

A Brief History of the Saguache and KV Community

The San Luis Valley region has been occupied by humans for at least 11,000 years, the Clovis and Folsom people left behind ample tools and artifacts as evidence of their existence here.¹ The Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has recorded 62 Paleoindian resource locations in the San Luis Valley, remnants of the prehistoric people who hunted the enormous *bison antiquus*.² The wetlands of Valley have been attracted humans for an extremely long time. The area remained inhabited and over the centuries different cultures left behind a myriad of stone artifacts for modern residents to find. Ute Indians left evidence that they were permanent residents in the Valley after 1100 AD, the presence of other tribes including the Comanche, Apache, Navajo, Arapaho, Cheyenne and several northern Pueblos has also been revealed.³ Native Americans, Hispanic and Anglo ranchers and settlers, immigrants, miners, entrepreneurs, and homesteaders all lived and made their marks in the San Luis Valley in what is now Saguache County weaving together multitudes of colorful stories.

Early Colorado

The first European recorded in the valley was Don Diego de Vargas who spent six days exploring there in 1694 and left the first documentation describing the area. His account “included contact, trade and occasional skirmishes with the Yutas (Utes), confrontations with Taos

¹ Rio Grande National Forest - History & Culture, , accessed May 18, 2017

² Meg Van Ness, "THE EARLY CULTURAL HISTORY SAN LUIS VALLEY – SOUTH CENTRAL COLORADO." U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE: REGION 6 - CULTURAL RECOURSE PROGRAM. March 1, 2012. Accessed May 8, 2015. p 2 http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/refuges/documents/San_Luis_Valley_Complex_-_Cultural_History.pdf. p 2

³ *ibid.* p 3

Puebloans, large herds of bison, and some ‘very large deer’”.⁴ It was also noted that the natives used tepee’s made of bison hide, pulled travois loaded down with meat and corn, and had especially large bows and arrows for hunting bison.⁵ When the Spanish entered Southern Colorado they were initially seeking the gold that they fervently believed to be abundant in the area. Their arrival upset the existing balance and “began to break down and reform power in its more fundamental arrangements.”⁶ The Spanish Empire claimed the majority of what is now Colorado, although they used the area mostly as a buffer to protect against Native attacks in their southern territories⁷. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 officially placed much of Colorado within the Spanish controlled New Mexico territory. However, things were in a state of flux in the region; Mexico had declared independence from Spain in 1810 which was finally granted to them in 1821 meaning that these Spanish lands including the San Luis Valley became part of Mexico.

The years 1821 to 1848 became known as the Mexican Republic Era. During this time the Old Spanish Trail was used as an official trade route connecting Santa Fe, New Mexico with Los Angeles, California; a trip that could take from 180 to 225 days. Woven wool textiles from the traditional Churro sheep were brought from New Mexico and traded for mules and horses from California. ⁸ During this era land grants were issued in parts of Southern Colorado and San

⁴ *ibid.* p 6

⁵ Virginia Simmons McConnell, *The San Luis Valley Land of the Six-armed Cross*. 2nd ed. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999. p 14

⁶ *Ibid.*, 33

⁷ Carl, Stephen J. Leonard Abbott,, and Thomas J. Noel. *Colorado A History of the Centennial State*. Boulder: University Press of Coloado, 2013. p 22

⁸ Susan Colville Off, "The Old Spanish Trail." Museum's of the San Luis Valley. http://www.museum-trail.org/uploads/4/3/6/8/43682169/old_spanish_trail_article.pdf.

Luis became the first permanent town in the area created by Hispano settlers from New Mexico, settlers began to filter into the Valley. The North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail passed by what is now Saguache, following the drainage of Saguache Creek up into the Cochetopa Hills. This arrangement didn't last for many years as the close of the Mexican-American War in 1848 meant that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo "ended Mexico's sovereignty over the Southwest."⁹ With this landmark treaty the United States grew by over 500,000 square miles as Mexico gave up all claims to Texas and acknowledged the Rio Grande as their northern boundary. The arrangement meant that the United States gained Upper California, New Mexico and Arizona as well as parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado including the San Luis Valley.¹⁰

Throughout this process of slow colonization Native people were seen as both a danger and a nuisance by those who wished to tap into the resources that the region offered. These resource tapping people were a diverse group of dreamers seeking new opportunities in a place where they felt they could reinvent themselves and start fresh lives. Driven by the ideals of Manifest Destiny, the newcomers did not care that the land they sought to colonize was already inhabited by either natives or Hispanics. They were confident that the place they wanted to settle should be theirs in a time when might always equaled right. Those who wished to argue the point were outnumbered and soon quelled. 1858 brought tides of newcomers from the East, arriving to settle the country that would soon become Colorado, frantic in their search for gold.

⁹ Abbot et. al. 24

¹⁰ "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo." National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 18, 2017. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo>.

