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CONEJOS COUNTY.

IRRIGATION.

The first concern of the original settlers of Conejos county was to secure water for irrigation and concurrently with the building plans for the first adobe cabins irrigation ditches were laid out and excavated. The Guadalupe ditch, with forty-eight co-owners, was located March 1, 1855. The Conejos mill ditch, by Major Lafayette Head, for both power and irrigation purposes, was located two months later. Ditches, both large and small, have been located since then, numbering about 200.

The early exhaustion of the streams by direct-flow rights disclosed the needs for storage of water from the early summer runoff from melting mountain snows and various reservoir projects were initiated. The first successful effort was in the construction of the Cove Lake reservoir by the Toltec Canal Co. in 1891, located seven miles southeast of Antonito, with a capacity of 6,700 acre-feet of water, and taking its supply from the San Antonio river.

In 1894 two small sites on Elk creek were filed upon and surveyed by George W. Pearce but they were never developed. In 1906 the same two sites were appropriated by local farmers, organized as the Union Reservoir Co., including Albert R. Smith, Joseph F. Thomas, Zeph Chas. Felt, W. H. Barlow and others, who also filed upon a basin on the east side of Mogote peaks, calculating water diversion from the Conejos river, but these were never financed.

Also in 1906 Antoine Jacob, a resident of Conejos county and graduate from the Colorado Agricultural College, backed by the late Judge Charles D. Hayt, surveyed a site on the Conejos river twenty-two miles west of Antonito, and made application to the U. S. government for a right-of-way for the construction of a dam with a capacity of 100,000 acre-feet of water, on the public domain. The filing was rejected on the grounds that it menaced the supply of water granted Mexico under a treaty which resulted in the construction of the Elephant Butte dam on the Rio Grande river, the provisions of which were enforced by an embargo declared against any further appropriation of water from the Rio Grande and its tributaries. The embargo was raised in 1926 by Dr. Hubert Work, secretary of the Interior, the Jacob filing was restored under petition of the Conejos Water Users' Ass'n but owing to disputes which developed in the meantime between the States of Colorado, New Mexico and Texas over the use of the water the project was held in abeyance pending a settlement of the disputes by compact to be consummated in 1935.

On November 19, 1904 the ~~Harvey~~ reservoir, with a capacity of 3,666 acre-feet of water, was projected by John Harvey on the La Jara river but was never developed.

W. A. Braiden and W. O. Meier made filings on the La Jara river for a reservoir on December 13, 1904. Before there was time for further development on either of the two projects John Harvey

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I r r i g a t i o n

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made a new filing, January 19, 1905, for a reservoir with a capacity of 15,000 acre-feet. This latter is probably the location of the reservoir built by the La Jara Meadows Land & Reservoir Co, E. R. Stark, president, in 1906. It passed into the ownership of a joint stock company of farmers in the vicinity of La Jara.

In 1908 the San Luis Valley Irrigation, Light & Power Co. constructed a reservoir on the Alamosa river, with a capacity of 17,700 acre-feet of water, primarily to irrigate land in the Terrace Irrigation district which was organized at that time.

During a long period of years prior to 1910 natural springs developed below the foot-hills six miles west of La Jara, presumably from a subteranean flow from the Conejos river, with a flow of about forty second-feet, and were filed upon by farmers who appropriated the water to valuable farm lands.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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CAPULIN.

The first settlement of Capulin, (chokecherry, when translated into English) dates back to 1867. Its founders were originally from the vicinity of Ojo Caliente, N. M., though many of them came in the earliest days of the settlement to Guadalupe. These settlers selected lands beginning at the point of settlement and extending eight or ten miles up the Alamosa river. Juan Gomez, Tomas Sanchez, Diego Abeyta and Antonio Tafoya were among the first settlers.

Among those who arrived within the next few years were the parents of J. Luis Rivera and Asisclo Gonzales, present residents, who became prominent stockgrowers of the community, both of whom became prominent in politics and served upon the board of county commissioners. Mr. Rivera connected himself with banking and other business life in the town of La Jara.

Juan Gomez installed the first flour mill in the community six miles west of Capulin on the Alamosa river, using water power and millstones made by hand.

Hipolito Romero was the first merchant of Capulin and served as a county commissioner in the '80s. Another early merchant in the community was Wm. Rutledge who operated a store east of the settlement.

J. Luis Rivera and Emilio Girard platted South Capulin in 1909. An imposing modern Catholic church is conspicuous on this addition.

Large herds of sheep were acquired by many of the settlers and general farming developed.

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SAN LUIS VALLEY STAKE OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER DAY SAINTS.

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The inception of the settlement of the Mormon colony, which became a strong factor in the development of Conejos county, originated in the report of three soldiers who were mustered out at Santa Fe in 1847 and headed north through the San Luis valley for Pueblo. The soldiers who were enrolled in Iowa or Illinois were adherents of the Mormon church and reported the wonderful attractions of the great basin at the head of the Rio Grande river to Brigham Young, president of the church. In seeking a location for their increasing numbers, investigations of this region during following years resulted in the emigration of a colony of seventy-two persons from Georgia and Alabama, under the leadership of John Morgan, which chartered an emigrant train over the Santa Fe railroad and arrived in Pueblo in the fall of 1877. Here they constructed temporary headquarters for the winter. In the following spring they arrived in Conejos county and secured lodging from the native settlers at Los Cerritos plaza, about three miles southeast of the site finally selected for the town of Manassa.

Of this original colony there survives in 1934 Mrs. Annie Kaneaster, Mrs. Victoria Hamnicutt and Hugh L. Sellers.

Bishop Hans Jensen, a man experienced in pioneer development and irrigation, was sent from Utah to direct the first work of the new settlement. The town of Manassa was laid out and construction work began.

In choosing locations a group of families, including among others, those of John L. Reed, Hans Heiselt and Peter Poulson, in addition to that of Peter Rasmussen, established a settlement, named Ephraim, four miles northeast of Manassa, and Peter Rasmussen was appointed their first bishop.

Richfield, seven miles north of Manassa on La Jara river, was chosen as the site for another settlement and Thors N. Peterson was appointed bishop. Thomas Crowther, John Shawcroft, Peter Guymon, S. C. Berthelsen were among the first settlers of the community.

