wooden outbuildings with floors and nails or hooks on the walls for additional storage became popular. The thrifty *ranchero* often used discarded scrap corrugated metal to repair the walls and roofs or inserted discarded doors or old windows to add interior light. The most interesting *dispensas* resemble patchwork quilts reflecting the recycling of materials and ingenuity of the owner.

Although some log *dispensas* are reminiscent of early Appalachian corncribs, since the population of the Mexican highlands also used log construction, it is difficult to trace the design origins of any outbuilding. The dates for the various outbuildings mostly correlate to the time of the house construction or thereafter.

Property Subtype: Cellars

Root crops like potatoes became commodities in the 1890s after over-planting of wheat depleted soils at the far northern end of Costilla County. Like growers elsewhere in the San Luis Valley, the Rio Culebra farmers profited from the booming potato market. Despite the cash income potato farming offered, mass production of potatoes had unforeseen limitations. Since a growing number of farmers planted this staple, the market was often glutted with surpluses. To deal with the situation farmers stored the unsold portion of fall surpluses until spring by enlarging the small family-sized root cellar, or *soterrano*. Within time larger earthen cellars appeared throughout the valley, their appearance similar to these earlier *soterranos*.

Dug part way into the ground and covered with an earthen mound, *soterrano* construction required large beams and logs, straw, willows, and dirt. Usually cellars were elongated rectangular

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forms. The size of a family *soterrano* was about 16 feet long by 12 foot wide. In contrast, the commercial cellar was 50-foot long and 30-foot wide or larger. Typically, a *soterrano* had two entrances.

At the center was a set of wooden double doors large enough to allow a wagon and, later, a truck to enter. Sloped at a gentle grade, the downward entryway allowed the farmer to move vehicle loads of surpluses into the interior. Usually cellars had a second, small door located at the front side to allow the farmer to enter the cellar without opening the large doors. Often an air lock, or vestibule, with a second set of interior doors kept cold air from entering the interior.

To fabricate the cellar, builders excavated the site to six feet or less, depending on the water table. To construct the structural framework they buried a series of poles vertically into the trench. These columns formed bays that acted as vertical support for the horizontal beams. To fabricate the roof they laid equally sized *latillas* over the beams. The final step was to create an insulated weather-proofed membrane over the roof by placing multiple layers of straw followed by willows, and finally, a thick blanket of earth. Strengthening the interior walls required a horizontal retaining wall of stone or wood. When concrete became affordable, many preferred this material for its durability and its strength. The dark and cool cave-like interior had an earthen floor and large bin-like areas to separate potatoes into lots. To keep moisture to a minimum and to maintain air circulation, the farmer used a wooden vent placed at the top and sides of the structure. Once completed, the cellar maintained an even, consistent temperature, keeping the contents from freezing. While there is no exact date for the onset of the *soterrano* this form likely developed with the establishment of farmsteads. Although many *soterranos* remain unsurveyed, there are cellars of varying sizes throughout the Rio Culebra. The smaller sized appears in San Luis and the larger commercial types in the villages.

Property Subtype: Barns

In the Colonial Period, *rancheros* of the Rio Arriba merged the domestic structure with animal shelters to form a home and corral unit, or *casa/corrals*. In this early architectural form, the house shared its outer rear wall with animal pens and corral. In the rudimentary configuration of the *casa/corrals*, a stable-like pole framework with an overhead covering to shelter livestock in the dead of winter was attached to rear wall of the home. The rear wall also functioned as an anchor for the corral. Once secured to the corners of the house, upright poles framed the corral and outlined the land at the rear of the house. During the Mexican Period, the Rio Arriba populace continued to use only basic home/animal shelter. In all probability, the *casa/corral* was limited to the plaza areas as this form declined once the *pobladores* moved to their individual fields. Currently there are no known *casa/corrals* in the Rio Culebra. With the onset of the American Era the monolithic barn forms common to the Eastern United States gained foothold as *rancheros* sought to compete in the burgeoning agricultural economy of American West. Although there is no exact date as to when *rancheros* of the Rio Arriba absorbed new barn designs, the best evidence for chronicling this type of construction are old photos.