The Colorado Territory was formed in 1861 and in 1876 became recognized as the State of Colorado. A new boundary divided New Mexico from Colorado and splintered the culturally distinct Hispanic community that already flourished in Southern Colorado. This disputed territory had once again changed hands and Carl Abbott accurately wrote that “[i]n many ways the economic and political story that played out in Colorado...was one of colonial exploitation.” Southern Colorado was a place where many cultures interacted—sometimes working together but often clashing or regarding each other warily. Despite the changes over the years indelible indicators of these past histories remain. The Spanish-Mexican history, “a past shaped by centuries of interaction and intermarriage between Hispanic colonizers and Native Americans,” is an example of this and still in clear sight today.¹¹

New Settlement in Saguache

The town of Saguache is located at the northern end of the extensive San Luis Valley and is also the official seat of Saguache County. Saguache Creek and the Cochetopa Hills were already popular locations for the local Native Americans before the influx of Anglo settlers. In the 1860 Hispanic colonists began to move up the valley settling along Saguache Creek among others in area. Ruth Colville stated that “[b]y the 1850’s many Spanish New Mexican families had established cordillera or plaza farming settlements...[t]hese settlers dug ditches, planted, irrigated, raised crops, grazed sheep, and built churches.”¹² In 1865 for example it was recorded that Manuel Lucero had already arrived in the region and created the Lucero Plaza with several hundred residents north of Monte Vista. Smaller plaza’s extended out from this point. In 1866 Pru-

¹¹ Abbott, *Colorado, The Centennial State*. 41

¹² Ruth Marie Colville, *La Vereda A Trail Through Time*. p 240

dencio Garcia came to the area that is now Saguache with Nathan Russell accompanied by men that John Lawrence described as “Mexican workers”. John Lawrence himself later headed to Saguache and the Northern San Luis Valley from Conejos with a herd of cattle that belonged to Santiago Manchego as well as his business partner John Woodson. They were accompanied by Longino Verte, Juana de Jesus Manchego and Jose Ant. Moran who were to be renters. When Lawrence arrived in February of 1867 he found Prudencio Garcia already settled, living on a claim “in camp style with a large family.” John Lawrence settled on Saguache Creek west of what is now the town of Saguache.¹³

That year land was donated to create the town of Saguache by Prudencio Garcia along with A.W. Settle, E.R. Harris, Otto Mears, Enos Hotchkiss, R.H. Jones, Samuel Ashley, and Nathan Russell. The small community began to grow. Many of the early settlers were German in addition to the Hispanic settlers and arrivals from the East. In 1868 Lawrence mentioned a store in town for the first time. This would have been the trading post that Otto Mears set up in his cabin, which began the process of replacing the barter system that had been place before that.¹⁴ In 1874 the Saguache Town Company was created, lots of land were given away in the town under the condition that cottonwoods be planted. Also in that year the large and elaborate Dunn Block building was constructed on 4th Street, owned by D. Herbert Dunn. Businesses began to grow and thrive.

In 1876 Nathan Russell, Prudencio Garcia, and Captain Kerber of Villa Grove were appointed as County Commissioners by Governor Cummings. Kerber declined the position but

¹³ John Lawrence. *Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908*. Edited by Bernice Martin. Publisher not identified. p 9

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p 27

Garcia and Russell swore each other in. Garcia however was not elected when the time came to renew the County Commissioners positions by public election the next year.¹⁵ It seems that the Hispanic population was not voting. Outside of the town the San Luis Valley was mostly still worked in a communal way. Settlements were built up around a central plaza, agricultural land was used collectively and water was shared. Ruth Colville wrote that from the 1870's on "the character of the San Luis Valley changed drastically with the onslaught of Anglo Americans coming from the East in search of prosperity and farmers arrived in wagons to homestead in the Valley." She also noted that most of the native wildlife was exterminated within a few years, the Mountain sheep, antelope and elk all had to be reintroduced in the Valley after they were completely wiped out.¹⁶

Early settlers of Saguache were clearly very involved in the lives of their neighbors and consistently willing to help each other cooperatively. In the earliest days of Saguache, John Lawrence frequently mentions fandangos as a regular means of entertainment and it is clear that these functions were diverse and welcoming. In fact on July 10th 1868 he admitted that "we done scarcely nothing owing to the former "fatiege" of attending the above mentioned fandangos."¹⁷ In later years the "fandangos" were referred to less often and "parties" were also attended. It becomes obvious from his recordings that they later became segregated by race as well as class. In 1896 he reported that "Samoras daughter got married to Santiago Gallegos & they had quite a feat at Samoras house...At night the Mexicans & Americans went together & had a free

¹⁵ Ibid. p

¹⁶ Colville, La Vereda. p 214

¹⁷ Lawrence, Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908. p 23

dance at Union Hall, there was the biggest turnout ever had there of both classes of people, and all danced pell mell together & was the best time held together for years, all danced.”¹⁸ The fact that Lawrence had to mention the integration shows that at this point in time it was a rare event.

The Diary of John Lawrence

“Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908” is a first-hand account of the early days of Saguache which offers excellent insight into the everyday lives of these early settlers from the creation of the town through to the early 1900s. Although John Lawrence was a successful Anglo man with all the advantages that came with it he seemed to genuinely care for the well-being of his neighbors regardless of their race or social status. Lawrence held the position of a patron in the newly formed town. David Fridtjof Halaas explained this role of patron saying, “the legitimacy of a patron-based society ran deep on the northern New Mexican frontier. A large landowner - a trusted and true man - obligated himself to the men and women who lived on or near his land. For a share of their profits, he represented their interests- political, financial, social - to an often hostile outside world.¹⁹ Lawrence was known as “the best Mexican interpreter in the area.” His obituary in the Denver Post gave him dubious credit for speeding up the removal of Ouray and his tribe from the area thanks to their friendship and Lawrence’s diplomacy. It also stated that he “knew every Mexican from Conejos and Saguache Counties, and it is said that at some time or other, he had rendered assistance to every family in the region.”²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid. 156

¹⁹ Maria C. Martinez, "JOHN LAWRENCE, FOUNDER OF SAGUACHE, CO AND HIS "LA CULEBRA" CONNECTION." Ancestry - Message Boards. Accessed May 18, 2017. <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/localities.northam.usa.states.colorado.counties.costilla/78/mb.ashx>.

