

# **“Retribution Will Be Their Reward”: New Mexico’s Las Gorras Blancas and the Fight for the Las Vegas Land Grant Commons**

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From February 1889 until the summer of 1891 a clandestine group of night riders known as Las Gorras Blancas (the White Caps) clashed with commercial ranchers, land speculators, and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad in the northwestern grasslands of New Mexico. The White Caps cut hundreds of miles of fences that enclosed thousands of acres of what commercial ranchers and land speculators considered among the best ranching lands in the territory. The fence-cutting campaign comprised nearly eighty separate attacks in an eighteen-month period. The midnight raids targeted the commercial ranchers and merchants, newly arrived following the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–48), and the timber and tie operators who fueled local railroad expansion. The targets were among the wealthiest and most politically powerful figures in New Mexico—ranchers, merchants, and politicians—who amassed great fortunes appropriating local common property resources.

At the center of the struggle was the commons of the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant, a community land grant created by Mexico before the area became U.S. territory. Mexico had distributed the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant to subsistence settlers in the 1830s and reserved the bulk of the more than five hundred

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thousand-acre grant for the collective management and use of land grant members. Both Spain and Mexico used common-property land tenure arrangements to populate the northern frontier of New Mexico. The difficulties of frontier settlement required a diverse subsistence strategy that included small, private agricultural plots augmented by a large commons for collective livestock grazing, fuel-wood collecting, and hunting. In addition, the subsistence communities that came to settle the dozens of community land grants in northern New Mexico served as a buffer between valuable mining regions in northern Mexico and the powerful Native societies to the north. After the U.S.-Mexican War, New Mexico and all its property claims fell under the authority of the United States, where land policies favored private-property land tenure and railroad-focused commercial expansion. For speculators and large ranchers, nowhere but in the former Mexican territories was it possible to acquire such vast acreages overnight. New Mexico's many large community property claims, often with hundreds of thousands of acres in common, became prime investment targets. Few common-property land-tenure arrangements survived the transfer to U.S. control and the onset of industrial development and commercial speculation.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1870s investment in railroad development linked the largest population center on the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant to national and international markets. With new transportation and communications connections, federal land administrators, investors, and speculators transformed Las Vegas into the military and economic center of the territory. The investors and speculators who followed the railroads into New Mexico undermined common-property land tenure, encouraged continued railroad expansion, expanded investment and credit for commercial and industrial development, and defended the interests of commercial elites through the application of repressive state authority. Las Gorras Blancas emerged out of the turmoil created by this economic upheaval. Over the course of eighteen months, the Mexican heirs to the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant organized in opposition to the waves of enclosure brought by railroad development and commercial speculation. Las Gorras Blancas orchestrated an organized pattern of widespread rural incendiarism. Fires that consumed the haystacks and barns of local elites frequently illuminated the night sky in Las Vegas and surrounding San Miguel County, and nearly every issue of local newspapers carried new reports of fences found cut and ranchers evicted by the White Caps. Local economic and political elites reacted to the "lawlessness" of the "White Cap Outrages," as the movement came to be described in the business-friendly press, through a reactionary campaign of rural repression. The press vilified suspected leaders. Local authorities harassed alleged members with frequent arrests.

For the first historians who examined Las Gorras Blancas, the movement provided an example of primitive social protest in action. These studies, following Eric Hobsbawm's call for historical attention to peasant resistance movements,<sup>2</sup>



Figures 1 and 2. The Town of Las Vegas Land Grant encompassed more than 500,000 acres in San Miguel County surrounding Las Vegas, the main route of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad through New Mexico, as shown on this 1895 Rand McNally map of New Mexico and San Miguel County. Source: Rand McNally, "The New 11 x 14 Atlas of the World," 1895. Map courtesy of Pan Reitsch (copyright memoriallibrary.com)



examined the cultural roots of insurgency in New Mexico but largely limited their explanation of the group's activities to kinship bonds and cultural tradition.<sup>3</sup> The first careful case study by Andrew Schlesinger defined the typical Hispano settler in New Mexico as prepolitical, primitive, and constrained by inherent cultural limitations: "He did not worry about the future," Schlesinger wrote, "as he did not regret the past; it would not change."<sup>4</sup> Though sympathetic to their plight and understanding of their tactics, Schlesinger nonetheless explained the mode of *mexicano* social protest similarly as did New Mexico's nineteenth-century elites: outsiders, labor agitators, and opportunists gave momentum to the movement, not new racial and class antagonisms born of the waves of property dispossession. Robert Rosenbaum took up Schlesinger's cultural pathologies argument and claimed that various and inherent cultural imperatives and social structures of Hispano agrarian communities in New Mexico offered a clue to the origins of resistance. The White Cap movement, he argued, while not entirely devoid of political or economic substance, was primarily a rural protest movement organized in defense of traditional lifeways.<sup>5</sup>

This preoccupation with Hispano culture rising up against Anglo enterprise reflected a tradition "among historians and social scientists writing about land issues in the Southwest [that] tended to characterize resistance by the poor Spanish-Indian-Mexican population as void of political content or consequence."<sup>6</sup> In contrast, more recent efforts have departed from cultural analyses of resistance. Anselmo Arellano situated the conflict in the political struggles that followed from the U.S.-Mexican War. Las Gorras Blancas in his view reflected a grassroots effort to defend existing Hispano political power against the changes wrought by elites and "political thieves."<sup>7</sup> In Arellano's study Las Gorras Blancas appear as one of a number of reformist organizations opposed to Anglo political authority. A recent article by Mary Romero has made the most explicit argument to date against the familiar "racialized ethnics" analysis of Las Gorras Blancas.<sup>8</sup> In addition, hers is the first to focus on political economy. She argues that the erasure of class struggle in the movement continues to bedevil a more nuanced and contingent understanding of "the cultures and traditions of the land grant descendants."<sup>9</sup> While the emphasis on racialized class relations among recent studies of Las Gorras Blancas resistance provides a necessary corrective to previous culturalist explanations, important blind spots still remain. Despite Romero's emphasis on new class relations and the transformation in landownership and tenure in nineteenth-century New Mexico, the various institutions and practices that constructed new financial networks and imposed capitalist wage relations remain underexamined and continue to escape close scrutiny. Lacking a detailed analysis of the political economy of social conflict in 1890s New Mexico, Las Gorras Blancas remains popularly and unfairly understood as a reformist peasant movement engaged in a desperate defense of rural traditions.