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Discernable barns are clearly visible in the oldest surviving photo of San Luis. At one end of the plaza are several planted fields and a handful of *casa/corrals* with haystacks. In the mist of this scene are two modern barns (one located at the mill complex). Both modern barns in the photo are single-story, with rectangular plans, and gable roofs. In a later photo (ca 1895), the miller's barn evolved into a two-story structure with a metal clad gabled roof. The style of the barn was likely imported from the eastern seaboard as was the use of wood siding and windows. In the 1929 photo, barns are modern rectangular forms, one and a half-stories in height with gable or gambrel roofs consisting of wood shingles or corrugated metal. Barns had two doors at one end to allow wagons to enter and a second corresponding set of rear doors leading into a stockyard or perhaps a planted field. Single-story barns housed animals and hay. If the barn was two-story, a hoist raised straw bales to a small door under the eave. While there are no remaining gambrel roofed barns, there are hybrid mixes of Hispano vernacular and imported designs. The only remaining one-and-a-half-story adobe barn in the San Luis Historic District is the Maxwell Barn. A second



Maxwell Barn

example is the Apolinar Rael Barn in San Pedro. A good example of a horizontal log construction (without chinking) is the Ferris Gould Barn. In contrast, in later periods commercial silos and three bay barns with hollow shells appear. Since these forms are imported replicas and do not reflect Hispano vernacular characteristics, they are not contributing properties.

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Significance

Outbuildings, cellars, and barns of the Culebra Villages serve as important reminders of the historic agricultural economy of the area. Their construction methods demonstrate how the same folk building tradition used for dwellings extended to encompass a variety of homestead related buildings. The location of these structures in relation to the dwelling constitutes an effort to integrate outbuildings, cellars, and barns into a spatial arrangement characteristic of the frontier Hispano ranch and farmstead. In combination with fields, *acequias*, and main dwellings, the agricultural structures assured the self-sufficiency of the farmstead. Such structures are historically significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the agricultural settlement of the area from 1851 to 1964. They are also architecturally significant under Criterion C for embodying the style, form, and methods of

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construction that emerged on the nineteenth century Hispanic frontier and continued into the latter part of the twentieth century.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for individual listing, these properties must be 50 years old and must be good and intact examples of the identified types of structures previously described. They must be recognizable to their period of significance and remain relatively unaltered, retaining their original plan, materials, and exterior finishes. Because there are only a few remaining examples of log outbuildings, old cellars, and early barns, the use of new materials (such as corrugated metal for repair or addition of doors, windows, new poles, stucco, or concrete reinforcement) will not disqualify them from registration.

Name of Property Type: VERNACULAR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS OF THE RIO CULEBRA BASIN

Commercial vernacular buildings were essential components of the expansion of the agricultural economy of Costilla County. Commercial buildings were the first structures constructed once the plaza was secured and commerce began to expand. When post offices were placed in mercantile establishments, commerce and basic governmental functions took place within the same building. By 1900s, the massing and siting of specialty stores (e.g., newspaper, hardware and dry goods stores, barbershops, and pool hall/liquor stores) along Main Street in San Luis mimicked aspects of small trade centers throughout the rural West. For convenience and for economy, many storeowners resided at the rear or above their businesses, forming a Commercial/Residence Hybrid type. By the 1930s, buildings serving the growing number of automobiles, including garages, gas stations, and eventually body shops, began to appear. Despite the diversity of functions, locations, and architectural detailing, non-domestic vernacular structures are interrelated. Because these buildings form a composite, this discussion merges significance, integrity, qualifications, and registration requirements for all subtypes.

Description

Commercial structures in San Luis transformed the southern end of the county into a center of trade. Since grain was the area's initial commercial crop, the first commercial structures in the Rio Culebra were horizontal gristmills operated by Hispanos. Later, Anglo overshot flourmills followed. Because traditional village gristmills could not compete with modern American flourmills, they gradually disappeared. In the 1950s, the San Luis Roller Mill, the modern predecessor of St. Vrain's flourmill, burned. Currently, there are no gristmills, flourmills, or granaries in the area.

After the pacification of the Utes, immigrants opened the first mercantile establishments at Costilla, New Mexico (eighteen miles south of the villages). These merchants created a network of outlets north from the New Mexico border, through San Luis, into Fort Garland. Later in the 1860s, the first Hispano opened a grocery store in San Luis. By the 1890s, smaller stores, or *tenditas*, appeared in most of the villages. By the turn-of-the-century, a diversity of shops lined Main Street in San Luis.

When the first Model-T arrived in the Rio Culebra in 1919 and the first Model-T truck appeared a year later, commercial structures adopted new styles and building components to serve the automobile.