²⁰ Lawrence, Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908. p 175

Later in his life Lawrence married Juliana Vigil nee Woodson, the younger widow of his business partner John Woodson after his death in 1894. Lawrence's diary reveals no romance in this marriage and it was likely the most sensible thing to do as their finances were so entangled from the lifetime business partnership. Julia died in 1901 and a notice of her death in the Saguache Crescent reported that she "was a charitable and kindhearted woman, having helped and given homes to many orphan children." Her obituary stated that "her ruling passion was to take care of orphans and the poor. The headstone of her grave has the inscription at the bottom "A friend to the poor."²¹ This tradition of adopting and fostering children from very poor families who couldn't afford to care for them seems to have been common in the early days of Saguache and is something that never died out completely.

Lawrence had much to say throughout his diary about the societal structure of Saguache during his time and later in his life he became more direct. Clearly he felt that the Hispanic folks in town were not treated equitably. Late in 1870 Donaciano Sanches was accused of stealing two horses, a saddle, bridle and other items from Mears & Gotthelf, a store that Otto Mears was part owner of. Lawrence described how "Ashley, Settle, T. Ashley, Schneider, Gotthelf, Mears, Russell and others" were present at a council held on Christmas Day to decide what to do about the stolen property. The next day the prisoner was captured and Lawrence sat with the prisoner over several nights presumably to protect him from being lynched before his trial where Lawrence probably intended represent him. The prisoner's uncle and brothers who had come up from Conejos to support him while he was being held stayed with Lawrence. However, after a week or so of being held as a prisoner he was "taken away" from sheriff Fullerton's before his trial and

²¹ Juliana Vigil Lawrence (1843 - 1901) - Find A Grave Memorial. Accessed May 18, 2017.

later “found hung to a tree.” Lawrence reported that he was “taken by persons unknown.” After the murder Lawrence helped with the burial while the prisoner’s uncle continued to stay with him. This was clearly a lynching and evidence from Lawrence’s diary seems to suggest that some of the more prominent town members were involved.²²

Later in his life he recounted the murder of a Hispanic sheep man by an Anglo cattle man in Saguache Park in 1902 and stated that “there was no call for this killing except that the cattle men will not rest easy as long as one sheep lives in Saguache County.” When the murderer was found not guilty in October of 1902, Lawrence went on to call out the racism in the system saying,

“this was expected by me as it was race prejudice, for in the nearly 36 years the county has been organized, there has never been a case where a Mexican has accused an american of a crime or where the American committed a crime against a mexican but what the American has gone clear. and for the same time there has only been one case where an American has accused a Mexican of a crime but what the mexican has been found guilty & sent to the penitentiary...”²³

In 1878 he described a Christmas gathering at the Methodist Church with entertainment by the Sunday school. He reported that there was a “big turnout and good speaking & singing & lots of old folks & the children got lots of presents, except the poor and the Mexican children who did not get any.”²⁴ Life must have been hard for many on this frontier town. Early in the next year Lawrence wrote about the inequities he saw in medical practices in town. A diphtheria

²² Lawrence, *Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908*. p 57

²³ *Ibid.* p 172

²⁴ *Ibid* p 141

epidemic erupted in January of 1903 and Lawrence complained that when Mexican children had diphtheria their houses were quarantined but when sickness fell amongst Anglos, they were always diagnosed as minor ailments and not quarantined. He claimed that meanwhile, the doctors went from house to house “doing all they can to spread it themselves.” He also stated bluntly after the death of Dario Archuleta’s baby girl that “the doctors take no particular care or pains to cure (the Mexican children) at least so I think.”²⁵ This is a serious accusation coming from a man so highly regarded by all classes in his society. Lawrence walked between two worlds and he could clearly see the divide and the unfairness.

The range wars that took place between cattle men and sheep men mentioned by Lawrence were frequent sources of friction in the area. Sheep had been the traditional livestock of the area for Hispanic as well as early Anglo settlers and many of the animals were descended from the original Spanish sheep and perfectly adapted to the environment. In the later years of settlement cattle had been moved in from Texas and became a popular commodity. The cattle men tended to be Anglo and the sheep men Hispanic, the struggle for range rights also became racially fueled. Lawrence himself had both sheep and cattle but like many of the older settlers he favored sheep-raising. Their methods of sheep farming seem to be largely communal and cooperative. The law usually seemed to lean towards the cattle men who were often richer and more powerful newcomers. Lawrence wrote disparagingly of a decision of the court made in 1883 in favor of two cattlemen who were accused of running Nate Russell’s sheep off of the range.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid. p 173