The purpose of this essay is to examine Las Gorras Blancas as first and foremost a broad social movement organized in opposition to the privatization of com-

mon property resources and the forced shift from subsistence to industrial production. My aim is to examine Las Gorras Blancas through a wider lens that draws into view not just cultural or racial conflict but also the regional patterns of resource-led, economic development in New Mexico. In doing this, I demonstrate that Las Gorras Blancas were powerful economic actors in the development of nineteenth-century New Mexico. As I show here, the campaign by Las Gorras Blancas against a new class of commercial ranchers and land speculators came on the heels of dramatic shifts in land tenure, rural and urban production, and political authority. Waves of enclosures squeezed communal property and thus threatened small-scale and subsistence production on the Las Vegas Land Grant. The enclosures captured and reserved a seemingly infinite reservoir of grazing, timber, and mining resources for newly arrived East Coast and European investors. As rural producers were thrown off the land, an emerging industrial workforce further transformed rural and urban production patterns in the territory. The emergence of Las Gorras Blancas came in response to transformative economic changes for Hispanic subsistence farmers in New Mexico.

New Mexico posed unique challenges to those seeking its resources. While the slow erosion in common-property land tenure established the conditions for increased investment in resource extraction and commercial speculation, it also fueled rural and urban discontent among land-grant heirs. The disruption of existing production patterns based on common-property land tenure, the imposition of private property, and the expansion of railroad development proved uneven, partial, and contested.<sup>10</sup> The White Caps met the diverse patterns and institutions that threatened common property land tenure with tactics and targets that evade simplistic explanations based solely on race or ethnicity. They cut fences and burned barns, but they also delivered a withering critique of political cronyism, commercial speculation, and industrial capitalism. They destroyed rail and telegraph lines, but they also organized the growing industrial workforce to oppose capitalist wage relations.

Despite the lack of political economy in previous analyses, the politics and actions attributed to Las Gorras Blancas reveal they had a sophisticated grasp of New Mexico's nineteenth-century political economy that developed into a radical social movement in opposition to the "land grabbers" and "political bossism" that served commercial interests. Their defense of common property relations galvanized a social movement that not only defended rural production but also targeted the technologies and institutions that made speculative investment possible—railroads, banks, and barbed wire fences—and for a time effectively muted the growing power of commercial interests and industrial firms over the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant. Their dual focus on rural and urban issues confounded territorial officials and rapidly expanded their political power among rural and urban working-class constituencies.

Though territorial officials ignored growing rural discontent in the years prior to Las Gorras Blancas, they understood its causes well. In October 1885 the New



Mexico territorial governor Edmund Ross gave an early warning of potential problems to come.<sup>11</sup> In his annual report to the secretary of the interior, he chronicled a rather gloomy state of affairs for the territory. Among a long list of unresolved issues, Ross found most vexing the continued refusal of the United States to recognize common-property land titles in the territory. Despite treaty guarantees and decades of adjudication, millions of acres in scores of common-property Spanish and Mexican land grants lingered in legal limbo. The treaty that had ended the U.S.-Mexican War obligated the United States to honor the community-land grants in New Mexico that were based on Spanish and Mexican property law. The land grants, Ross told the secretary of the interior, were “unimpeachable” and “as perfect and conclusive as can be found anywhere.” He found it inexcusable (a “serious embarrassment,” he called it) that thirty years of federal adjudication had failed to resolve the issue.<sup>12</sup> According to Ross, “public robbers” capitalized on the uncertainty in property claims. Fraudulent homestead, timber-culture, and preemption claims “have been thus absorbed into great cattle ranches, merely for the purpose of getting control of water courses and springs, and thus keep out settlers and small herds, and in others the lands have been thus stolen for purely speculative purposes.”<sup>13</sup>

The Ross report echoed previous warnings of land speculation and enclosures in New Mexico. Eight months prior to Ross’s report, the General Land Office (GLO) concluded a four-year inquiry into corruption and land fraud in New Mexico. Its investigation, which included the careful scrutiny of nearly every private land claim in the territory, implicated commercial cattle ranchers, railroad companies, territorial politicians, and federal officials in a coordinated campaign of wide-ranging land fraud throughout the territory that had resulted in thousands of acres of illegal enclosures.<sup>14</sup> According to the report, while land speculation plagued the entire territory of New Mexico, a pattern of public corruption and intense speculation focused in particular on the Las Vegas Land Grant commons. The Las Vegas Land Grant was particularly appealing to land speculators and commercial cattle operators for its vast grasslands, timber reserves, and rail connections. Investigators from the GLO uncovered a conspiracy that included the San Miguel County district attorney Miguel Salazar, commercial ranchers, land speculators, and federal officials. Salazar colluded with public officials on behalf of a cabal of large cattle ranchers in a scheme to consolidate control of the Las Vegas commons.

Despite Ross’s descriptions of bureaucratic malfeasance and the GLO’s evidence of systemic fraud in the administration of public lands, their analyses stopped short of a broader consideration of the social impact of speculative investment and the erosion of rural land tenure. Despite the growing racial and class antagonisms that came with the capitalist transformation of New Mexico, territorial and federal officials, along with commercial operators, were unprepared for the challenge posed by Las Gorras Blancas, a challenge rooted in the antagonisms developing as a function of the capitalist transformation of New Mexico.

### The Capitalist Transformation of New Mexico

By the time Las Gorras Blancas emerged in the late 1880s, forty years of global economic expansion had reached New Mexico and settled squarely on the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant. While land fraud likely exacerbated social conflict in 1880s San Miguel County, the emergence of a broad social movement in defense of common-property land-tenure arrangements reflected a broader set of social and economic shifts that came with commercial investment and land speculation in territorial New Mexico. While timber operators clear-cut the forests around Las Vegas, cattle operators flooded the open range with massive herds that turned New Mexico into a major livestock exporter. As railroad mileage increased, so, too, did commercial herds. Throughout this period homestead and timber-culture entries by commercial ranchers continued and further eroded common property claims to the Las Vegas Land Grant. Economic development in San Miguel County was thus a function of increased market access for New Mexico's resources fueled by new forms of credit. Between 1865 and 1900, fifteen hundred British companies blanketed the American West with venture capital.<sup>15</sup> In addition to railroad and cattle, mining investments contributed to the late nineteenth-century economic transformation in New Mexico and the intermountain West. Land speculators advertised investment opportunities in the "mountains of silver" found in New Mexico, and their exaggerations enticed European investment.<sup>16</sup> In the final forty years of the nineteenth century, British mining investments exceeded £77 million (\$417 million) in the intermountain American West.<sup>17</sup> Between 1886 and 1900, twelve British mining companies invested £1.3 million (\$6.3 million) in New Mexico.<sup>18</sup> The New Mexico Bureau of Immigration relentlessly advertised New Mexico's resource wealth, describing San Miguel County as possessing "the greatest and most varied natural resources [in the territory]." By the time of the Las Gorras Blancas raids, coalfield production exceeded 1 million tons in New Mexico, with values approaching \$2 million.<sup>19</sup>

A series of closely related economic and technological changes paved the way for the large-scale exploitation of New Mexico's natural resources. The technical achievements of railroad development and barbed wire fencing established the necessary conditions for commercial ranching, industrial timber production, and expanded mining. These technologies of capital were funded by, and contributed to, the expansion of new financial institutions that made speculative investments possible on various common-property land grants. These factors overwhelmed common-property relations, supplanted subsistence production, and integrated places like Las Vegas into a network of global financial markets.