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Old mercantile businesses expanded their product lines by placing a single gas pump in the front of their establishments. During the Depression, businesses catering to the automobile converted residential spaces into rudimentary filling stations, and later, repair shops. Eventually WPA programs training the underemployed in auto repair stimulated construction of another specialized form, the auto body shop.

In the 1960s half of all trade remained in the county. As a consequence, subtypes that emerged late in this period retained their economic importance. While many businesses have become residences or are vacant, many continue to function although not at their former level, since they are not able to compete with large chain stores in regional centers.

Property Subtype: Vernacular Commercial Buildings

Constructed in the mode found in small northern New Mexican villages, mercantile establishments faced the street, had rectangular plans, and were about 80 feet long and 24 feet wide. In a similar pattern to domestic construction, merchants favored a structural shell of adobe. Many commercial buildings were one-and-one-half stories high with milled lumber, false-front facades and pitched roofs. The typical establishment had recessed doorways, Territorial Style pedimented doors and window lintels, door transoms, molded wood parapets, milled ornamentation, and glass display windows. By the turn-of-the-century, merchants installed wooden floors and tin ornamental ceilings. Because the earliest stores carried a large array of goods, the arrangement of shelving and interior circulation patterns complemented each other. Upon entering the building, patrons could go to glass display cases along one side of the interior wall or they could browse through barrels filled with dry produce in the middle of the store. Usually located at the opposite wall were counters fitted with small bins with the flat space above used to stack dry goods. The more prosperous and influential merchants often obtained an appointment as postmaster and incorporated a post office into their establishments. Not only did this increase business, it added to the social atmosphere at mail time as many gathered around the wood stove to read their mail. Ornate weight scales and cash registers and very large metal safes with pastoral scenes painted on the doors symbolized the more successful storeowner. Currently, the only mercantile establishment from the early 1900s to retain its original facade in the Rio Culebra, is the Zegob Store. Although they have undergone some modification, many Main Street structures represent the latter periods of significance including the Gallegos-Romero Grocery, the Mondragon-Garcia Mercantile (now a residence), and the Carpenter Hardware store.

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Property Subtype: Hybridized Commercial/Residence

Storekeepers typically situated their residences at the side of their store, with a freestanding warehouse at the rear. By the turn-of-the-century, small storeowners began to combine commercial and residential spaces into one unit. Now a single space housed the store at the front and the residence at the rear, with an interior wall and doorway to separate functions. Some businessmen added an elongated enclosed rear porch to connect the residence to the store while others used a common wall to construct a space to the side. Hybridized Commercial/Residence included grocery and hardware stores, barber and beauty shops, liquor stores and other buildings which are currently unused or have other functions.



Hybridized Commercial/Residence

In the 1940s, the Hybridized Commercial/Residence underwent a revitalization and merchants constructed structures so that a second story housed the residence with the business below. While second story Commercial/Residence construction promoted the use of cement block for the core, the Spanish Pueblo Revival elements present in their facades unified the street-scape. Hybrid buildings include a range of styles from the adobe vernacular of Grandma Tere's Grocery (now a bed & breakfast), to the two-story Spanish Pueblo Revival motif of the Pena/Mesa Clinic and Drug Store and, the most diverse, the Streamline Modern façade of the San Luis Company.

Property Subtype: Filing Stations and Auto Body Shops

Because both filling stations and auto body shops evolved in an era when steel sash casement windows, multi-glazed panel overhead garage doors, grease racks, concrete, and steel trusses became available, many owners experimented with these innovations. For example the first significant building to use a barrel roof with curvilinear capped parapet was the SPMDTU lodge hall at San Luis. Late in the 1930 and again in the 1940s, filling stations and auto body shops replicated the hall's roofline, stylized parapet, and cement stucco over the adobe exterior. In a similar fashion to residences constructed late in the 1920s and the 1940s, some gas stations incorporated Spanish Pueblo Revival details in their facades. Currently, filling stations/auto body shops using the Spanish Pueblo Revival mode have stepped parapets along their sides and flat roofs. All filling stations have cement stuccoed exteriors, steel casement

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Auto Body Shop

windows with concrete sills, and asymmetrically placed service doors. The best examples of historic filling stations and auto body shops are in San Luis. The oldest filling station (under the ownership of the same family) and the first filling station to replicate the bowstring arch truss used by the lodge hall was the San Luis Garage and later the Auto Body Vocation School (currently a garage). A good example of Spanish Pueblo Revival motif is the Speedway Garage, Salazar's Station (now office for GT Trash), and Hillside Auto Body Shop.