²⁶ Lawrence, *Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908*. p 120

Throughout the 1870s cattle stockmen who often had financial support from Eastern investors moved into the area buying out smaller Hispanic sheep ranches. They quickly found that in the San Luis Valley the standard 160 acres did not provide enough nutrients to support their cattle herds. In some cases they resorted to force to drive landowning sheepherders out. One major incident of note was the burring of Teofilo Trujillo's sheep ranch just west of the Sand Dunes in 1902.²⁷ However not everyone interpreted or understood things the same way. Abigail Shellabarger from a prominent early Anglo family remembered the range wars as a trivial episode saying, "the only range trouble between cattlemen and sheepmen that I recall was some time between 1876 and 1879, when the sheep began encroaching on our range and the cattlemen got together and drove them off at night. No one was injured. The sheep staid (sic) off the range after that and there was no more trouble"²⁸ This recollection differs quite drastically from Lawrence's and probably others that were never recorded.

The Utes

The Ute Indians were a frequent presence in early Saguache hovering on the outskirts of the new town, coming in to visit and trade. Abigail Shellabarger first arrived in Saguache as a girl in 1870 and recalled that, "the grass was so tall in the middle of the Valley at that time that we could see only the tops of the tepee poles sticking up when the Indians encamped on the site of Moffat."²⁹ This casual observation makes it clear that the Ute were commonly in the area.

²⁷ Mike Butler, and O. T. Davis. *Southern Colorado: O.T. Davis collection*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014. p 51

²⁸ Abigail Wales Shellagarger. *Images of the Past: Places and People*. Vol. 1. Saguache, CO: Saguache County Museum, 1996. pp 62-66.

²⁹ Abigail Wales Shellabarger. *Images of the Past: Places and People*. pp 62-66.

However they quickly began to feel the pressure of the new white settlements. Chief Ouray, who was 35 in 1868 was appointed by President Andrew Johnson, to be the spokesperson for the Utes of Colorado. Ouray with his highly respected wife Chipeta were frequent visitors to early Saguache.

Historian Robert Utley described Ouray as “a wise and articulate statesman with a ready wit and a penetrating ability to expose the pretenses by which white officials sought to ask their acquisitive enterprises.” Dr. Edward Crowther wrote that, “Ouray was neither a ‘noble savage’ nor a ‘blood-thirsty savage,’ the typical images of Utes held by most of Ouray’s Anglo contemporaries.³⁰(Crowther, 5) He was well acquainted with Lawrence and complained to him that ‘they were tired of continually making treaties once or twice every year, and nothing being complied (sic) with.’ The pressure on the Tabeguache Utes to settle down and become farmers was increasing. The desire for new settlement in the area meant that the Utes were pushed even further away as they were considered the only barrier to development of the area.

In March of 1868 Ouray and others were taken to Washington where a treaty was signed which promised them ownership of most of the mountainous areas of Colorado but moved them out of the Valley itself. They were promised agencies to provide them with the supplies they needed to survive. The intention was for the reservation was to contain two agencies, one for the northern band and one for the southern group. The Tabeguache Utes near Saguache would only go as far as a branch of the Cochetopa Creek 75 miles south of Gunnison and refused to travel any further. To avoid further conflict the southern agency was set up at that location, about 55 miles west of Saguache, in an area that was technically off the reservation. It was named the Los

³⁰ Edward R. Crowther, "Chief Ouray and John Lawrence; Cultural Clash and Personal Interaction in the San Luis Valley." *The San Luis Valley Historian* XXIII, no. 2 (1991). p 5

Pinos Agency. The new settlers in Saguache benefited greatly from this agency which distributed the government supplies to the Utes. John Lawrence and Otto Mears quickly opened a trading post and got contracts from the government to supply the agency with some of the foodstuffs promised to the Utes in the treaty.

Otto Mears has been remembered and celebrated as one of the more important founders of Saguache. Extremely involved in the early development of Saguache he was known as a successful entrepreneur. He wielded a great deal of economic power but was not exactly popular as he was a shrewd and determined businessman. He led the efforts to improve the wagon road to the new agency up Cochetope Pass it making easier to transport supplies sent from Saguache up to the agency. Mears also managed to get the contract himself to deliver goods to the agency in 1869. Goods and provisions were purchased from local farmers in the Saguache area to be delivered to the Utes. Saguache was the only community anywhere near the new agency and it provided a huge economic benefit to the small town. Mears quickly organized improvements on the wagon trail creating a toll road over Old Cochetopa Pass.

Of course he, like many others supplying goods to Indian agencies, abused the privilege.³¹ John Lawrence described one delivery of cattle to the agency courtesy of Mears, which the Utes refused to accept, as; “the poorest, scrubbiest and ordinariest Texas cattle that ever passed through the territory.” When the time came for the Utes to be removed from Colorado Mears was right there once again. In 1880 he admitted that he paid the Indians \$2.00 each of his own money if they would sign the treaty for removal. Mears was ordered to go to Washington to stand trial for the bribery, however in the end he was told that he was “perfectly right in

³¹ Virginia Simmons. "When Opportunity Knocked on Saguache's Door." CoZine.com. May 2000. Accessed May 10, 2017. <http://cozine.com/2000-may/when-opportunity-knocked-on-saguaches-door/>.

doing as he did,” in fact, Secretary Kirkwood told him to draw up a bill so he could be recompensed for the money he spent.³² This wasn't Mear's first act of bribery, he was known to have influenced voters with “wagons loaded with whiskey, ham, bacon and other goodies” to sway votes in his favor.³³