Railroads arrived in New Mexico in the late 1870s as though chased into the territory by a stampede of finance capital. By 1885, following a span of only five years, more than eleven hundred miles of track had been constructed in New Mexico.<sup>20</sup> The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad bisected the Las Vegas Land Grant and concentrated speculative investment on the grant's nearly endless sea of

grazing lands. The arrival of railroads enticed investment in large-scale commercial ranching accomplished through massive enclosures made possible by new barbed wire fencing technologies.

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the lack of effective fencing materials and the cost of construction and maintenance bedeviled the western expansion of capitalist ranching. The smooth wire fences commonly used by prairie settlers proved ineffective on the large enclosures required in arid and semiarid western grasslands.<sup>21</sup> In the early 1870s Illinois-based merchants began to produce a variety of barbed wire fences for sale in the West. Barbed wire fencing served a variety of commercial ranching interests. The barbs limited damage by animals, thus reducing maintenance costs, and in less than a decade the technology—with its easy production methods, low capital investment, and minimal maintenance needs—had spread widely: by 1880 a million miles of barbed wire fenced the West.<sup>22</sup> Hundreds of miles of barbed wire crisscrossed northern New Mexico. By 1884 barbed wire fencing had produced wholesale enclosures throughout eastern and northern New Mexico.<sup>23</sup> The ubiquity of barbed wire closed off sheep trails and water holes throughout the upland north in New Mexico.

New transportation infrastructure and the ability to effectively and affordably enclose grazing lands spurred an increase in the circulation of finance capital in New Mexico, particularly in Las Vegas. While there were no banking institutions in New Mexico in 1870, by 1890 forty-six banks operated in the territory.<sup>24</sup> Newly opened territorial banks competed to fund speculative investments in land and cattle. Linked to finance capitalists in St. Louis, Chicago, and New York, New Mexico's nineteenth-century bankers absorbed huge capital investments from East Coast and European investors who sought to profit from New Mexico's resource bonanza. The first banks that opened in Las Vegas operated as a real estate syndicate. Speculators established banks, named themselves directors, and took out loans. Money poured into resource development: timber, mining, and cattle operations.<sup>25</sup>

The three banks that opened in Las Vegas between 1876 and 1890 financed the local economic expansion brought by the railroad.<sup>26</sup> The San Miguel National Bank of Las Vegas advanced loans for livestock investments at 18 percent interest rates.<sup>27</sup> Despite these high interest rates, the low cost of land and labor guaranteed huge profit margins. Through the loans large cattle operators in San Miguel County rapidly expanded herd sizes. The Scottish rancher Thomas Carson described early 1880s Las Vegas as “wide open. Real estate was moving freely, prices advancing, speculation rife; and infectious.”<sup>28</sup> As competition for huge profits increased, competition fueled by easy access to credit and based on the free use of the commons, highly leveraged commercial ranchers fenced the commons in a scramble to protect their investments.

By 1889 New Mexico was fully integrated into national and international



markets for investment and resource extraction. More than a decade of railroad development, the nearly complete enclosure of the common lands, and the expansion of credit markets had transformed property relations and land tenure on the Las Vegas Land Grant commons. Massive cattle herds owned by ranchers from Europe and the East Coast dominated the ranges around Las Vegas. The European cattle baron Wilson Waddingham consolidated over twelve thousand acres in fraudulent homestead claims along the Ute Creek and the Canadian River. By the 1880s Waddingham controlled nearly all important access points to springs and watercourses in huge swaths of San Miguel County.<sup>29</sup> As the number of cattle and ranchers increased, the competition for profits precipitated sell-offs by smaller ranchers and additional waves of enclosures. Established cattle operators and existing homesteaders fenced in more and more of the commons in a scramble to protect investments and property claims. “Seeing that it was quite hopeless to run cattle profitably on the open-range system,” Carson fenced one hundred thousand acres in the 1890s in a pattern that played itself out across San Miguel County.<sup>30</sup> Despite increased freight and loan costs, investments in large herds remained profitable for the largest ranching operators as the massive enclosures kept production costs low.

The 1890 San Miguel tax assessment recorded the new economic disparity in the county.<sup>31</sup> Waddingham, who recorded no property claims in the county, owned 22,500 of the 149,655 cattle there. Two small, Anglo-dominated enclaves of newly arrived economic elites accounted for nearly half of all cattle grazing on the Las Vegas Land Grant—2,356 cattle per resident. One tax assessment precinct, dominated by large cattle operations and territorial elites, reported a herd that exceeded 40,000 head of cattle. Commercial operators overwhelmed subsistence producers, who averaged barely more than 16 head of cattle. This growing disparity produced sharp divisions in Las Vegas and fueled popular discontent among the heirs of the Mexican recipients of the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant.

The enclosures and commercial herds imposed a new commercial and industrial geography on a landscape previously organized around common-property land-tenure arrangements and subsistence production. New fences and railroads impeded access not only to water holes and grasslands but also to churches and schools. The social interruptions wrought by these transformations contributed to popular discontent among small-scale producers. As the commons slowly disappeared behind barbed wire fences, frustrated smallholders were increasingly forced into wage jobs with the railroad or local commercial ranchers.

### **Resistance and the Origins of Las Gorras Blancas**

Las Gorras Blancas began cutting fences only after the collapse of legal efforts to defend common-property land tenure on the Las Vegas Land Grant commons. The legal struggle over the commons began in 1873 when a group of economic and polit-

ical elites claimed all authority over the land grant, including the right to distribute land to new settlers. The U.S. Congress had confirmed the grant and its common property in 1860 to the Town of Las Vegas. Congress, however, failed to explain in the confirmation exactly who or what comprised the “Town of Las Vegas.” While the 1873 attempt to seize the land grant failed, it had the effect of clouding common property legal claims for the grant. As a result of the uncertainty created by Congress, many settlers tried to protect farming and grazing plots by fencing in small portions of the grant. In the early 1880s a number of commercial cattle operators purchased recently fenced tracts of common lands and asserted private ownership.