Significance

The early development of agriculture by the Rio Culebra villagers helped to establish the economy of the region. The small village stores were likewise instrumental in promoting the commercial growth of Costilla County and the San Luis Valley. The *pobladores* of the Rio Culebra participated in the export economy of the San Luis Valley by the raising of sheep for export, wheat for flour, and grains for stockmen. Increased trading stimulated construction of commercial spaces. Mercantile establishments were not merely places to purchase goods but spaces to socialize, receive mail, and exchange news. Early commercial structures signified the prosperity of the economy and the influence of the newly arrived Anglos in their styles and in the use of processed building materials such as milled lumber, glass, and interior tin ceilings. By the turn-of-the-century, the basic freestanding mercantile form evolved into a single story Commercial/Residential Hybrid. Beginning in the 1920s, this form prompted second story construction and the use of cement block. By the 1920s, businesses catering to the automobile began to derive new building forms, combining adobe with manufactured materials and incorporating new designs, new rooflines, and stylized front and side parapets. Commercial structures are historically significant under Criterion A because these spaces were pivotal to the development of the early agricultural economy of the San Luis Valley and to the establishment and commercial evolution of San Luis. The interrelationship between the older mercantile establishments, the commercial hybrid, filling stations, and auto body shops reflect the transformation of San Luis's Main Street into a modern streetscape and the continuum of the period of significance. The stores are architecturally significant under Criterion C for embodying the style, form, and methods of construction that emerged during the late nineteenth century. Specialty shops appearing in the twentieth century are likewise significant under Criterion C as they demonstrate how second story construction and the use of industrial components

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combined with Spanish Pueblo Revival motifs to form a Hispano streetscape. Garages and auto body shops are also significant under Criteria A because they represent commercial forms emerging during the introduction of motorized vehicles into Southern Colorado. The garages and auto body shops are architecturally significant under Criterion C since they reflect how traditional adobe construction responded to the automobile by absorbing modernistic designs and components.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for listing, commercial properties must have been constructed before 1949 and be good and intact examples of the local vernacular commercial building traditions and trends in later periods of significance. Buildings must reflect design and continuity of common patterns as well as their original siting and relationship to other structures, and reinforce historical street patterns. Although minor changes that may have occurred with time are acceptable, properties are eligible only if they are recognizable to their period of significance and retain their original plan. If there are excessive street-facing alterations because of contemporary construction or if a design embellishment of the storefront obliterates the dating to the period of significance, the structure will not be eligible

**Name of Property Type: VERNACULAR CHURCHES, PARISH COMPOUND, AND RELIGIOUS/
FRATERNAL BUILDINGS OF THE RIO CULEBRA BASIN**

The religious and social convictions of the *pobladores* of the Rio Culebra have sustained the villages of the Rio Culebra through 150 years of development. In the first years of establishment, a lay confraternity of males dedicated to mutual aid preserved moral norms until priests arrived. Soon after, visiting priests periodically led worship services in village churches until the founding of a parish. After the appointment of resident priests the parish developed a self-reliant compound complete with church, day chapel, rectory, convent, school, and training center. In 1900, a fraternal organization with religious overtones continued to support the community in times of intense racial discrimination. Churches and the parish compound, in combination with confraternity and fraternal spaces, all contributed to the well being of the community. Despite the variety of architectural detailing and siting, the religious and secular vernacular structures served a common function. Consequently, this narrative will merge significance and registration requirements for all subtypes into one discussion.

Description

Since maintaining the plaza was a labor-intensive endeavor, *pobladores* could not construct churches in the first years. Despite these constraints, the *pobladores* were very religious. The first documented formal religious space was a simple *jacal*, constructed at San Pedro by 1859. Within a few years most villages had churches. Single nave churches in this early period were simple flat-roofed *jacals*. With the founding of the Sangre de Cristo Parish in 1886, French priests constructed the first modern church in San Luis. This large space incorporated Gothic Revival detailing into an adobe façade. Through the addition of steeples and pitched roofs, the architectural emphasis shifted from simple and

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horizontal to vertical and complex. After 1894, the single nave was altered into a cruciform plan common to both the Spanish-Mexican tradition and the Gothic Revival. While most churches retained the simple single nave form, those in the larger villages replicated the San Luis model after the older churches underwent remodeling or were destroyed by fires.