The sites of these two settlements did not prove entirely satisfactory and, with the exception of a few families who remained at Richfield, the people consolidated on a site named Sanford midway between the two. Bishop Peterson was transferred to the new location and assumed leadership in laying out and constructing the Sanford, Richfield and Ephraim irrigating ditches.

In 1880, through the aid of State Senator Jose A. Garcia, two sections of state land were purchased at 80¢ per acre, John F.

Vivian was then register of the State Land Board. The price was a compromise between 50¢ offered and \$1.00 asked.

The several wards having been established, the whole was organized as a stake in 1883, with Silas S. Smith, Jr. as the first president, Manassa having been the first ward organized, with Wm. L. Ball the first bishop and Daniel L. Sellers as the first presiding elder.

In 1895 a large stake house was completed at Manassa to supplement the old log church constructed in 1878 and in 1932 a new and handsome brick chapel arose to adorn the site of the old log structure.

The Mormon settlement embraces approximately two townships, though many families neighbor over the county with gentiles and catholics.

Many families gave attention to fruit growing early in the development of the colony and produced apples and berries for family use. These early endeavors resulted in the prolific production of strawberries, raspberries, siberian crabs and apples.

The flour mill which served the community was established with water power on the Conejos river near Los Cerritos in 1879 by T. A. Lawrence who brought the stones from Rome, Georgia.

During the early years of the colony and through succeeding years the young men sought work at Leadville and other mining camps and engaged in freighting and operating sawmills in the neighboring mountain forests and in railroad tie camps to gain funds to develop the homes and farms.

Great tribute is due those sturdy, persevering, unflinching pioneers who hewed their own success through a barricade of hardship and difficulty.

S. S. Smith, first president of the stake, gave to the community seven sons and six daughters who perpetuate a genealogy that connects with Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. One of the sons, Albert R. served the stake as its president and left a name that is revered as is perhaps none other during his time.

In 1882 came Christen Jensen from Utah. He led a prominent life until his passing at the age of 92 years and left a family of four sons and eight daughters to perpetuate a family of strong character.

George, Kenis R. and Troy are three dependable citizens who survive their father, George Sowards, who joined the colony in 1883.

The largest family representation in the colony is in the descendants of James H., Thomas W. and P. W. Depriest, three brothers who came in 1883, and did their part in community service.

#### M A N A S S A .

The seat of the San Luis Valley stake(parish) of the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, developed typically as a community of agriculturalists who were devoted to their farms, church and education. After the first arrivals no time was lost in securing a post office. Peter Allen was the first postmaster. The mail came to Conejos by stage and was carried to Manassa twice a week by George Elledge who made the 20-mile round trip usually on foot.

In the midst of home development the stake house, chapel, tithing office, district, high and grade schools, seminary and opera house made their appearance. A prosperous bank, the Colonial State, was established in 1912. A flouring mill, established by Brady & Sons and a cheese factory, a Frink concern, came in as leading industries. The first general store was established by Joseph Morgan and other mercantile houses were established as the community demanded.

The town was incorporated in 1899 with L. M. Peterson as its first mayor. S. S. Smith, R. H. Beers, John Morgan, Nelson T. Sowards, W. T. Dotson and Hiram B. Schofield comprised the remainder of the board of trustees.

Most of the farmers established their homes in the town for convenience to schools and church and the development of Manassa merely reflects the development history of the stake as a whole.

Succession of the presidency passed from S. S. Smith, first president, to his son, Albert R. and then through Levi P. Helm, E. S. Christensen, H. S. Harris, W. O. Crowther, James P. Jensen and the present incumbent, John B. Reed.

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Manassa, Colorado.

Jan; 23<sup>rd</sup> 1935.

The State Historical Society  
Of Colorado.

Dear Sirs:

Your communication addressed to the Post Master Of Manassa a few days ago, was handed me, with request to answer; Of which I assure you I take pleasure in doing so. With reference to the name of our town it came about and was named as follows.

In the spring of 1878 a company of Latter Day Saints, better known possibly as "Mormons" mostly from the States of Georgia and Alabama, made temporary settlement on the bottom lands at or near the village of Los Cerritos, in Conejos County and State of Colorado. Which is about three miles south east of the town of Manassa.

A location committee was arranged consisting Hans Jensen, John Allen and Lawrence M. Petersen. After careful consideration of this part of the country the place to day known as Manassa was selected, which was on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1879.

The Name for the new town of course had to be considered. From scriptural reference as also local evidence; it was found that the natives which afterwards became the colonists neighbors was an extraction of The Spaniards and Indian, the latter However: being much degenerated, although once a very high civilized nation or people and with out doubt of ancient Isreal and evidently direct decendents of Manasseh the oldest son of Joseph who was sold int bondage.

There fore the town was named in honor of the fore father of these people, calling Manasseh but spelling it M A N A S S A,.

Giving all credit to the location committee. It is however suggested that. A man by name of John Z. Stewart who was present earlier, and was a scout and very well acquainted with Central America Old Mexico and talked the Spanish or Mexican language well. He might of made the suggestion to call the town MANASSA.

I am delighted to give you the above infotmation, hoping it will be satisfactory. Any time I can help in any historical way of any thing pertaining to the Colony I assure you it will be a pleasure.

I am scincerely and very Respectfully

  
G. Wayne Rogers

Historian of the Manassa Colony for many years.

MANASSA COLORADO.

March 7 1935.

State Historical Society

Denver, Colorado.

I am pleased to have been of some service to my country and home town Manassa in sending into you a little history.

Now as you ask for more historical facts incident to names of physical conditions etc.; I just thought as I have just sent you the history wanted as to how Manassa was named. Los Cerritos lying about three miles south east of Manassa is an old land mark. And naturally is a kind of foster mother to Manassa. It was on the banks of the conejos river near the villige of Los Cerritos the first colonists camped in 1878 previous to locating Manassa in 1879.

I have visited the oldest living decedents of those who have a right to know the beginning of Los Cerritos. In the summer of 1845 The families of Rafael Garcia, Atanacio Trujillo and Ignacius Trujillo (brothers) from Ambudo New Mexico camped with their sheep, Goats, cattle and ponies in the river bottoms near some little hills where at one time was quite a villige and it was named by these early settlers Los Cerritos. Which means in English Little Hills. A catholic church was established early in the villige and filled its mission faithfully. 1926 the old Church was pulled down and a more modern building now takes its place. Not many people live in the place now but in the surrounding valley are quite a number of families who no doubt will live and keep Los Cerritos on the Map indefinantly.