This pattern continued until 1887 when three brothers—Jose, Francisco, and Pablo Padilla—each fenced in 160-acre sections of the grant commons. The Padillas feared that the expansion of commercial grazing threatened collective resource access to the commons. They argued in court that grazing by nonheirs on the grant commons created uncertainty over the legal ownership of the Las Vegas Land Grant. The unique threat to collective resource use prompted an unusual solution. Their status as land grant heirs, they claimed, gave them the legal right to fence the common lands on behalf of other grant members. The fences, they claimed, did not constitute a conversion to private lands but rather a defense against commercial enclosure. Legal opposition to the Padillas came from Philip Milhiser, the representative of an investment consortium that relied on enclosures and advocated the privatization of the land grant commons.

*Milhiser v. Padilla* pitted familiar enemies in the struggle for New Mexico land grants against each other. Milhiser represented the interests of the Las Vegas Land and Cattle Company, a cattle, timber, and real estate corporation. The Padillas represented local land grant members. Elisha Long, the chief justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, heard the district court case. Long appointed a special master to referee the dispute and recommend a course of action. The July 1888 referee’s report favored the right of the Padillas to fence the commons. Despite the recommendation Long spent the next year in deliberation. It was during the limbo of Long’s lengthy delay that a number of cattle operators erected massive enclosures on the grant commons. One cattle operator fenced in more than ten thousand acres.<sup>32</sup> In addition, speculators continued to make homestead and timber-culture claims to the Santa Fe Land Office for land around Las Vegas.<sup>33</sup> Long finally rendered his decision in November 1889. In it, he concluded that the land grant belonged to the Town of Las Vegas (despite ongoing uncertainty over who or what group represented the interests of the “Town of Las Vegas”). Most interesting, Long concluded that the Padillas’ fences were allowable under the terms of the original Mexican grant. In doing so, Long stretched the definition of agricultural land—that portion set aside for settlement—to include also the common grazing land, leaving open the possibility for the legal privatization of common property.

Las Gorras Blancas activities began during Long’s deliberations and, without

a legal solution to the enclosures, increased through the summer and fall of 1889. By May, reports of fence cutting by huge parties of hooded horsemen swamped territorial and county officials. District Attorney Salazar, an important ally and accommodator of land speculators, moved swiftly in defense of commercial interests. In early summer, he brought twenty-six men to trial on charges of fence cutting and property damage, but the lack of witnesses to back up circumstantial evidence doomed his efforts. The first trial ended in an acquittal on all counts. Although Salazar did not know it then, it would be the closest he would ever come to a conviction against fence cutting on the Las Vegas commons.

Less than two months later, a series of dramatic attacks on the fences of prominent political leaders and wealthy ranchers announced the full arrival of Las Gorras Blancas. Night riders cut miles of barbed wire on a ranch along the Tecolote River owned by two wealthy Las Vegas merchants. The homes of the surveyor general and the captain of the militia burst into flames and burned to the ground. A former governor and two European ranchers found miles of fences cut and scores of fence posts destroyed.<sup>34</sup> In August, night riders destroyed miles of fences and posts and uprooted the crops of the county sheriff, Lorenzo Lopez. The sheriff, to the dismay of local business interests, complied with Las Gorras Blancas' demands and removed remaining wire and posts himself. Letters poured into the governor's office from commercial ranchers. "I have appealed to the sheriff of our county" wrote one rancher,

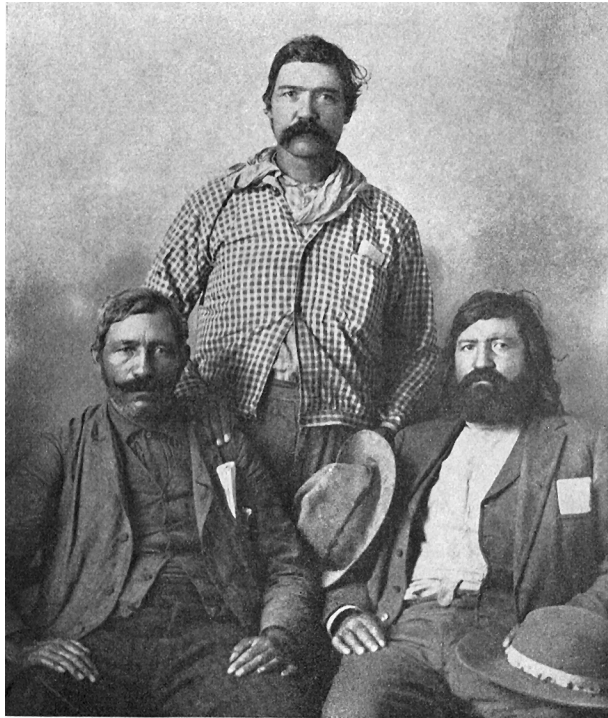
but am doubtful if any efficient protection will be given me, as the so called White Caps have been doing about as they see fit in this county for nearly the year past . . . about two weeks ago notice was given to our sheriff that if he did not remove a fence which was around some land he claimed to own, it would be cut. I know you will be astonished when I say that he immediately removed the fence and brought the wire and the gates into town.<sup>35</sup>

In November, the railroad agent in nearby Rowe, New Mexico, stormed out of his house with a loaded shotgun ready to confront Las Gorras Blancas as they destroyed his fence. Amid a barrage of return fire, he fled back "into his house to save his life," and barely survived. The summer ended with White Cap attacks on the fences and property of the Indian agent and the county tax assessor.

Local officials scrambled to make sense of the group. Political leaders and local newspapers sought an explanation for the rise of Las Gorras Blancas in the rapid increase in Knights of Labor chapters, which suddenly seemed to pop up everywhere in San Miguel County. Where Knight chapters appeared, they noted, Las Gorras Blancas activities followed. The focus on the Knights of Labor as a front for Las Gorras Blancas activities drew attention to three brothers, Juan José, Pablo, and Nicanor Herrera. All three were prominent union members and Knights organizers in San Miguel County.

Figure 3. Juan José, Pablo, and Nicanor Herrera (from left to right). This photo is believed to have been taken during the period when they were union organizers in New Mexico.

Source: Charles Siringo, *Cowboy Detective: A True Story of Twenty-two Years with a World-famous Detective Agency* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1912)



By the late 1880s the Knights had become one of the largest labor unions in the United States.<sup>36</sup> The union found success in the mid-1880s organizing the coal-mining and lumber camps of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Juan José Herrera had spent years working in and organizing coal and lumber camps throughout the Rocky Mountain West. When the Herrera brothers first organized Knights of Labor chapters in New Mexico, only three Knight chapters existed. By the spring of 1890 they had organized twenty more. Nearly all operated under the Spanish name *Los Caballeros del Trabajo*.