The most complex parish construction projects were undertaken in San Luis. Beginning in the 1890s, the priests renovated a house in San Luis into a rectory and constructed a self-sufficient parish compound complete with a rock carriage house, ice house, *granero* with interior storage bins, hen house, and barn. In 1904, the pastor completed a two-story convent, or *convento*, as a residence for the Sisters of Mercy and to house a school. Eventually, the parish built a freestanding two-story high school. By the 1920s the priests decided to add a linear, single nave chapel at the side of the rectory.

In post-World War II, the pastor undertook several ambitious projects that revolutionized religious spaces in Costilla County. This included construction of four mission churches, a grade school, and a small training center. In addition, the pastor constructed a new rectory and day chapel at the rear of the central church. With the exception of the three mission churches, all projects are in the area under study. While the old high school and the mission at San Francisco were destroyed, the parish restored the old convent and the mission at Viejo San Acacio. Additionally, the pastor undertook aggressive maintenance of all mission churches, the grade school, and the training center. Currently, these properties are either within or very near the period of significance.

From the onset of establishment, lay groups operating outside of the formal institutional framework of the Catholic Church helped organize the community in the absence of priests. Foremost was the older lay confraternity of *Penitentes*, founded in New Mexico sometime at the end of the eighteenth or early in the nineteenth century. After 1900, the SPMDTU, a modern fraternal order, helped to augment social and economic aspects of the community. The *Penitentes* were strictly religious and focused on Lenten observances and provided mutual aid in times of death. In contrast, the SPMDTU offered insurance benefits, organized the community to combat racism, and sponsored social functions. Although both groups do not have the levels of membership enjoyed in the past, *moradas* and two lodge halls date to the period of significance.

Property Subtype: Vernacular Churches and Parish Compound

Early churches in the Culebra villages were about sixteen feet in width and at least twice as long as residential rooms. Although early religious spaces were low-profiled and domestic-like in scale, their siting on high ground, massiveness, and the use of a glazing indicate the central importance of the church. The mission of Viejo San Acacio is a model of the early churches of the Rio Culebra and typical of nineteenth century northern New Mexico village churches. Like the earlier Franciscan plan, Mission San Acacio is an east-facing single nave with 24-inch adobe walls, an indented entry, and lacks a tower incorporated into the façade. Originally constructed with a flat roof, Mission San Acacio once had an over-head transverse clerestory to light the altar, a distinct innovation used in early New Mexico mission architecture. Today, San Acacio is the oldest continually used non-Amerindian religious space in Colorado. In contrast, most adobe missions emulate the Gothic Revival innovations introduced at the central church at San Luis including pointed arched windows and doors with tracery, centered entry

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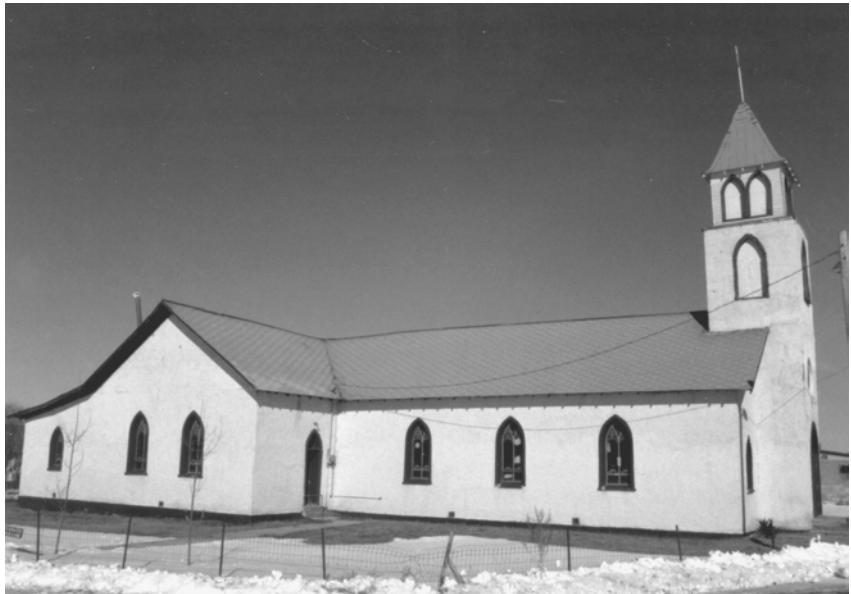
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tower(s) constructed into an adobe core, and steep gabled roof. While designs vary, San Isidro is an example typical of smaller churches. Constructed of adobe this structure has a rectangular plan, gabled roof, single hung windows, wood shake shingles, and a belfry with a pyramid roof. An example of later church construction departing from the norm is the San Francisco Church. Constructed of concrete block this rectangular plan has metal single-pane casement windows, gabled roof with metal panel roofing, and crenellated parapet at twin belfry towers.