Another instance of history which I never have seen in print is a story which is told by the oldest settlers, and of which I take pride in sending you. I have talked with the old settlers about the incident for over forty years, but just recently I visited and talked with Mrs Victor Garcia and Mr Crecincia Salazar each of these old timers are nearing their nintyeth mile stone in this life, and seem to have clear keen memory and their stories harmonize perfectly as well as to the general stories told. So I believe the story is just about as correct as it is possible to obtain from living memories that far away from the incident.

The Story goes as fallows (In the summer of 1858 there was lots of Indians in the country. They were of different tribes and clans. The Utes seemed to have the strengest hold in the country, but the Kiowas seemed to claim certain hunting and herding grounds. These two factions got into a terrible fight over boundary lines. They faught and the Kiowas got the worst of the battle. This war was supposed to be in what is known to us as the La Isla Country in Conejos Co near the State line between Colorado and New Mexico. The Kiowas ran for their lives east across a sand deseret towards the Rio Grande river towards ~~the~~ what is known as the State Iron Bridge. about a mile of the river which would be west of the Bridge is a small round hill and lies south afew yards or rods of the present High Way. This hill is about two hundred feet higher than the road. These fleeing Kiowas ran ontop of this hill for protection, but the Utes surrounded the hill which is between a half mile and a mile around the hill. Here they guarded the Kiowas and starved them to death estimated about two hundred men women and children. It is said three men got a way but that is just supposition. This hill has ever since been called KIOWA CERRO and is frequently refered to as the hill where the Kiowas was starved to death by the utes. The writer was on this hill not many years ago and ividences of the incident could at that time easily be subst-anciated by fragments of human bones which could be picked up as souvenirs of this ancient war.

Farnestly Submitted By G. WAYNE ROGERS

Manassa, Colorado.

(Historian Manassa Colony)



CONEJOS COUNTY.

R o m e o .

On October 30, 1899 a plat of the town of Romero was filed with the Clerk and Recorder of Conejos county by the Romero Town Co., Zeph Chas. Felt, president. Because of there being another post office of the same name, which created confusion in handling mail the name was changed to "Romeo" and the filing in the office of the county recorder was amended accordingly in August, 1901.

The Denver & Rio Grande Ry. Co. maintained a siding at the location, midway between Antonito and La Jara, for the convenience of the meagrely settled community and for the Town of Manassa three miles inland. It was designated by a signboard, "Sunflower," appropriately located on the right-of-way, and the Sunflower post office was established at the nearby residence of a homesteader.

Zeph Chas. Felt, an eastern investor and developer speculator from the vicinity of Boston, Mass., acquired a considerable acreage of partially developed farm land in the vicinity either by direct purchase or by tax title and laid out the town. The Town Company built a neat and attractive hotel with creditable conveniences and interested an enterprising merchant, C. S. Birkins, of Idaho Springs, Colorado, who gave the town a large general supply store under the firm name of the Romeo Stores Co. The place became a good marketing and shipping point, with adequate depot and livestock and produce shipping yards.

At the exact location where the railroad company in earlier years planted the "Sunflower" side-track marker the Romeo Town Co. erected an elaborate bulletin board bearing the slogan, "Watch Romeo Grow, The Land of Peas, Pork, Potatoes and Plenty."

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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Antonito.

Had there been amicable adjustments between property owners at Conejos and vicinity and the Denver & Rio Grande Ry. Co. upon the arrival of its engineers in 1880 as to rights-of-way, etc., the biography of an Antonito, Colo. would probably never have been written. Upon failure of the railroad company to get desired concessions at Conejos the company established its own town half-way between the Conejos and San Antonio rivers, one mile from Conejos, and made it the junction point of the Durango branch and the southern line, which it was alleged, was headed for the western coast.

An election to incorporate Antonito was held on Nov. 3, 1889 under the supervision of a commission, consisting of J. J. Corlett, D. G. Campbell, A. B. Wright, George Riedel and John Eagan, carried unanimously. The railroad shipping point of Antonito gradually attracted commerce from the old town of Conejos until the town was marked only by a handsome court house, the historic old church, a creditable school house and a few surrounding residences.

The town of Antonito became the basic point of relationship with New Mexico on the south, and entrance to the Conejos river avenues which lead to the vast grazing domain of the Rio Grande national forest, to the mining region of Platoro, the wonderful recreational retreats along the stream and its tributary lakes and creeks, and over Cumbres pass via. highway No. 17 into the domain of the San Juan basin. It became the base of operations of vast herds of sheep and cattle that range the surrounding mountains and became the center of a rich agricultural region

The pioneer merchant of Antonito was George Riedel and the Colleton house was the first hostelry, both established in 1880. The first newspaper in the town was the Antonito Sentinel, published by Jesse Lewis. It passed in 1889 and in 1892 the field was appropriated by the Antonito Ledger, published by J. D. Frazey. The first place of worship was the Presbyterian church, erected in 1867 under the supervision of a committee, of which Rev. F. M. Gilchrist was president, appointed by the Pueblo presbytery. The first minister was R. E. L. Hays, a student at the Presbyterian seminary at Del Norte.

Antonito's first bank was established in 1891 by H. L. McMullan, principally for the convenience of the Toltec Canal Co., which was promoting an irrigation project. In 1910 the Antonito State Bank was organized with George Riedel, T. D. L. Menke, H. F. Jordan, C. E. Smith and Max Buchmann as directors. The Commercial State Bank was established in 1911 with H. F. Jordan, Wm. Neff, W. H. Barlow, T. D. L. Menke, W. D. Carroll and E. Rockhill as directors, and the two concerns subsequently merged in the latter.

Conejos

In 1909 W. H. Barlow who acquired ownership of the Nathan Eldott store at the time of the latter's death, moved the stock to Antonito and merged with George Riedel under the name of Riedel & Barlow.

In 1909 a municipal gravity water system was constructed with an

CONEJOS COUNTY.

Antonito.

abundant supply of water for domestic and fire purposes by means of a pipe line taking water from an underground flow tapped three miles west of the town.