It should not be surprising that new Colorado settlers were unhappy that the entire Southwestern portion of Colorado was being set aside for a Ute reservation. Miners and prospectors continued to enter the region in search of wealth and were unconcerned by the knowledge that they were trespassing. The general notion that the Utes were not utilizing the resources of the land properly was a popular one and was frequently used as a reason for further trespass. In 1873, Felix Brunot, who was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with the help of Saguache's ever present Otto Mears as interpreter, created the Brunot Treaty or the San Juan Cession. This treaty took 4,000,000 acres of land from the Ute Reservation in the San Juan Mountains to open the area to unrestricted mining. Despite the loss of the contracts related to the Los Pinos agency the town of Saguache still benefitted from the increase in mining activity in lands now opened up by the removal of the Utes.

By 1875 the Utes had been removed from this agency also and out of the San Luis Valley region officially. They were moved further west to the Uncompaghre River Valley, twelve miles south of what is now Montrose, to the second Los Pinos Agency. As 1881 rolled in most of the Utes had been removed from Colorado altogether and by 1882 six million acres of Ute territory were opened up to Anglo settlement. The Bureau of Land Management explained that, “[i]n a

³² Sidney Jocknick. *Early days on the western slope of Colorado*. Ouray, CO: Western Reflections, 1998. p 216

³³ Butler. *Southern Colorado: O.T. Davis collection*. p 73

period of twenty years from the establishment of the Colorado Territory, the Ute Indians witnessed the rapid diminution of their domain. The removal of the Utes from the Western Slope, rather than retribution for acts perpetrated against Anglo-Coloradans, was emblematic of the crushing weight of an advancing mining frontier in southwestern Colorado.”³⁴

Hispanic Saguache

In all of Colorado, Hispanics are the largest of all ethnic minorities making up 12.5% of the population.³⁵ Despite the rich Hispanic culture it seems to have been downplayed in the history of the Saguache region. The San Luis Valley is reported to contain one of three of the largest native born Hispanic populations in Colorado. Many of these residents can trace their ancestry back to the time of Mexican land grants in the 1800s and many old timers take great pride in what they see as a Colonial Spanish rather than Mexican heritage.³⁶ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago granted citizenship to Mexican people already living in the territory newly obtained by the United States. Because at the time one had to be “white” in order to be a United States citizen these new citizens were considered to be legally white, even if they weren’t treated as such. They were in fact “subjected to systemic discrimination” and if they tried to fight such

³⁴ Paul M. O’Rourke. *Frontier in transition: a history of southwestern Colorado*. Denver, Colo. (Rm. 700, Colorado State Bank Bldg., 1600 Broadway, Denver 80202): Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management, 1980.

³⁵ "SANCHEZ v. The Pueblo Chicano Democratic Caucus, Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Amici Curiae." Findlaw: For Legal Professionals. Accessed May 10, 2017. <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-10th-circuit/1183252.html>.

³⁶ Ibid.

discrimination in law suits they were denied as they were officially white, and whites did not suffer discrimination.³⁷

The Saguache area was no different when it came to segregation and discrimination. Despite the fact that there has always been a large Hispanic population they have hovered on the periphery of history. Proof of their existence is obvious in the writings of John Lawrence as he casually mentions his Spanish surnamed friends and neighbors daily, just as frequently if not more often, as he mentions Anglo names. However anyone reading archived editions of the Saguache Chronicle or the Saguache Crescent newspapers would never guess at such a population. The same apparently Anglo names are mentioned over and over, as business owners, members of boards and organizations, school and government officials and segments about social events. In the early 1920s Mrs. Russell with Juan A. Chavez did operate the Russell and Chavez grocery store here but by the late 20s Mrs. Russell was running the store alone. Charles S. Vigil noted that in the Colorado Legislative Assembly of January 3rd 1876 there were 9 legislators and one Senator with Spanish surnames. He went on to point out that by 1915 there were only three legislators with Spanish surnames and by 1921 only one.³⁸ This trend of Anglo domination of politics has continued in the area. Studying the names of those historically involved in school boards, Town Trustees and County Commissioners shows they have consistently been a majority Anglo surnamed.

³⁷ "Mexican-American." Mexican-American | Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing - eBooks | Read eBooks online. Accessed May 9, 2017. <http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/Mexican-American>.

³⁸ José De Onís. The Hispanic contribution to the State of Colorado. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976. p 185

In the 1900s many Hispanic families migrated seasonally within the San Luis Valley as farm laborers.³⁹ The ranching and agriculture community continued to grow within the entire valley and Saguache was no exception. However the town did not get the chance to experience the railroad boom. The Saguache newspaper the Chronicle reported on July 1st 1881 and that the railroad was scheduled to be completed by July 1st to Del Norte. representatives of the town went to Colorado Spring to talk to D&RG about bringing the line up to Saguache. Apparently this effort was fruitless. The train never came to Saguache and shipments had to be taken 18 miles to the D&RG railroad in Villa Grove to the north-east. In 1881 a narrow-gauge line was built to connect the San Luis Valley with the Arkansas River Valley over Poncha Pass.⁴⁰ Moffat also became a shipping hub for the area which was booming with mining towns and was at one point a town of 2000 and actually considered as the state capital!