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Vernacular Church: St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Church

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The parish compound has several significant structures aside from the central church. Foremost is the two story adobe *convento*. The *convento* has double-hung windows throughout, an open wooden porch with Doric columns, wood shingled hipped roof with intersecting front facing gable, and cupola with bell. The rectory addition and day chapel are built entirely of brick with double bands of patterned

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work at base and upper levels. The two-story rectory has multiple entryways with decorative fenestration, brick pilasters, and curvilinear parapets. The most prominent feature is a red clay tile roof.

Property Subtype: Moradas

The *Confradia de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, also known as *Los Hermanos Penitentes*, as it developed in northern New Mexico reflects colonial folk religious customs of the region. In the absence of priests, the practices of the lay brotherhood of *los hermanos* were essential to the establishment of the Rio Culebra. The *penitentes* constructed meeting houses, or *moradas*, in remote sites to ensure secrecy of their practices. In addition to carrying out their religious customs, the *penitentes* functioned as a social organization, often providing aid to families, especially during a death. Located in all of the Rio Culebra villages, *moradas* replicated the designs, layout, and floor plans customary to *moradas* in New Mexico. Today the *penitentes* of Costilla County have declined to an estimated 40 active members in four councils. Nevertheless, the *moradas* remain an important socio-religious feature within the cultural landscape of the area. Generally, *penitentes* sited their *moradas* in remote areas at the outskirts of the villages. Their location was in proximity to an area that functioned as a pathway, or *calvario*, leading to a cross used for processions during Holy Week. The one-to-three room *moradas* were domestic in scale and in appearance. Typically plans were linear-single file configuration with a chapel, a dining/meeting room, and ritual space for observances. All *moradas* in the villages used adobe construction, flat roofs, and minimal window openings covered with wooden shutters for privacy. When pitched roofs became fashionable, many chapters added a belfry and cross to distinguish the *morada* from village dwellings.

While there are four active councils in Costilla County, the San Francisco *morada* reflects the New Mexican ideal, has the most original features, and is the longest used.



SPMDTU Hall: Chama

Property Subtype: SPMDTU Lodge Halls

The *Sociedad Proteccion Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos* (SPMDTU) is a Hispano union-type secular organization based on the "*Sociedad Proteccion Mutua Por Ley y Orden*" (a New Mexican fraternal organization) and the Minor Order of Saint Francis (a Catholic lay society). Often SPMDTU lodges mirror *moradas* in their use of adobe construction, domestic in scale, and their role in housing community gatherings. However, unlike *moradas*, SPMDTU structures did not have

shuttered windows, interior prayer spaces, nor were they located in isolation. Because the SMPDTU sponsored social functions, the size of the building related to the size of membership. An example of a small chapter house is the single room building at Chama. In contrast, the founding chapter in San Luis is a prominent two-story adobe structure. Constructed in 1927, the San Luis SPMDTU building is one of

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two lodges in the San Luis Valley functioning as a community center for dancing, sports events, and family gatherings. This building influenced design trends along Main Street as it introduced the barrel roof, steel trusses, and curvilinear front. Unfortunately, because of a decline in membership, the SMPDTU hall at Chama is vacant. In contrast, while the SPMDTU building at San Luis is privately owned, it is still maintained and continues to function as a social space for weddings, dances, and other gatherings.

Significance

Churches embody the cultural and historic roots of the Hispano early settlers of Costilla County. Because of their early dates of construction, these structures are significant for Colorado as symbolic reminders of the central role that religion held in the lives of the longest non-Amerindian settlements in the state. Likewise, religious spaces reflect how Hispano vernacular traditions, under the influence and aesthetic preferences fostered by the French-hierarchy of the Catholic Church, merged together in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Currently, since churches (along with irrigation associations) form the core of Hispano village life, they reflect the continuity of community organizations fostering inter-group cooperation. The parish compound itself is significant as a model of community self-reliance through time. Taken together, the parish compound and mission churches mirror the evolution of a diversity of architectural styles, materials, and designs in all periods of significance. Since the *Penitentes* are a lay religious organization rendering mutual aid to villagers to compensate for the limited religious and governmental support, *moradas* represent the tendency of Hispanos to maintain group cohesion in a frontier settlement. The SPMDTU continued the legacy of group self-sufficiency through mutual aid. Since the SPMDTU members adapted a traditional building form to new construction and designs, their meeting halls exemplify how a social center influenced design trends after the turn-of-the-century.