The first school house in Antonito was built in 1881. It was replaced by a more adequate building, a brick structure, in 1889 which was enlarged in 1900. A high school building was erected in 1922.

St. Augustine's catholic church, a neat brick structure was built in 1889 and in 1929 the Theatine Fathers, a Spanish priestly order, erected a handsome rectory in Antonito as the national establishment of the order in the United States. The new order was greeted with satisfaction by the communicants of the entire region who are largely of Spanish extraction.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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Garfield Monument.  
Toltec Gorge.

Toltec gorge is a narrow crack, 980 feet deep, with perpendicular walls in the granite formation, through which Los Pinos creek forges its way from its source in the "Continental Divide." Its location is near the state line between Colorado and New Mexico in the southern part of Conejos county. At the narrowest and deepest point the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad emerges from a tunnel 366 feet long, through a cliff of solid granite and skirts the very edge of the chasm which is guarded by an iron railing. Here, on a projecting point, leveled to a plane with the railroad track, stands the Garfield monument, at an elevation of 9,637 feet above sea level. The monument is cut from granite and stands about seven feet high.

The face fronting on the railroad track bears the following inscriptions:

In Memoriam  
JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD  
President of the United States  
Died September 19, 1881,  
Mourned by all the People.

Erected by the Members of the National  
Association of General Passenger and  
Ticket Agents, who held Memorial Burial  
Services on this spot September 26, 1881.

After holding their annual convention at St. Louis the members of the passenger agents' organization were making a tour of the state of Colorado. They arrived at Toltec gorge at the hour the funeral service for the lamented President was being held in Cleveland, Ohio. It was suggested by Major S. K. Hooper, at that time general passenger agent for the Hannibal & St. Joe line, but three years later holding the same position for the Denver & Rio Grande, that they hold a memorial service at that point. The service was held and a temporary monument of boulders was erected to mark the spot and later the cut stone was erected at the expense of the railroad company and members of the party.

The base of the monument contains a copper box in which was placed the names of the party members, details of the occasion, etc., with newspapers describing the occasion.

9. Toltec gorge is one of the most noted scenic spots of the world.

Not Approved

CONEJOS COUNTY.

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D r a i n a g e :

The sequel to irrigation is drainage, so proven by history thro-  
out all irrigated territory. So, after years of continuous applica-  
tion of water on the surface a considerable portion of land in Co-  
nejos county became seeped and required drainage.

The San Luis Valley Drainage District No. 1, organized in 1912,  
embraces about 4,000 acres of land lying southwest, south and south-  
east of La Jara, which is served by approximately 12 miles of main  
open ditch and 13 miles of covered drain tile.

The Carmel Drainage District was organized in 1912 and embraces  
land in Conejos and Rio Grande counties. Its mileage in Conejos  
county combines about 10 miles of main open ditch and nine miles of  
buried drain tile. The acreage served is approximately 4,000 acres.

The Morgan district, embracing approximately 4,000 acres of land  
north of the Alamosa river and generally west of the D. & R. G. rail-  
road, was organized in 1920. About 13 miles of main open ditch and 18  
miles of buried tile constitutes the project.

✓ The Manassa district was organized in 1921 and embraces a small  
acreage circling Manassa on the north and west. The length of the main  
ditch is but a few miles and but little buried tile was necessary to  
effect the objects of the system, which was primarily to benefit the  
town of Manassa.

An extensive drainage system was constructed in 1921 by the Norton  
Land Co. to drain 11,000 acres of land lying in the northeast corner  
of Conejos county and belonging to the company. The tract was for-  
merly known as the "Excelsior" farm. The system consists of 30 miles  
of main open ditch and 32 miles of buried tile.

The effect of drainage is little less than marvelous. About three  
years is required to allow the seepage to drain off, during which time  
sweet clover is used to "tame" the land, which thereafter, by culti-  
vation becomes very productive.

Some drainage districts projects have proven a financial failure,  
in the first instance, because the bonds issued for construction were  
written to draw interest from date, while there was no production on  
the land and, consequently, no revenue with which to pay interest  
during the "taming" period of the land and the owners were overwhelmed  
by an accumulation of unpaid drainage taxes.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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Live Stock.

Attempts to maintain necessary live stock for domestic purposes by the first settlers were attended by Indian invasions upon the herds and success was limited. It was only by co-operation and strict precaution that any stock was preserved from the marauders.

After removal of the Indians in 1863 there was material increase in goats and milch cows and sheep for wool for mattresses, blankets, etc. Herds of sheep were soon built up and wool and mutton became an industry. The sheep were of inferior grade and scabbies were a serious drawback until about 1905 when the government began a crusade against the infliction and continued the campaign until the flocks were practically clean.

During the period Samuel Jackson & Sons began the business of growing improved breeding stock which found their way into the flocks of the county. Fred Warshauer, the largest operator in the county improved his flocks with sires brought in from Ohio and Kentucky. Conejos county became the leading county in the sheep industry in the State.

From the few and inferior type of pioneer days cattle gradually increased in numbers and quality and the industry in Conejos county won distinction and publicity at the International Stock Show at Chicago in 1900 when a car load of feeders belonging to D. E. Newcomb, of La Jara, took the sweepstakes prize.

A few years later feeders belonging to Russell Bro's won sweepstakes prize at the Western National Stock Show at Denver and again at the Chicago International. During the years that followed the Russell herd continuously won trophies at the two great shows.

As other growers gave better attention J. E. Braiden, John W. Shawcroft, B. J. Reynolds, Barr & Sons, W. A. Braiden, David E. Shawcroft, Tho's Paine, P. Peterson and others in the county produced prize-winning feeders and contributed largely to the feed lots of corn belt states.

During earlier days hog raising was handicapped by lack of marketing facilities. The advent of the D. & R. G. railroad gave relief in 1880. So far as is known, the first car lot of hogs to be shipped from Conejos county belonged to R. H. Beers, of Manassa. The industry increased rapidly, bringing into cultivation many idle acres which were planted in field peas for feeding purposes.

Cholera was destructive but in 1914 a co-operative campaign between the growers and the county commissioners left no trace of the disease in the county.

Conejos county pork popularized itself on the Atlantic coast. As far back as 1907 Los Angeles packers bought 105 car loads here.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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M i n i n g .