Transportation in Saguache

Saguache has always been an isolated area with the transportation issues and needs that come with that designation. In the early days stage lines, pulled by teams of horses, transported people from town to town for a fee. In the July 19th, 1890 edition of the Saguache Crescent, the Villa Grove and Saguache Stage Line advertised that they carried “mail, passengers and express” and ran daily. It took 2 and a half hours to get from Villa Grove to Saguache in the morning and 2 hours and 50 minutes to get back to Saguache in the afternoon.⁴¹ Livery stables also provided transportation options for 19th century travelers in the West. Generally they hired out horses,

³⁹ Nostrand, Richard L. *The Hispano Homeland*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. p. 147

⁴⁰ Butler. Southern Colorado: O.T. Davis collection. p. 60

⁴¹ *The Saguache Crescent*, July 19th, 1890. Accessed May 11, 2017.

driving teams, buggies and wagons and boarded horses for visitors. They were often situated near a hotel. In Saguache, The Freighter's Feed and Sale Stable boarded horses and operated near the Camp House, which offered human lodging. They advertised in the Saguache Chronicle of November of 1876 that they had saddle horses "constantly on hand to hire."⁴² A. Brewer advertised his livery and feed store in The Saguache Crescent in July of 1900 but by 1906 as transportation needs changed he was advertising as an undertaker. The rise of the automobile made it's mark in Saguache. Five businesses related to automobiles opened in the sixteen years between 1904 and 1920. There were three garages and an "auto livery" business. One garage sold Model T Fords in addition to doing repairs.⁴³

In 1925, an article in The Saguache Crescent bemoaned "the bus problem." Apparently Saguache was beginning to feel pressure over transportation needs and desired to have the same amenities other places had. The article stated that, "the bus is the popular idea of public transportation" and felt that since there were busses from Denver to Greeley and Colorado Springs to La Junta, it was even more important for, "an isolated county like Saguache, with only a dinky train, once a day and none on Sunday." The article went on to say that there was no way the residents could "be held at fault for being in favor of more modern transportation." The article explained that the San Luis Valley Bus Company had applied for a rehearing on their franchise application (which had presumably already been turned down) to operate a bus route from Alamosa

⁴² *Saguache Chronicle*, Dec 23 1876. Accessed May 11, 2017 <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=SQC18761223.2.61&srpos=2&e=-----en-20-SQC-1--txt-txIN-The+Freighter's+Feed+and+Sale+Stable-----0->

⁴³ State Historic Preservation Officer, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Saguache Downtown" <http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/NRSR/5SH4597.pdf> p 39

to Salida.⁴⁴ Their plan was not successful and even today residents struggle with the lack of public transportation.

Despite the lack of a train Saguache continued to benefit from the mining boom in the region and continued to be a supply town with many businesses and resources. Abigail Shellaberger recalled this time of extreme growth in the area, saying, “in about 1875 to 1881, during the Leadville mining excitement hundreds of horse, ox trains and mule teams came from the south and passed over a road which ran about 2 miles east of Moffat, passed what is now known as White House where the Shellabargers lived at and straight on up the Valley to Poncha Pass and so to Leadville.”⁴⁵ This growth continued into the 19th century.

Education

John Lawrence started the first Saguache school in 1872 at the site of the present museum. Initially he had trouble finding students to attend the school and it got off to a slow start but eventually the idea caught on. In the Saguache Chronicle of November 1878 a letter from “a visitor” described a second school; “an excellent private school” or “Home School” with Mrs. S. S. Bronaugh as the teacher. This school apparently had 12 to 15 students from primary to advanced grammar school grade.”⁴⁶ By 1880 a two story brick school house had been built. In 1900 the Saguache High School was opened for students who wished to advance beyond 8th grade in response to the act passed by the Colorado Legislature of 1899 to establish and support high

⁴⁴ "The Bus Problem." *The Saguache Crescent*, September 17, 1925. Accessed May 11, 2017. <http://sag.stparchive.com/Archive/SAG/SAG09171925P05.php?tags=1925|bus>.

⁴⁵ Abigail Wales Shellagarger. *Images of the Past: Places and People*. Vol. 1. Saguache, CO: Saguache County Museum, 1996. pp 62-66.

⁴⁶ Rubén Donato. *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado schools and communities: 1920-1960*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

schools in fourth and fifth class counties. It was to be free for all children of Saguache county and was owned, supported and controlled by the county. Students had to pass the eighth grade exam and then could attend high school for four years. The building fund was donated by the town of Saguache as well as private donors.

Sadly but predictably the opportunities that the school offered do not seem to have been equally distributed but rather outright racial segregation and later discrimination held Hispanic students back. Archived editions of the Saguache Crescent list the names of teachers and staff involved in the school periodically and into the 1940s they all seem to have Anglo surnames, including the Spanish teachers and the teachers for the Spanish Primary. Spanish Primary schools were created for the Spanish speaking primary students to teach them English so that they could move through the rest of the system. However many students were discouraged from progressing further past second grade or they were made to repeat grades keeping them in the Spanish Primary until their English was deemed sufficient to move on. These separate schools made segregation a legal process. Students were punished for speaking Spanish in school which is something that many older residents of the town of Saguache recall.