The religious properties, *moradas*, and SPMDTU lodge halls of the Rio Culebra are noteworthy examples of building types that served the spiritual as well as the social needs of one of Colorado's oldest non-Amerindian settlements. As such, they qualify under Criteria A and C. The normal National Register exception that prohibits the registration of properties on purely religious grounds does not apply because of the broader cultural significance of churches and *moradas* in the establishment of Colorado's Hispano village enclaves. In addition, churches and *moradas* were important social and social centers not merely religious structures. They also reveal information about the evolution of religious vernacular architecture structures, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and therefore may qualify under National Register Criterion D.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for listing churches, *moradas*, and SPMDTU lodges must have been constructed before 1949. Because of their age, most structures have undergone alterations as a result of typical maintenance practices including the addition of concrete aprons at the base, cement plaster finishes, buttresses at corners, wood shingles, asphalt, or metal roofing, and insertion of ornate stained glass windows. In their present state they must retain their original form and be recognizable to the period of

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their construction. Because only a few of these significant buildings were built, most remaining examples should qualify.

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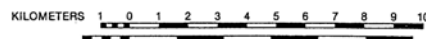
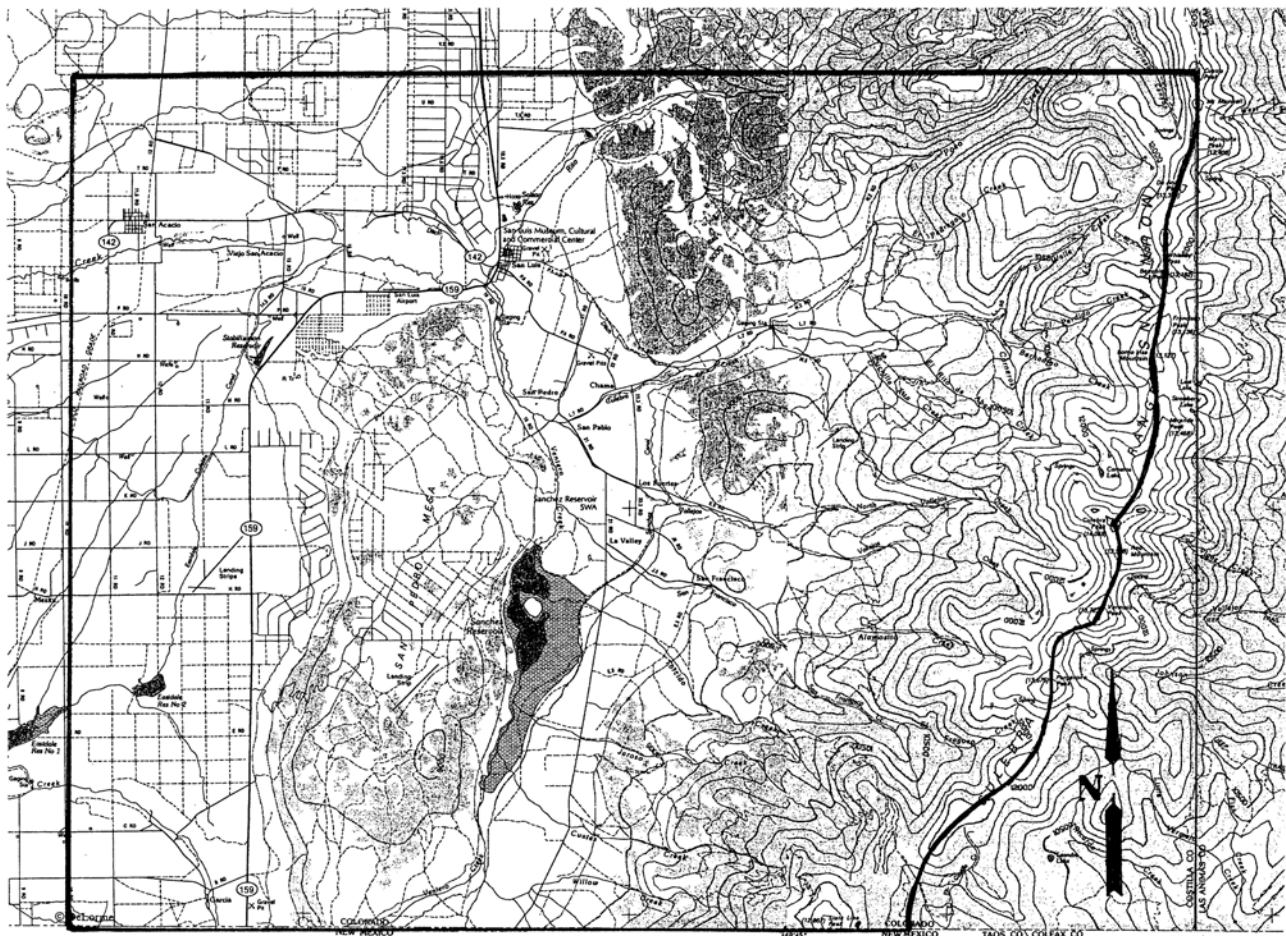
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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