The first mining in Conejos county is supposed to have been done by the Indians. The meager proof is in evidence in the turquoise deposits in the eastern part of the county, in the low hills that slope down to the Rio Grande river. About 1890 I. P. King, of Manassa, while searching the hills for metal deposits came upon signs of an ancient excavation that were almost entirely obliterated by erosion, or hidden by design. He investigated and found a deposit of turquoise. Subsequent inquiry among the oldest inhabitants of the region failed to disclose any information as to when the excavations were made.

A very fine quality of turquoise has been found in small quantities but no market has been found for a sufficient quantity to justify extensive operations.

# Prospecting for mineral in Conejos county never attracted notable interest until 1882 when the overflow from the famous Summitville district scattered out among the hills and made the discoveries at Platoro. Jas. A. Kelly, a non-resident at the time but later a permanent fixture in the life of Monte Vista, grubstaked "Porphyry" Oliver who made the Mammoth location, the first in the camp, in 1882. Development work on the property went into the hands of Al. Merline, Riley Patton, and Wm. Teems with no startling results. In 1884 Jim Walker and Andrew Burroughs bought the claim and, with financial aid by W. H. Adams, drove a tunnel into good ore. Rich surface deposits were also found on the claim. Jack McCarty took an option on the claim and sold it to J. M. Hyman, Chas. Hallam and C. J. Hughes, of Aspen, who installed machinery and sunk a shaft. It is said that during the operations of the property, which continued at intervals over a period of years, approximately a half million dollars in ore had been sent to smelters. The property finally found ownership in a group, of which Gerald Hughs, of Denver, was a member. #

The Valley Queen and Valley King were located in 1884 by a prospector, named McGilvry, grubstaked by Chas. M. Scott, of Indiana. Chas. S. Barnes became manager of the group. Machinery was installed and opened up good pay streaks.

The Merrimac claim was located in 1883 by a prospector, named Pat Horan, who was grubstaked by Jerre. Frank, of Alamosa, who organized the Merrimac Mining & Milling Co. Machinery was installed to perform the development work that followed.

The Payrole had been staked upon a rich vein and was bought in 1895 by Charles Axell, of Chicago, who installed machinery. A furnace was erected to smelt the ore and the project was encouraged by others in the camp who erected a charcoal kiln and produced the fuel for the smelter. Lime was brought in by pack animals.

George Gilmore made a very rich strike north of the Merrimac in

CONEJOS COUNTY.

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M i n i n g --- 2 .

1912 but the vein was lost and never recovered.

There was promise of a revival of interest in Platoro in 1913 and the commissioners of Conejos county and the business men of Antonito developed an automobile road into the camp at an expense of \$3,000.00 along the course of the Conejos river.

In 1914 Chas. S. Barnes interested capital to buy a mill and transport it in to treat ore in a claim in Fisher's gulch but the source of the capital failed and the mill was never installed.

Interest was kept alive through succeeding years by a firm faith that the camp would some day prove one of the best ever developed in the State. The ore carries gold and silver, with a small amount of copper.



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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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T o l l   R o a d s .

The western boundary line of Conejos county, the "Continental Divide" and "Back-bone of the Continent," presented a most formidable barrier to transportation between the eastern and western slopes during the days of early development. A foot-path sufficed for the moccasini-footed Indian and the adventurous prospector with his burro pack but as the mining possibilities developed into more definite mining operations in the mountains and habitation increased in the valleys there was a demand for transportation facilities that would not be denied. With limited cash the best that could be accomplished was the worst that could be endured. Toll roads that never paid for the investment or provided funds for their improvement were the only recourse.

On June 1, 1877 the route over which an occasional wagon had negotiated what is now Cumbres pass was appropriated by the Park View & Ft. Garland Freight Road, & Telegraph Co. for a toll road. The incorporators were Tho's B. Catron, Elmer L. Corthell and Wilmot E. Broad. The original filing was in the First Judicial Dist. of New Mexico, John H. Thompson, clerk, and W. G. Ritch, territorial secretary. The filing was recorded in Conejos county, Crescencio Valdez, recorder, April 29, 1878. After the establishment of the San Luis valley stake of the Mormon church this became the common route between Salt Lake City and the new colony. The telegraph line projected in the scheme was never built.

In 1880 a lease on the project was filed at Conejos by J. M. Archuleta, with a notice of intention to locate a toll gate at the crossing of the road at Los Pinos creek (now Osier.) The rates which the law required him to publish ranged from 15¢ for a man on horseback to \$1.75 for a 12-horse team and wagon. The tariff was  $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per head for sheep and 2¢ per head for other loose stock. Controversies over the tolls on stock occasionally developed near-bloodshed.

William Jenkins made a sub-lease with Archuleta in the early '80s and maintained the gate until his death in 1926.

On June 1, 1877 the Conejos, Pagosa Springs & Rio Grande Toll Road Co. filed articles of incorporation at Conejos, Jose B. Romero, recorder, for a toll road following the course of the Alamosa river to the summit and thence down the western slope to the San Juan river and down to Pagosa Springs. The incorporators were Jackson Orr, Chas. A. Brastow, Henry Ford and B. F. Keables. This road passed through the Stunner Mining district.

The Conejos & Adams Camp toll road was incorporated Nov. 26, 1883. The incorporators were Benj. D. Branson, Jefferson D. Branson and Wm. Stewart. This road was projected to give access to Platoro Mining camp. Its first development was at the base of Mogote peaks on the south side of the Conejos river, changing from one side of the river to the other, as was necessary, until it reached Platoro.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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T o l l R o a d s--2

*Completed*

The LeDuc & Sanchez Toll Road Co., by Julius LeDuc, Jose Victor Sanchez and Julian Sanchez, filed articles of incorporation at Conejos July 2, 1884. They appropriated a ford and crossed to the north side of the Conejos river below the mouth of Fox creek and excavated a road at and around the base of the Mogote peaks, followed the mesa into the mouth of the cañon and on to Platoro, generally on the north side of the river. This was adopted as the general course of a survey by J. F. Thomas under an appropriation of \$12,000.00 made by the general assembly of Colorado in 1891 for a wagon road across the range, via. Platoro and Stunner. From Stunner over to the San Juan side of the range the survey was projected by Fred Robinson. No survey was ever made across the high ridge between Platoro and Stunner. As construction could not be accomplished within the appropriation the project was never fulfilled.