In 1914 one of the earliest legal challenges by Mexican Americans to school segregation in the United States took place in Alamosa about 50 miles south of Saguache. A Mexican School was constructed on the “Mexican side” of town to serve non English speaking children. In the lawsuit *Francisco Maestas et al. vs. George H. Shone et al* Mexican American parents argued that that children were being segregated by race, while the school board and the superintendent claimed this was impossible as Mexican American children were considered Caucasian. The argument was made by the defendants that the students’s special linguistic needs were being met

but the judge found a policy in place that sent all Mexican American children to the Spanish school regardless of their ability to speak English and ruled that this was illegal. It was decided that English speaking Mexican American children had to be allowed to attend the school of their choice and schools that were closer to their homes.⁴⁷

The school in Saguache continued to use the Spanish Primary system well into the 1940s. Hispanic students remember being discouraged from attending school by severe and unfair discipline and discrimination. The social and psychological effects of this attitude and treatment of discrimination was intense and long lasting. Alice Atencio went to school in Del Norte a nearby town. She recalled that, "I felt the teachers helped the Anglos and left us [Hispanics] to fend for ourselves...we were not given an opportunity to advance. I grew up thinking that they [Anglos] were supposed to control everything. We grew up to think that that's the way it's supposed to be. I also grew up thinking I was dumb in school." Even into the 1970s unofficial discrimination continued with Hispanic students being assigned seats at the back of the room and facing unequal discipline methods.

Current school policies are more welcoming but Hispanics still face greater difficulties in schools than white students due to the historical implications of segregation. The graduation rates show that 78.9% of all students graduate from high school in Colorado. White students seem to have a successful graduation rate of 84.4% while Hispanic students only have a graduation rate of 69.9%.⁴⁸ As of 2005 Colorado was the 14th most segregated state for Hispanics.

⁴⁷ Donato, Ruben, Gonzalo Guzmán, and Jarrod Hanson. "Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.: Mexican American Resistance to School Segregation in the Hispano Homeland, 1912–1914." *Journal of Latinos and Education* 16, no. 1 (2016): 3-17. doi:10.1080/15348431.2016.1179190.

⁴⁸ "Graduation Statistics." Graduation Statistics | CDE. Accessed May 15, 2017. <https://www.cde.state-co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent>.

The effects of poverty combined with race means that in poor schools fewer enrichment programs and educational opportunities to prepare students for post-secondary life are available to any children. The Mountain Valley School District serves Saguache today with students attending Mountain Valley school in Saguache, the Moffat school and the Crestone Charter School. All three schools are very small by national standards and suffer from a lack funding.

Economy

The San Luis Valley has always been nurtured as an agricultural center. Modern agriculture increased greatly in Colorado between 1890 and 1912. From 1912 to 1916 Great Western Sugar company hired agents to actively recruit workers in rural areas of Southern Colorado.⁴⁹ There was an population boom in the San Luis Valley in the 1920s as a result of continuing immigration. There were hopes in the 1920s that the beet sugar industry would take off in the San Luis Valley and replace the country's dependence on cane sugar. The Denver Republican reported in 1909 that an independent beet sugar factory was planned in Monte Vista which would include the construction of 38 miles of standard gauge railroad north to Saguache in the hopes of equaling Greeley's success. Five year contracts had been signed with farmers in Saguache County and there were high hopes that it would flourish.⁵⁰ The beet industry never took off like it had been planned and the railroad still didn't come to Saguache. However downtown Saguache experienced a boom during this time and had "a healthy mix of businesses."⁵¹ Many

⁴⁹ (Rivera 32)

⁵⁰ *The American Sugar Industry and Beet Sugar Gazette* XI, no. 3 (March 1909). https://books.google.com/books?id=CRQgAQAAMAAJ&dq=sugar+beet+saguache&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

⁵¹ State Historic Preservation Officer, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Saguache Downtown" <http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/NRSR/5SH4597.pdf> p 40

businesses survived the depression and the Federal Writers Project described Saguache at the end of the 1930s as the Federal Writers' Project described Saguache as "a thriving but isolated community retaining some of the spirit of the old frontier."⁵²

In 1936 the Pueblo Star-Journal reported that the upcoming year had a bright outlook for agricultural prosperity. The potato business was on the rise and the article described the potato crop as "the greatest industry in the San Luis valley." Head lettuce also did well in this time as the valley lettuce was ready in the two weeks between the end of the California harvest and the beginning of the Eastern harvest. Other important crops were cabbage, cauliflower, peas, beans, alfalfa, grain, and sugar beets. During this time statistics showed that grazing land was diminishing while more land was being used for agricultural cultivation demonstrating that the valley was transforming from a livestock community to an agricultural one. Generally farming was taking place on a larger scale and farmers owned large farms and hired many low paid workers to do the manual labor. For the most part Hispanics were farm workers and landowners were Anglo.