Intense organizing efforts by *Los Caballeros* and expanded activities by *Las Gorras Blancas* dominated local politics in late 1889 and early 1890. Territorial and federal officials, convinced of *Caballero/Las Gorras Blancas* connections, began a campaign to stop both the epidemic in fence cutting and the increase in union organizing among land-grant members. Salazar pursued legal harassment as a strategy. He ordered the arrest of twenty-three people after an October grand jury relying on flimsy evidence had indicted forty-seven men, including the Herrerias, on fence-cutting charges.<sup>37</sup> In the days following the arrests, crowds began to appear outside the Las Vegas jail. On December 11, 1889, the sheriff telegraphed the governor, Bradford Prince, pleading for “fifty rifles and ammunition for same. The kind you keep for the militia” to defend the jail from “a mob over one hundred strong.”<sup>38</sup> Salazar responded by arresting Juan José and Nicanor Herrera. The arrests further

inflamed supporters. “The three leaders of fence cutters just captured and in jail,” a colleague of Salazar’s cabled the governor; “large parties of their friends coming into town. Trouble expected.”<sup>39</sup> The crowd swelled over a tense weekend, but the violence that Salazar expected never materialized. After three days in jail all suspected fence cutters were bailed out and welcomed into the arms of a crowd of over three hundred supporters and family members. With children holding the hands of the released men, nearly all members of various Caballeros chapters, their families, and supporters marched through the streets of Las Vegas in an impromptu parade waving American flags and singing the abolitionist and labor song “John Brown’s Body.”

The public expression of solidarity for the suspected fence cutters encouraged a new pattern of overtly political demonstrations by Las Gorras Blancas. In December 1889, and again in March and August 1890, large groups of masked night riders rode into Las Vegas and followed the December parade route into the plaza. There they posted and distributed copies of a handbill, titled “Nuestra plataforma” (“Our Platform”), describing their aims.<sup>40</sup> The manifesto identified the agents and tactics of economic exploitation, enumerated the potential consequences that motivated the group’s actions, and described their political goals:

Our purpose is to protect the rights of the people in general; and especially those of the helpless classes. . . . We want no ‘land grabbers’ or obstructionists of any sort to interfere. We will watch them. . . . If the old system should continue, death would be a relief to our sufferings. And for our rights our lives are the least we can pledge. . . . If they persist in their usual methods retribution will be their reward.

The tactics of Las Gorras Blancas and the rhetoric of the manifesto suggested that the group was not a reformist movement but instead a direct threat to the newly emerging economic order. Salazar described “Nuestra plataforma” to the governor as “anarchical, revolutionary and communistic.”<sup>41</sup>

In February the *Las Vegas Optic* newspaper advocated a compromise resolution to the fence cutting:

While the Optic does not approve of the acts of those who have been engaged in the cutting of those unlawful fences on the grant, yet we do not wholly condemn their course but believe that it has been largely and usually those that have improperly taken the law into their own hands. . . . Let us then unite . . . and preserve and protect this great property from all further depredation, that it may be kept intact and held for the common benefit of all our citizens.<sup>42</sup>

Despite condemnations and pleas for compromise, Las Gorras Blancas attacks in early 1890 expanded to include new targets among the large timber and tie operators cutting trees on the grant commons for the railroad. On March 6, 1890, three hundred masked and armed night riders ripped up railroad ties and cut



telegraph lines. In the attack they destroyed six thousand ties.<sup>43</sup> The escalation of attacks and increase in targets beyond merely fences frightened political and commercial elites, who again flooded the governor with letters demanding government protection and weapons to combat the White Caps. On March 29, the deputy sheriff who operated a ranch along the Upper Pecos River wrote a letter to the governor with a series of claims of violence and criminal activity by Las Gorras Blancas, including “robbing the stores in the small towns and threatening the lives of those who oppose them.”<sup>44</sup> The deputy sheriff pleaded to the governor for “not less than one dozen rifles with ammunition” to defend the fences along the Pecos. Despite increased concern among politically elite San Miguel residents, the White Caps continued to target wealthy cattle operators. In April they cut the fences of the probate judge Manuel C. de Baca, who promptly wrote to the governor and demanded that a militia be raised to put down the White Caps.<sup>45</sup>

Political pressure increased, but the April 1890 trial for suspected fence cutters arrested in December never happened. The charges were dismissed when the sheriff failed to locate the grand jury witnesses. A furious Salazar speculated that “those witnesses have been killed and disposed of by the white caps.”<sup>46</sup> Repeating the scene of four months earlier, the defendants spilled out of the Las Vegas courthouse and into the arms of cheering supporters.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, attacks on the railroad continued. Groups of masked riders stopped teamsters hauling ties for the railroad and ordered them to charge more for their labor. In August 1890 railroad workers found a notice posted to a depot and section house that read, “to all section foreman and operators, you are advised to leave here at once otherwise you will not be able to do so.” A number of employees quit work following the posting. The railroad pleaded with territorial officials for protection.<sup>48</sup> The attacks on the railroad corresponded with new attacks on wealthy ranchers. In July Waddingham found a note, written in Spanish, posted on some of the fences that enclosed his twelve-thousand-acre ranch:

Sir:

This notice is with the object of requesting you to coil up your wire as soon as possible from the North and South sides. They are fences which are damaging the unhappy people and we request you further to coil up your wire as soon as you can to the agricultural land, and if you do not do it, you will suffer the consequences from us.

Your Servants,  
The White Caps<sup>49</sup>

By August no rancher or timber and tie operator working on the land grant had escaped attention. The effect was a total shutdown of railroad construction and cattle operations that rippled through the local economy. “You will see,” wrote one merchant in a letter to various U.S. senators, “that the R.R. Co. has ceased to buy

any more ties in this Territory, cutting us short of an annual expenditure by [the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe] of \$100,000 annually.”<sup>50</sup>

The secretary of the interior, James Noble, ordered Governor Prince to “enforce private rights” and put a stop to the “White Cap Outrages.”<sup>51</sup> Noble was under constant pressure from various senators and a prominent Washington, D.C. attorney named Benjamin F. Butler, who had himself fenced four hundred thousand acres of land in New Mexico.<sup>52</sup> Butler had sent an agent to New Mexico in June of 1890 to investigate White Cap activities.<sup>53</sup> The agent’s 1890 report had alarmed Butler, who then spent the better part of a year lobbying federal officials to defend commercial interests. Butler’s appeals for federal intervention relied on racialized arguments to suggest that only labor agitators could be responsible for the campaign of Las Gorras Blancas. “You must recollect,” he told the secretary, “that these are Mexicans; that the Mexicans in New Mexico, with the exception of perhaps five per cent, are the most ignorant people on the face of the earth.”<sup>54</sup>

But letters to the governor and to Secretary Noble from political opportunists and outraged commercial ranchers competed with others that blamed large ranching interests for unrest in the county. One writer reminded the governor that “many parties fenced in big tracts of land in the Las Vegas grant, shutting off water and wood from people settled on parcels of these lands long ago and thereby left without means of support.”<sup>55</sup> The judge who had previously dismissed fence-cutting indictments located the origins of unrest in “the establishment of large landed estates, or baronial feudalism” in San Miguel County.<sup>56</sup>