On July 14, 1890 the Platoro Toll Road Co., John Palmer, D. K. Tripp, R. B. Wallace, Dan'l Selby and W. H. Graves, filed articles of incorporation for a road from McDonald's ranch on the Alamosa river to Platoro.

The Animas City, Pagosa Springs & Conejos wagon road was incorporated Jan. 6, 1887. The incorporators were C. J. Marsh, J. W. Shaw, Robert James, R. L. Nute and W. E. Earl, all of La Plata county. This project proposed a road from Animas City, via. Florida creek, thence easterly across the Los Pinos, Piedra and San Juan rivers, Pagosa Springs and then by the most feasible route over the range to the Conejos river. The project never succeeded.

After the creation of the state highway commission in 1913 a committee, of which A. L. Moss, Conejos county commissioner, was a member was appointed to investigate and recommend a route over the range to connect the San Luis valley with the San Juan basin. Cumbres, Elwood and Wolf Creek passes were investigated. Elwood pass was agreed upon and a state highway was constructed up the Alamosa river to Stunner. A later change of plans resulted in Wolf Creek pass being finally chosen for the route.

While the Elwood route was being surveyed Lon. Mitchell, county surveyor of Conejos county, was drowned in the turbulent waters of the east fork of the San Juan river.

The U. S. bureau of public roads, the State of Colorado and the commissioners of Conejos county entered into co-operation and constructed highway No. 17 over Cumbres pass in 1924.

Thus the early pioneers who left the old mountain avenues strewn with partial or total disaster were indeed the blazers of ways that were to become the principal State, inter-State and national thoroughfares.

CONEJOS COUNTY.

Railroads.

The records of Conejos county of the year 1878 is evidence of vast possibilities foreseen, presumably, by the promoters of the Denver & Rio Grande Ry. Co. The road was completed to Alamosa (then included in Conejos county) July 4, 1878 and before the first train arrived, figuratively speaking, every mountain pass that appeared as a possible entrance or outlet of the San Luis valley was filed upon for railroad purposes.

On June 4, 1878 articles of incorporation for the Alamosa & State Line railway was filed with the object of a line from Alamosa down the Rio Grande river to the State line. The incorporators were Rob't F. Weitbrec, Hanson A. Risley, Wm. Wagner, Henry McAlister, Jr. and John Harvey.

On June 7, 1878 the Alamosa, San Juan & Pacific Ry. Co. filed articles of incorporation, with Henry McAlister, Jr., Harry Winters, Rob't F. Weitbrec, Hanson Risley and John Harvey as incorporators. It contemplated a line from Alamosa north to Saguache, via. Cochetope pass to Gunnison river, Lake City and Ouray to Salt Lake City. The project included a San Juan division up the Rio Grande river, over Weminuche pass to the Animas river and thence down to its mouth. The Rio Grande Western railway was a line designed from the San Juan division from the mouth of the South fork of the Rio Grande river to the summit of the Continental Divide and down the San Juan river to the west boundary of the State.

The San Luis Park & Western railway was the name of a proposed line from Alamosa up the Alamosa or La Jara river to the summit of the range and down to an intersection with the Rio Grande Western on the San Juan river.

A Conejos & San Juan line was designed to leave the Denver & Rio Grande road at its crossing of the Conejos river and follow the stream to the summit of the Continental Divide and thence down the Navajo or Rio Blanco to intersect the Rio Grande Western.

This vast network of railroad construction was probably contingent upon the development of sufficient mineral to justify the expenditure. With the examples of Leadville, Aspen and Summitville as a basis of calculation, fabulous figuring was not unwarranted. Slightly more than a dozen years later the vast deposits discovered at Creede yielded sufficient returns to have paid for all the construction involved in those gigantic calculations.

CONEJOS COUNTY.

Telephones.

The telephone became a utility in Conejos county in a very small way in 1896, when Antonito and Conejos were connected by a private line promoted by H. H. Russell, at that time county clerk. In 1900 the line was extended to Ortiz by the Conejos County Telephone Co., organized by H. H. Russell, W. D. Carroll and W. C. McGregor. In October of the same year the company was absorbed by the Extension Telephone Co., a corporation organized with a directorate composed of L. A. Morland, W. A. Braiden, Swen Petersen, John C. Dalton, Jacob Spiker, Fred Warshawer and H. H. Russell, which took over the Extension Telephone Co. and extended the service to Manassa, Sanford, La Jara and Capulin. About ten years later the Colorado Telephone Co. acquired the line and connected it with their system which was extended from Alamosa to La Jara

*C. C. Libbey* *Dec 31 1899*

CONEJOS COUNTY.

Indian Wars

In the near vicinity of the stockade erected by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike in 1807 on the Conejos river a battle occurred in the late '50s between the Kiowa, or Crow, and the Ute Indians, in which the Utes were victorious. A year later warriors of the plains tribe again invaded the Conejos domain and another battle ensued.

Legend narates that the invaders were driven to the summit of a small cone-shaped mountain twelve miles east of Antonito, overlooking the Rio Grande river, where a massacre was complete and but one of the invaders escaped.

CONEJOS COUNTY.

Honey  
Production.

(The production of honey in Conejos county began in the early '80s when James McCarroll obtained one stand of bees for the family supply on his ranch on the Conejos river west of Antonito. Some years later Jacob Spiker, of Manassa, collected a few stands and his success was noted by his neighbors, among whom were Jacob Nance and George Sowards who undertook bee culture on a larger scale and in the years that followed increased their colony to 600 stands, from which they furnished a local supply and found a market for their honey in the neighboring towns in the Pan Luis valley. The superiority of their product, from alfalfa and sweet clover, gave it wider fame and attracted the attention of some of the nation's largest producers who established themselves in this favorable environment.)

In 1930 there were approximately 5,000 stands of bees in the county and the annual production of honey was approximately fifteen cars.

The honey is gathered almost exclusively from alfalfa and sweet clover and is without a superior in the markets of the country.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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Major Lafayette Head.

Major Lafayette Head, who led the first settlers into Conejos county became a leader in State and local affairs. At the age of 20 he left his home at Head's Fort, Missouri, as a volunteer in Colonel Price's Missouri regiment to serve in the Mexican war. The war closed before they reached the front and the regiment was detained at Santa Fe to protect the inhabitants from the Indians. He was wounded in the leg by an Indian bullet in the historic "Battle of Taos."