The town of Saguache was a busy place until fairly recently within the last generation. The National Historic Register notes that the town's period of significance was from 1874 until 1964 when it began to diminish. Population trends show that the population of the town began to diminish steadily from 1940-2010 and losing more than half the population. Until 1946 Highway 285 went down 4th street but was rerouted to skirt the town which diverted traffic from the 4th street businesses. In the 1950s Saguache experienced a dramatic population decrease but retained a variety of businesses; "Saguache County National Bank, the Saguache Crescent,

⁵² Ibid. 41

Saguache County Abstract and Investment Company, the Saguache Hotel, Ute Theater, two mercantiles (Hammond and Charles A. Williams), Saguache Drug (E.J. Hazard, proprietor), Saguache Cold Storage, two liquor stores, Vera Kruse's Coffee Shoppe, Martin Chevrolet, the Malouff's dry goods store and grocery and market, and the offices of the Public Service Company of Colorado and Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph." In the 1966 the Saguache County National Bank failed and closed its doors.

These 4th street businesses seem to have remained until the 1960s or 70s when they seemed to start to disappear rather than simply change hands, the declining population meant there was less support for these local businesses.⁵³ In the 1990s buildings began to look noticeably vacant and by 2004 4th street was virtually devoid of businesses. Today businesses on 4th Street include several art galleries, a natural food store, a thrift store, antique store, a movie theater, two restaurants, waste disposal company, two banks, the Saguache Crescent Newspaper office, and an abstract company. A restaurant, grocery store, liquor store and a gas station line the current route of Highway 285 which divides the town into two residential sections. Most of the businesses are found on the eastern side of the highway and there are not enough businesses to provide employment for all the residents who would like to work.

The Lazy KV

Modern day settlers and homesteaders continue to move to the Saguache area in the hopes of attaining a better life. Once a large ranch the Lazy KV Estates is a subdivision community that has attracted many new arrivals over the past twenty years. Located fifteen minutes away from Saguache to the north-east, it was first created as a subdivision in 1976. The lots

⁵³ Ibid.

come in parcels of 1, 2, or 3 acres and they are advertised as having water and electricity available. Water is available for a one time \$3500 installation fee and a yearly fee that is currently \$177.00. This annual fee is said to be for maintenance of the water which includes, testing and treating the well water brought to each lot. The subdivision boasts minimal restrictions, county guidelines make building easy. New land owners are permitted to move onto their lots as soon as they have made their initial deposit. These residents can camp in a tent or RV and “use the land as you choose” once they have made the agreement. Lots can be purchased for as little as a \$99.00 deposit with \$199.00 a month payments for 28 months and no credit checks.⁵⁴

Many of the residents of the Lazy KV are attracted by the idea of being able to grow legal marijuana on their own land with hopes of cashing in on the legal marijuana trade in Colorado. This has led to concerns about excessive use of water and unrestricted activities from other residents. A 2015 resolution was obviously made to crack down on the grey and black market marijuana industry and the influx of newcomers it brought with it. New rules state that residence must be established on lots before a greenhouse can be built. The lot must be a primary residence and must have septic, water and power. They have imposed limits on the greenhouse size and only one is allowed per lot. No commercial actives are permitted and greenhouses are for personal consumption only. They have also stated that water from installed water taps is not to be sold or given away and that they will notify the DEA of suspicious activity.⁵⁵ This resolution is very direct and clearly exemplifies the current concerns that many have about illegal marijuana grows in the rural Saguache area.

⁵⁴ "Lazy KV Estates." The Land Guru. Accessed May 11, 2017. <http://www.easyfinanceland.com/lazy-kv-estates.html>.

⁵⁵ Lazy KV Estates. “Resolution of the K-V Board of Directors” August 2015.

The subdivision boasts of having several amenities including a stocked pond and a community building with bathroom facilities and showers available during office hours for a \$5.00 fee.⁵⁶ The Lazy KV Estates is a short fifteen minute drive from the town of Saguache but it has the feeling of being in the middle of nowhere. Unlike the town with its lush and mature trees the Lazy KV is mostly tree free with full exposure to the brutal winds of the San Luis Valley. The subdivision is controlled by a Home Owners Association which is run by a Board of five directors who are also required to members of the Association. They serve for staggered three year terms. Every year a position becomes vacant and the Members vote in a director. A director can be removed by a majority vote of the members. Members can vote by proxy and each member is entitled to one vote for each lot that they hold an interest in. If more than one person owns the lot they must decide on what one vote they will cast.⁵⁷

Many of the residents of the KV live off the grid by choice but others live without electricity, running water or septic because they can't afford these amenities. The very inexpensive land is an attraction with down payments and monthly payments however the area has very little to offer in the way of employment with it's low population and high poverty rate. The weather in the summer is pleasant but winters can be brutal with sub-freezing temperatures. Residents living in RVs find winters particularly long and cold. The KV can also seem very isolated and disconnected from the town of Saguache both physically and socially.

The community of Saguache and KV has a long and interesting history with far more detail than can be included here. Over the years the voices of many of the minorities and lower

⁵⁶ "Lazy KV Estates." The Land Guru. <http://www.easyfinanceland.com/lazy-kv-estates.html>.

⁵⁷ Lazy KV Estates Home Owners Association, "By-Laws of K-V Homeowners Association" September 14th 1995

class have been overlooked and have remained unheard. When only one part of a story is told the result is unsatisfying and boring. The region has grown and diminished over the years and it is still in a state of change. The town of Saguache remains small and the surrounding area is sparsely populated. The economic opportunities that once existed have dwindled and many residents here suffer from poverty and struggle daily to make ends meet. Despite the ample hardships it is a beautiful environment which is rich in a diverse and unique cultural history which, when recognized in full, is incredibly interesting.

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