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Vecino Archaeology AD 1780-Present

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(organizers)

Session Abstract

What's in a name? Sustained scholarly interest in Hispanic communities of the northern Rio Grande, from the Bourbon reforms through New Mexican statehood, demonstrates that a name can have far reaching implications. *Vecino* is ethnically descriptive and action-oriented; it conceptualizes intellectual exchange and downplays unproductive debates. This session, dedicated to Frances Leon Swadesh Quintana, celebrates 75 years of the SAA. It assembles papers that establish Vecino Archaeology as a dynamic field of anthropological and historical inquiry. Current research transcends theoretical significance by contributing to grass roots initiatives, land and water legislation, and education, while engaging the traditional values of paramount concern to descendant communities.

This session is dedicated to Frances Leon Swadesh Quintana (1917-2009)

Paper Abstracts

Religion on the Rocks: Interpretations of Hispanic/Genizaro Petroglyphs

Richard I. Ford. University of Michigan, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor Emeritus

Recent surveys in northern New Mexico have discovered numerous petroglyphs pecked and carved into basalt boulders with Christian symbols. They represent the historic religious beliefs of rural Catholics, including Penitentes, and some Protestant converts. Apparently they were produced by males in hinterland locations while herding sheep, hunting/woodcutting, or traveling on established trails well marked by Christian crosses. Their distribution on the landscape is patterned and predictable. There are some secular petroglyph images but they are generally close to established ranches or villages.

The Manufacture and Utilization of a Lithic and Bottle Glass Tool Technology by 19th Century Hispanic New Mexicans and their Colorado Descendants

Richard Carrillo, Cuartelejo HP Associates Inc.

Lithic technology, as considered by most Americanist prehistorians, is associated with a technology that is unique to Native Americans. Chipped stone artifacts found on Spanish Colonial period and later sites have previously been attributed to mixing of prehistoric materials from underlying or nearby sites with the historic artifacts, or to historic Indian manufacture and use. A similar situation occurs in Colorado. Using archaeological and ethnohistorical data, the argument is made that the modified tools, both lithics and bottle glass, found on historic sites in the Purgatoire and Arkansas Valley region were manufactured by Hispanic New Mexicans and their Colorado descendants.

From Carreta to Railroad: Los Vecinos in Turn-of-the-Twentieth Century Southern Colorado

Minette Church, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Department of Anthropology

The late nineteenth and turn of the twentieth centuries was a tumultuous time politically and economically in southern Colorado, yet these years have gotten little attention from archaeologists. In less than a generation, Spanish-speaking families living there found their civic identities externally redefined through successive sweeps of cartographers' pens, from Mexican to U.S. citizen, from New Mexican to Coloradan. Damacio and Loretta Lopez and their twelve children were at the center of these transformative contexts, and through archaeological and unprecedented surviving personal documents we can look at the identities they and their vecinos, Anglo and Hispano, created together and apart.

Plaza Community and the Vecino Household: An Archaeological Perspective

Caroline Gabe. University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology

How does plaza organization influence the expression of vecino household structure and spatial configuration? The plaza village is a common historical expression in northern New Mexico, which evolved in tandem with the political changes that shaped the Spanish frontier. Plaza organization affected the associated individuals and households within vecino villages and the spatial organization of gendered activities. Taking the Ranchos de Taos and Taos parishes as a case study, this paper analyzes plaza community layouts from multiple perspectives and their possible effects on social organization and community arrangement.

Vecinos en la Frontera: New Mexican Identity in the Pecos River Settlements

Kelly Jenks, University of Arizona, Tucson; Statistical Research, Inc., Albuquerque

In attempting a vecino archaeology, one is forced to define the term in a practical sense. While the word captures the importance of community in Hispanic identity, Nuevomexicanos long have recognized significant cultural differences among various villages. Authorities in Santa Fe, for example, tended to view the inhabitants of frontier settlements as degraded owing to their close relations with indigenous neighbors. This paper explores what it means to be vecino in the Pecos River settlements, where daily life was shaped more by interactions with outsiders—whether captive or cousin—than by any relations with the Santa Fe elite.

Vecino “Status” in Two 18th-Century Border Communities

Heather Atherton¹ and Jun Sunseri²

¹Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, ²University of California, Berkeley

This paper explores vecino identity as it was expressed in two 18th-century villages: LA917 (or “Casitas Viejas”) in the Northern Rio Grande and San José de las Huertas in the Middle Rio Grande. Although these settlements were a product of similar historical forces (such as the Bourbon Reforms), archaeological, archival and oral historical research on the two communities reveal that some degree of diversity existed at the local level. As such, villagers in both communities employed a variety of strategies to deal with the precariousness of frontier life.

Politics, Trade, and 19th-century Vecino Identity: An Archaeological Examination of a Small New Mexican Ranch.

Heather Trigg, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research

The 19th century represented a time of political upheaval for New Mexico. First as part of the Spanish Empire, then the Mexican State, and finally as a territory of the United States, New Mexico experienced changes in economic and social relationships with shifting centers of political control. Increased social and economic contacts with Anglo-Americans accompanied the opening of the Santa Fe Trail and incorporation into the United States. These economic, social, and political relationships influenced vecino identity and how it was expressed in material goods and practices. This paper explores these relationships at one vecino site in northern New Mexico.

Vecino Archaeology and the Politics of Play

B. Sunday Eiselt, Katy Pocklington, Nicola Muchnikov, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

Francis Swadesh identified an 18th century vecino cultural pattern, which after American occupation, retracted into the isolated hills and tributary valleys of the northern Rio Grande. This paper investigates the impacts of the American invasion on vecino culture through a consideration of children’s artifacts and fantasy play. As children were gradually excluded from the workforce and drawn into the home, they were simultaneously pulled into an expanding commercial market and public educational realm. Elders today observe that this historical process has disenfranchised local youth from traditional village life in the St Francis of Assisi Parish, New Mexico.

Turley's Mill: The Archaeology of Vecino Resistance

Albert Gonzalez, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

The opening of the Santa Fe Trail and the annexation of New Mexico by the United States strained the fabric of New Mexico's vecino society. Turley Mill, the Arroyo Hondo grist mill and whiskey distillery that became the focal point for the Taos Rebellion of 1847, represents the force of that strain. The aim of this paper is to analyze the recently excavated mill as an example of vecino resistance to Anglo intrusion in northern New Mexico. More specifically, the paper will explore the economic aspect of Anglo intrusion through an examination of excavated materials, architecture, and documents.