The geographic area of the San Luis Historic District and the surrounding Rio Culebra Villages encompasses the southeastern section of Costilla County beginning at the boundary of the Costilla and Trinchera Estates and extending south to the Colorado-New Mexico state line. This area includes most of Townships 1, 2, and 3 North and Ranges 69, 70, 71, and 72 West. The total area is approximately 440 square miles. The approximate boundaries are shown on the map below.



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SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The multiple property context listing for the Rio Culebra Villages of Costilla County, Colorado, is founded upon 1990 survey of sixty structures in Viejo San Acacio, San Pablo, San Pedro, Chama, San Francisco, La Cordillera, and Los Fuertes. The survey results of the 1990 study became the basis for "The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County: Village Architecture and Its Historical Context, 1851-1949." Published in August 1991, this study was compiled by Valdez and Associates, under the auspices of the Colorado Historical Society/Office Archeology and Historic Preservation. Chris Wilson, architectural historian from Albuquerque, New Mexico, provided peer review for the 1990 context. A 1992 thesis by Arnold Valdez entitled "Hispanic Vernacular Architecture and Settlement Patterns of the Culebra River Villages of Southern Colorado 1850-1950," also mentored by Chris Wilson, expanded the 1990 research. The measured drawings, historic photos, maps, and descriptions in the Valdez thesis was a foundation for expanding research on the Culebra villages. During 1998-2000, Valdez and Associates conducted an additional survey of 128 historic structures, 17 miscellaneous cultural landscape features, and three farmsteads in and around San Luis. Maria Mondargon-Valdez, Doctoral Candidate from the University of New Mexico Department of American Studies, wrote a new and expanded historical narrative for the multiple property context. Dr. David Kammer, architectural historian from Albuquerque, New Mexico, provided peer review for the context.

After a decade of primary historical research on the architecture in the study area, Valdez and Associates has identified broad themes and chronological periods that most accurately describes the evolution of the build environment of the Rio Culebra. These periods of significance identify various social, economic, and technical influences that reconfigured vernacular traditions in southern Costilla County.

Research documents for the multiple property context are from collections housed at the Colorado Historical Society Stephen H. Hart Library; the Denver Public Library (Western History Section); Colorado State Archives; Adams State College special collections; University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research; New Mexico Records Center and Archives; and, the Museum of New Mexico photo archives.

New sources for primary research in the context include 130 deeds from 1863-4; an itemized accounting of properties completed in 1894 known as Book E; a sampling of notations from record books located in the Clerk and Records Office at the Costilla County Courthouse; various maps produced between 1894-1913 and assessment records located in the County Assessors Office at the Costilla County Courthouse; and historic photos from private and public collections. Several oral histories taken for the 1990 and 1998-2000 survey helped to elaborate the context. Secondary references include published genealogies on local families and a parish baptismal and marriage registry. Historical publications, thesis and dissertations, and relevant architectural contexts from Colorado and New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office aided in the development of the multiple property analysis.

The goal of the multiple property context is to provide the Office of Archeology and Preservation with a foundation for including Hispanic Vernacular categories in its Lexicon Tables. This context is also intended to encourage implementation of preservation planning and to stimulate nomination of qualified properties to the National Register of Historic Places.

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