In 1854, with Martino Martin, he headed the colony that settled at Guadalupe. His untiring efforts and diplomacy during the trying times of 1861 were largely responsible for the loyal stand of the native residents and Indians with the Union. For his services he was major of volunteers.

He had served as U. S. marshal in New Mexico and served in the New Mexico legislature, served in the Colorado colonial council and was a member of the Colorado constitutional convention. He was appointed agent for the Utes in 1858, in which capacity he served for ten years. His advice on Indian affairs was considered of great value. The success of Governor Evans in 1863 in negotiating a treaty which assigned the Utes to their location in the southwest corner of the State was promoted by the advice of Major Head. The negotiations were held and the treaty was signed in his residence. He was often called to Denver to advise with the government and war department upon Indian questions.

When Colorado was admitted to statehood Major Head was made lieutenant governor. At the expiration of his term he returned to Conejos and lived a retired life, managing his business affairs, until his death which occurred at Denver on March 8, 1897 while on a visit to the capitol city. On the day of the attack which three days later proved fatal, he visited the senate chamber and upon invitation of Lieutenant Governor Jared L. Brush occupied a chair behind the president's desk where he had wielded the gavel twenty years before.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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Jose Victor Garcia.

The first settlers at Guadalupe established their marks of settlement in 1854 and returned to New Mexico to assemble their effects. Returning in the spring they were accompanied by Jose Victor Garcia, who the previous year had married the daughter of Jesus Ma. Jaquez, one of the leaders of the colony.

Previous to this Mr. Garcia had served in the New Mexico legislature. In 1859 he was elected to the Territorial legislature and served three terms. He was the first to apply to the National Government to have the San Luis valley surveyed, which was done in 1860. In 1861 he applied to Governor Gilpin to have the line between Colorado and New Mexico established. In 1866 he was appointed collector by Governor Boone. In 1871 he was a member of the Colorado council. In 1872 he was commissioned brigadier general by Governor McCook, in the Colorado national guards Governor Gilpin appointed him on the board of managers of the Centennial Exposition. He was later a member of the board of county commissioners of Conejos county.

The distinction of the Garcia name was perpetuated in the history of two of his sons. Jose A. began public life as a page in the state senate, having received the appointment through Juan F. Chacon, first member from the district after Colorado was admitted to statehood. He served as interpreter in both houses and was later elected as a member of the senate. He served as sheriff over a period of a quarter of a century. He served as county judge over a period of years which ended at his death in 1918.

Celestino, another son of Jose Victor, served as the outstanding parliamentarian of the house of representatives over a period of almost two decades. He also served as assessor of Conejos county.



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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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L a J a r a .

La Jara, (meaning willows, in English,) so named because of the luxurious growth of willows that flourish along the banks of the river of the same name, came into existence soon after the completion of the D. & R. G. railroad to that point in 1880. The first sign of its commercial existence was a general store, established by D. R. Smith, as an adjunct to his more elaborate establishment in Alamosa.

A few years later came Leroy Wilson from Iowa who established a general merchandise store and Dr. Limberg's drug store was added as a convenience to his medical practice and to the public.

T. P. McDaniel contributed to the convenience of the region and development of La Jara by installing a pork packing plant in 1896.

In the early '90s the H. K. Mullins milling interests erected a flouring mill and elevator.

Soon after the location of the town a newspaper, the La Jara Echo, was installed by Frank Capps.

In 1886 Schiffer Bro's established a bank.

The town was incorporated in 1903 with T. P. McDaniel as mayor.

The La Jara State Bank was established in 1905 and in 1910 the First National was established by W. A. Braiden and others. In 1917 the La Jara State was absorbed by the First National. In 1921 the San Luis State Bank was established by the San Luis Valley Investment Co., but liquidated a few years later.

Among those who figured in the early history of La Jara was A. W. McIntire, who acquired a large tract of land east of the town and engaged in the cattle business and engaged in the practice of law. In 1883 he was elected county judge, in 1889 he was commissioned to take testimony for the adjudication of water rights in the San Luis valley and in 1891 he was appointed judge of the 12th Judicial District by Gov. John L. Routt. In 1894 he was elected governor of Colorado.

L. D. Eskridge, of a prominent Delaware family, served in the civil war, turned his face westward and found himself on a farm on the Conejos river, ten miles west of Conejos, in 1874. Two years later he established himself west of La Jara where he developed a large farm, well stocked with cattle, and enjoyed the life of a successful country gentleman. He also was an organizer of the La Jara Town Co., with Judge Chas. D. Hayt and R. K. Brown.

Daniel E. Newcomb, a volunteer from Illinois in the civil war,

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

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L a J a r a--2

settled west of La Jara in 1877 and proved an ambitious and valuable acquisition to the community. He assumed large operations in livestock and in 1880 organized the La Jara Creamery & Livestock Association in partnership with Harry Schiffer and John L. McNeil. As in other public matters, he was active in educational affairs and was instrumental in organizing the first public school district in the county in 1888.

Among the settlers of the time were John McCunniff, John, Ben and Frank Russell, whose operations promoted community development. W. A. Braiden engaged in town affairs and became extensively engaged in cattle raising and farming.

Educationally, La Jara maintains distinction by being the seat of a consolidated school, embracing several districts, which was organized early in the history of consolidated schools, 1915.

The town's water supply, as well as that of the entire surrounding area, is from artesian wells.

In this, year of 1934, the State game and fish department is completing a magnificent fish hatchery on the southern border of La Jara, taking its water supply from artesian wells and appropriating a drainage ditch for fish developing purposes.

The site of the location of Lieutenant Zebulon Pike's stockade erected immediately upon his arrival in 1807 while in search of the head waters of Red river, is about ten miles east of La Jara on the Conejos river. The exact spot was identified by Ex-Gov. A. W. McIntire by reference to Pike's diary, and residents of La Jara, of whom L. A. Norland has been one of the most active, succeeded in having the State of Colorado take action to have the location creditably marked, and preserved.

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

Sanford.