In the early debate over the origins of White Cap activities, Governor Prince was initially unmoved by the demands from hard-liners like Butler. While he acknowledged that the problem of fence cutting posed a serious threat to resource extraction and railroad development in the county, he remained skeptical that the White Caps constituted any real menace. “While an unfortunate feeling exists [in Las Vegas] arising principally from the unsettled titles to land grants and the belief of a large body of people that they have rights in common in certain grants on which others have been fencing considerable areas,” Prince wrote the secretary, “yet there is naturally much exaggeration about the matter and that every kind of wrong doing however committed is now very naturally attributed to the so-called ‘White Caps.’”<sup>57</sup>

The national Knights of Labor and the three local Anglo-controlled Knights chapters, however, lobbied the governor to oppose Las Gorras Blancas. The tactics, particularly threats against workers who refused to follow Las Gorras Blancas demands, brought the Herreras into conflict with the local chapters and the national headquarters. In July, Juan José Herrera, representing local Caballeros chapters, offered to meet with the governor to discuss Los Caballeros. Herrera maintained that there were no formal links between Los Caballeros and Las Gorras Blancas, and he denied that he or any member of Los Caballeros played any role in Las Gor-

ras Blancas activities. Prince traveled to Las Vegas in July 1890, where he spent nearly a month conferring with business interests. He made a speech to the Las Vegas Commercial Club, where one merchant took the opportunity to present the governor with a bill for damages done by the White Caps.<sup>58</sup> Prince finally met with Juan José and Nicanor Herrera in August, during the same week that Las Gorras Blancas posted the notices in train depot houses ordering section men, then making \$1.40 per day, off the job.<sup>59</sup> Prince met with leaders of the Anglo-controlled Las Vegas assembly of the Knights the following day. The meetings convinced Prince that the Herreras were connected to Las Gorras Blancas. He encouraged the local Anglo Knights to write to the Knights of Labor national president Terrence Powderly: "The land grabbers fenced up our public domain, whatever they chose, without the shadow of a title, or if they purchased a tract of land with a title, they would fence in ten times as much as they bought," their letter began. "About this time a renewal of the commission of Brother J. J. Herrera came to hand, and as organization proceeded, so also did fence cutting. . . . Now who these fence cutters are we are not prepared to say. But the Mexican people who are being organized as K of L, are of the poorer class and consequently they are more ignorant."<sup>60</sup> The letter went on to ask Powderly to suspend new charters for Knight assemblies in New Mexico, particularly those organized by Herrera, until a resolution to White Cap resistance could be achieved.

After finding success in locating opposition to Las Gorras Blancas within the Anglo Knights of Labor chapter, the first group outside local business interests to publicly condemn the White Caps, the governor called a public meeting to find support for the establishment of "a committee to take steps to protect property and especially to obtain testimony on which the authorities could act."<sup>61</sup> The governor was convinced that "the name of the Knights of Labor has been used as a cloak for the dissemination of lawless ideas and the organization of a secret society generally known as White Cap."<sup>62</sup> He credited Juan José Herrera with organizing Caballeros chapters as a front for Las Gorras Blancas. "He has recently organized about 20 assemblies of Knights of Labor in San Miguel County, which are still unchartered; and it is generally believed that at the same time he has disseminated the ideas and created the secret organization which have resulted in the depredations in question. At all events the outrages have followed in his track in a very noticeable manner."<sup>63</sup>

Prince hoped the public meeting would serve as a forum to "devise means to stop the depredations and punish the wrong-doers."<sup>64</sup> Instead, angry land-grant heirs excoriated the governor and local business interests. Attendees denounced local business interests as "land grabbers" and praised "those who were defending the rights of the people against them."<sup>65</sup> Local residents, one after the other, complained bitterly about the enclosures and cattle operators who fenced the commons. The governor came away shocked. "More than one half of the people of that town," he wrote, "including many of those whom we would call the best citizens, sympa-

thize with the fence cutting on the Las Vegas Grant, and this prevents that strong public sentiment which we ought to have as an aid in suppressing these outrages.”<sup>66</sup> Despite the popular support and local anger Prince found in Las Vegas, his report to the Interior Department recommended that the president either dispatch troops to New Mexico to restore order or hire Pinkerton detectives to infiltrate the White Caps. “There can be no doubt that there is a secret oath-bound organization in San Miguel County,” Prince wrote to Noble. “It is believed to be confined entirely to natives of New Mexico and almost entirely to the most ignorant class. As nearly as can be ascertained a few active and educated men have arranged this organization, working on the idea that the common people are being deprived of their rights.”<sup>67</sup>

As federal attention on Las Gorras Blancas increased in the fall of 1890, Juan José Herrera and others shifted from labor organizing to party politics when they joined the Partido del Pueblo Unido (The United People’s Party), a political third party composed largely of reformists and union activists. The move by the chief organizers of Los Caballeros into party politics coincided with an abrupt end to White Cap activities. That the end of White Cap attacks would accompany the beginning of party activities stoked speculation that the Herreras were indeed behind Las Gorras Blancas activities. There was, however, another possible explanation for the end of fence cutting. By the fall of 1890 every single fence that had enclosed the Las Vegas Land Grant commons had been cut, and none had survived reconstruction. Initially, the strategic shift to party politics proved effective. During the fall elections the entire slate of Partido candidates was elected, including Juan José Herrera as the county’s probate judge and Pablo Herrera as the county’s representative to the territorial legislature.

Two events in February of 1891, however, unraveled the political momentum of the Partido and undermined the possibility that popular enthusiasm for Las Gorras Blancas and its aims would translate into radical change or even political reform. The first came at the close of the legislative session in February, when Pablo Herrera resigned from the legislature and left the party in disgust. One session convinced him that neither the legislature nor the Partido could be a vehicle for radical political and economic changes. “The time I spent in the penitentiary was more enjoyable than the time I spent here,” he said in remarks to the entire legislature. “There is more honesty in the halls of the Territorial prison than in the halls of the legislature.”<sup>68</sup> Returning to San Miguel County, he resumed the labor organizing that had first inspired grassroots opposition to resource extractive industrial development of the Las Vegas Land Grant commons. Territorial officials feared Pablo Herrera’s organizing would lead to a revival of White Cap activities in the county. Not long after his return to Las Vegas, a deputy sheriff gunned him down as he walked unarmed along the street in front of the courthouse. There were no charges pending against Herrera at the time of the shooting. The deputy was not charged with any crime.

Herrera's violent death signaled the beginning of a broad backlash against Las Gorras Blancas, Los Caballeros, and the Partido. The climax came with a second shooting in late February, when unknown shooters raked the offices of Thomas Catron, a prominent territorial lawyer, politician, and land speculator, with gunfire. Prince used the shooting as a pretext to infiltrate the Partido and Los Caballeros. For the job he hired the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, a union-busting firm notorious for its use of labor spies and agents provocateurs.<sup>69</sup> The Pinkerton operative Charles Siringo spent the summer of 1891 investigating Los Caballeros and the Herrera brothers. Unfortunately for Prince, what Siringo lacked in counterintelligence skills he made up for in bluster and self-promotion. He publicized fantastic claims that he had infiltrated the White Caps, befriended Nicanor Herrera, joined various secret societies, and uncovered links between Las Gorras Blancas, the Knights of Labor, and the Partido. While Siringo's claims fanned the flames of anti-White Cap sentiment, particularly among conservative newspaper editors, Prince refused to pursue legal action. Siringo's evidence, more spin than substance, was based on a "partial confession" he claimed to have taken from Nicanor, along with endless unsubstantiated anecdotes and circumstantial evidence.<sup>70</sup> While Prince refused to pursue legal remedies, the U.S. attorney for the territory sought grand-jury indictments for fence cutters based on a separate and lengthy federal investigation. But like Siringo's investigation and previous criminal cases against local land-grant activists, the testimony before the grand jury was comprised of unsubstantiated claims by various settlers who themselves had fenced dubious homestead claims on the commons. The grand jury refused to make any indictments.<sup>71</sup>

Where territorial and federal officials failed, however, San Miguel's merchant and commercial class succeeded. A reactionary group called the United Protection Association aggressively defended commercial interests and painted antibusiness and antienlosure proponents as agitators and opponents of progress. In the wake of constant denunciations by conservative political leaders and business-friendly newspapers, the reaction covered the territory. Newspapers throughout the territory of New Mexico frequently editorialized against the Partido and Las Gorras Blancas. Under the weight of constant public attacks, the Partido del Pueblo Unido failed to translate support for Los Caballeros and Las Gorras Blancas into a political constituency.<sup>72</sup> The momentum that had propelled Las Gorras Blancas into a political movement dissolved in the face of the coordinated attacks by territorial officials and commercial interests. Following the assassination of Pablo Herrera and the erosion in political support for the Partido, commercial interests reestablished political and economic authority over the land grant. By the mid-1890s barbed wire fences had returned to the commons; investments in livestock and railroad development also again corresponded to pre-Gorras Blancas levels.



## Conclusion

Resistance to range enclosures and the spread of capitalist ranching was not unique to New Mexico. From Texas to Montana, the GLO noted with astonishment the scale and scope of violent resistance to range enclosures throughout the American West.<sup>73</sup> The fence cutting that began in Las Vegas in 1889 was part of a series of localized agrarian protest movements, or White Capism, that stretched from Indiana to the western territories and states. The name came from the common use among night riders of white hoods, which they used to conceal their identity. The reactionary White Caps in Indiana, a forerunner to the early twentieth-century Ku Klux Klan, operated as moral enforcers of rural traditions amid dramatic social and economic changes.<sup>74</sup> The conservatism of the movement in Indiana gave way to more radical elements in the West. Fence cutting first erupted in Texas in 1883 where small ranchers, desperate for water during an extended drought, created local night-riding secret societies to cut the fences of large estates and return free access to water and grasslands. As the movement spread west, the iconic white hoods were often the only similarity between the more radical groups in places like New Mexico and the conservative White Caps in Indiana. In New Mexico, night-riding activities reflected local patterns of resistance to the social upheaval that followed the arrival of barbed wire fencing, railroad development, and large-scale, commercial ranching.

The fence cutters in New Mexico reflected similar antifencing sentiments as did those in Texas, but theirs also included an explicit challenge to the class of merchants and commercial ranchers and their newly emerging economic order founded on the coercive power of the barbed wire fence to establish durable private property rights. Las Gorras Blancas destroyed hundreds of miles of barbed wire fences, thousands of railroad ties and telegraph lines, and supported the organizing efforts of a new urban working class throughout the county. They developed a sophisticated critique of political economic changes that served as the foundation of an eighteen-month campaign against the commercial and industrial transformation of New Mexico. As a clandestine group of night-riding fence cutters, Las Gorras Blancas interrupted the commercial and industrial expansion that relied on range enclosures. These actions defended common-property land claims and subsistence production relations and challenged new industrial wage relations.

The focus of Las Gorras Blancas on both rural and urban organizing and direct action was a strategy rooted in the particular political economy of late nineteenth-century Las Vegas. Years of economic expansion by grazing and timber operators based on the large-scale exploitation of natural resources on the Las Vegas Land Grant had eroded access to water and range for subsistence producers. Between 1850 and 1890 increased investment in commercial grazing operations relied on unfettered access to the expansive resources on the Town of Las Vegas Land Grant. As competition over those resources increased following the arrival of the railroad, commercial speculators conspired with territorial authorities to priva-

tize common property. The enclosures that followed railroad expansion expropriated subsistence grazing resources. By the time homestead entries on the Las Vegas Land Grant flooded the Santa Fe land office in the early 1880s, 5.2 million sheep grazed New Mexico's grasslands, three times the number prior to the arrival of the railroad.<sup>75</sup> When Las Gorras Blancas were at their peak, more than 1.3 million cattle turned New Mexico's rangelands into a factory of meat production.<sup>76</sup> The increase in sheep and cattle numbers in New Mexico reflected a transition from subsistence to capitalist meat production that placed enormous pressure on what had previously been a pastoral production economy. The enclosures turned rural smallholders into ranch hands and railroad workers.

Where Las Gorras Blancas reacted to the enclosures with organized political resistance based on union organizing and direct action, their absence in the mid-1890s opened the door for bandits and brigands, like the notorious Vicente Silva, to replace social protest with "a carnival of crime."<sup>77</sup> For conservative newspapers and territorial politicians the fact that many of the members of Los Caballeros became members of Silva's La Sociedad de Bandidos de Nuevo Mexico was final proof that Las Gorras Blancas was nothing but a criminal syndicate. "Gorras Blanco [*sic*], La Sociedad de Bandidos de Nueva Mejico [*sic*], and the Partido del Pueblo Unido are one and the same," wrote the prominent Las Vegas politician Miguel Otero.<sup>78</sup> These conclusions conveniently ignored the underlying violence of the enclosures and the political and economic focus of Las Gorras Blancas and Partido activities. The many local skills for industrial interests in industrializing New Mexico were content to connect the campaign of property damage conducted by Las Gorras Blancas to the random rural violence practiced by the Silva gang. Local conservative newspapers became particularly adept at playing a speculative game of connect-the-dots: "Commencing in fence-cutting, it progressed to barn-burning, and culminated in murder, while it also degenerated into larceny both petty and grand."<sup>79</sup> Critics of Las Gorras Blancas, such as Otero, ignored the political foundation and broad public support for the group's opposition to enclosures and were blind to the role played by federal and territorial efforts in undermining the Partido and Las Gorras Blancas. Political and economic elites blamed Las Gorras Blancas for the increase in rural violence and the rise of criminal gangs in an argument that self-servingly ignored the social and economic dislocations that followed the forced shift from subsistence to industrial production on the Las Vegas Land Grant and the waves of enclosures that followed.