Home sufficiency seems to have been the impelling spirit of those who wrought the first development in the Sanford settlement in 1879. No sooner were the new dwellings made habitable than were young shade trees planted and fruit trees and berries of various varieties were set out. It was not long until the gardens which produced all the various varieties of vegetables for the year's family necessities added delicious fruit to the family storehouse.

JN 1879

Sanford Settlement ^ The names indicate that the settlers were largely of Danish and English nationality. Among those who made their original settlement at Sanford were Peter Mortensen, Peter Rasmussen, Wm. H. Kirby and Lars Mortensen. They were followed soon by Peter Poulson, John L. and James W. Reed and Hans Heiselt from Ephraim and Bishop T. N. Peterson, Thomas Crowther and S. C. Berthelsen from Richfield. At this writing, in 1934, Mrs. S. C. Berthelse is enjoying remarkable vitality at the ripe old age of 95. Three sons, Tho's A., Wm. O. and Frank, succeeded their father, Thomas Crowther, and were staunch citizens of the town. Wm. O. served the San Luis Valley stake as its president over a period of years and was connected with the Colonial State Bank at Manassa. Jen Jensen, one of the early settlers, was succeeded by a son, James P., who served the stake as president. Bishop T. N. Peterson left two sons, Peter and Swen, to become creditably established in the community. The names of Lars Mortensen and Peter Rasmussen were preserved to posterity by large families of sons and daughters.

The town was platted by the Sanford Town Co., W. O. Crowther, president, and the Sanford Land Co., C. J. Block, president, and incorporated in 1892.

A handsome church, adequate school buildings and opera house became ornaments of the town.)

Not Presented

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

Los Pinos.

The Los Pinos settlement, in one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys in Colorado's mountainous domain, centers around what is now known as Ortiz, is enclosed by mesa ridges sloping down from the mountain range from which issues Los Pinos creek. From nature's marvelous crevasse, the granite-bound Toltas gorge, one of the world's wonders, which at a depth of 980 feet narrows down to a mere passage-way for the narrow thread of liquid crystal, the valley spreads to one mile in width, forms an oval basin two miles in length and again narrows down to a passage through which the stream finds its way into "Mother" Conejos. The settlement follows the course of the stream westward until "pinched out" by the granite-ribbed gorge and from Ortiz east until it spreads out from the lower outlet over the broad valley plane where the stream is bordered by gnarled and twisted cottonwoods.

It was here among the trees, in later years designated as San Antonio, that the first settlers in the country pitched their tents and made it the base of their observations for ten days while they made the investigation that resulted in the selection of the Guadalupe site as their permanent location.

Through the Los Pinos valley the Colorado-New Mexico state line very closely parallels the course of the stream, dividing the community into two units. The south side which is in New Mexico retains the name Los Pinos and the Colorado side was designated Ortiz when a post office was established there in 1885. We find in the county commissioners' records of 1963 where a commission was appointed to identify the exact location of the state line when the eligibility of a juror was questioned because of the location of his residence. The commission reported that there was not a residence in the settlement on the New Mexico side of the line at that time:

Owing to its superb environment the Los Pinos valley was rapidly settled and between 1856 and 1859 the entire valley in Colorado and the San Antonio district were occupied. Among the first settlers were Antonio Jose Duran, Jose Francisco Salazar, Rafael and Tomas Atencio, Francisco Lujan and Pedro Lobato. Antonio Jose Duran was succeeded by two sons, Nestor and Jose Damian who were prosperous and prominent in the community. Nestor was elected county commissioner in 1877. In 1934 Jose Damian had attained the age of years and shared the association of three sons, Maximiano, Marcos and Gregorio, all of whom became extensive sheep growers and prominent in politics. Jose Francisco Salazar died at an advanced age leaving three sons, Toribio Z. and Raquel, who were stable citizens of the community. Dimetrico, another son, perished in a snow storm while looking after his sheep at the foot of San Antonio mountain. One daughter became the wife of J. Nestor Ortiz, a skilled artisan in the manufacture of filigree jewelry who gained wealth at his trade, in merchandising and sheep growing. The naming of the post office in his honor identified his prominence in the community. CIRIACO

Among other settlers of the latter '50s were Juan Jose Lopez, Luis

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CONEJOS COUNTY.

Los Pinos, Continued.

Romero, David Romero and Demecio Salazar who came as small boys with their parents, still survive in 1934, are heads of prominent families and occupy the premises originally located by their parents.

As the community thrived and increased their herds and flocks on the vast range of foot-hills sloping toward the Los Pinos creek the Indians who had been allotted a reservation on the western slope of the San Juan range, either through revenge or to discourage further encroachment toward their domain, set fire to the vast pine forest that covered the hills in 1869. The fire raged from September until quenched by the heavy December snows. The hills were denuded and the settlers were sorely afflicted by the dense smoke and suffered great inconvenience and loss of live stock

Antonito, Colo. April 1, 1934.

Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen,  
State Historian,  
Denver, Colo.

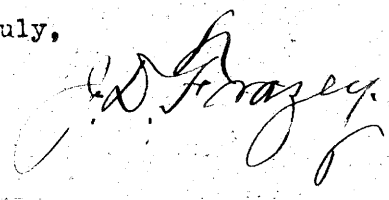
Dear Sir:

I am enclosing a few more pages of Conejos county history, and will have a limited amount more in a few days.

I received your letter this morning, and am sorry that I did not have another week. I have been unable to contact authority on the settlement of Los Pinos, Genicero, San Rafael and Los Cerritos. I had intended to visit them Monday and Tuesday. Guess-so information is plentiful but reliable stuff is more difficult.

Since the passing of the last of the original settlers a considerable number of years ago the volume of history(?) is bewildering, and while I would not suggest anything to tear down anybody's "play house", I do not care to offer anything for record that is not reliable.

Yours truly,



CORRECTION.  
Conejos County.

First Page, last two lines:

I found indications that the original name was "Guadalupita" and I found what I thought was reliable verification by one man, but I can find no supporting proof. I am finally of the opinion that the information was not reliable, probably without foundation, I would substitute "Guadalupe" in place of Guadalupita and strike out the remainder of the sentence.

*J. D. Frazier*

Page 3, Middle of page. Reference to change of county seat.

From some sources the paragraph is correct.

Others claim the change was made after statehood.

I will try and definitely settle the point. There is no question as to the forcible change.