### Notes

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1. For a review of the patterns, tactics, and consequences of land speculation during the territorial adjudication of Spanish and Mexican property claims in New Mexico, see David Correia, "Making Destiny Manifest: United States Territorial Expansion and the Dispossession of Two Mexican Property Claims in New Mexico," *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009): 87–103.
2. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959).
3. Andrew Schlesinger, "Las Gorras Blancas, 1889–1891," *Journal of Mexican American History* 1 (1971): 87–143; Robert W. Larson, "The White Caps of New Mexico: A Study of Ethnic Militancy in the Southwest," *Pacific Historical Review* 44 (1975): 171–85; Robert Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: "The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).
4. Schlesinger, "Las Gorras Blancas," 90.
5. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest*.
6. Mary Romero, "Class Struggle and Resistance against the Transformation of Land Ownership and Usage in Northern New Mexico: The Case of Las Gorras Blancas," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 26 (2006): 90.
7. Anselmo Arellano, "The People's Movement: Las Gorras Blancas," in *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, ed. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David Maciel (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 60.
8. Romero, "Class Struggle and Resistance," 88.
9. *Ibid.*, 109.
10. For analyses of identity, social, and political relations and political violence in New Mexico, see Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Andres Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a review of pre-nineteenth-century economic development in New Mexico, see Ross Frank, *From Settler to Citizen: New Mexican Economic Development and the Creation of Vecino Society, 1750–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
11. *Report of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), in New Mexico State Records Center and Archive (NMSRCA), Santa Fe, New Mexico: Territorial Archives of New Mexico (TANM), microfilm roll 102: frames 279–84.
12. *Report of the Governor of New Mexico*, NMSRCA: TANM, 102:281.
13. *Ibid.*, 102:283. The Timber Culture Act of 1873, the Homestead Act of 1862, and the Preemption Act of 1841 provided for the alienation and distribution of public lands in newly acquired territories. As Ross noted in his report, and as the General Land Office demonstrated (see note 16) in their 1885 investigation, federal officials routinely approved timber-culture, homestead and preemption claims within the boundaries of existing Spanish and Mexican land grants in New Mexico.
14. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior transmitting copies of reports upon the subject of fraudulent acquisition of titles to land in New Mexico, March 3, 1885, Senate Report, 48th Congress, 2d sess., Ex. Doc. No. 106.
15. O. Winther, "Promoting the American West in England, 1856–1890," *Journal of Economic History* 16 (1956): 506–13.
16. C. Spence, "British Investment and the American Mining Frontier," *New Mexico Historical Review* 36 (1961): 121–37.

17. C. Spence, "When the Pound Sterling Went West: British Investments and the American Mineral Frontier," *Journal of Economic History* 16 (1956): 482–92. The conversion into dollars is derived from the average exchange rate from 1860 to 1900 of U.S. \$5.42 = £ 1; see L.H. Officer, "Dollar-Pound Exchange Rate from 1791," *Measuring Worth*, 2010, [www.measuringworth.org/exchangepond](http://www.measuringworth.org/exchangepond).
18. Spence, "British Investment and the American Mining Frontier," 137. The conversion is derived from the average exchange rate from 1886 to 1900 of \$4.87 = £ 1.
19. G. L. Seligman, "The El Paso and Northeastern Railroad's Economic Impact on Central New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 61 (1986): 217–31. The figures are in nineteenth-century dollars.
20. David Myrick, *New Mexico's Railroads: An Historical Survey* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).
21. E. Hayter, "Barbed Wire Fencing—A Prairie Invention: Its Rise and Influence in the Western States," *Agricultural History* 13 (1939): 189–207.
22. *Ibid.*, 191.
23. *Ibid.*, 196. Hayter based his claims of wholesale enclosures on various newspaper reports from the period.
24. Ralph Edgel, "A Brief History of Banking in New Mexico," Report 39, Bureau of Business Research, University of New Mexico (1962), 6.
25. Larry Schweikart, "Early Banking in New Mexico from the Civil War to the Roaring Twenties," *New Mexico Historical Review* 63 (1988): 1–25.
26. Edgel, "Brief History of Banking in New Mexico," 7.
27. E. Rogers and S. B. Elkins, "Business in New Mexico's Early Banking Era, 1873–1875," *New Mexico Historical Review* 70 (1995): 67–76.
28. Quoted in L. Harrison, "Thomas Simpson Carson, New Mexico Rancher," *New Mexico Historical Review* 42 (1967): 127–43.
29. V. Westphall, *The Public Domain in New Mexico, 1854–1891* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1965).
30. Harrison, "Thomas Simpson Carson," 135.
31. San Miguel County Assessments, 1887–1890, NMSRCA.
32. August 12, 1890, letter from Territorial Governor L. Bradford Prince to Secretary of the Interior John Noble, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:640. As a territory, New Mexico's Supreme Court was part of the federal judiciary.
33. August 25, 1890, letter from San Miguel County Commission Chairman Stephen Booth to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:661.
34. June 26, 1890, report to Governor Prince, NMSRCA: Prince Papers, 121:580–81.
35. July 22, 1890, letter to Governor Prince, NMSRCA: Prince Papers, 121:586–87.
36. For the Knights of Labor, see Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Jason Kaufman, "Rise and Fall of a Nation of Joiners," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 (2001): 553–79. For the Knights in New Mexico, see Robert Larson, "The Knights of Labor and Native Protest in New Mexico," in *Labor in New Mexico: Unions, Strikes, and Social History*, ed. Robert Kern (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 31–52.
37. July 25, 1890, letter from Salazar to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:590.
38. December 11, 1899, telegram from Lorenzo Lopez to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:572–73.
39. December 13, 1889, telegram from E. W. Wynkoop to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:574.
40. August 8, 1890, handbill, NMSRCA: Interior Department Territorial Papers, 8:625.

41. July 25, 1890, Salazar to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:591.
42. *Las Vegas Optic*, February 1, 1890, NMSRCA.
43. June 26, 1890, report to Governor Prince, NMSRCA: Prince Papers, 121:580–81.
44. March 29, 1890, letter from Deputy Sheriff Joseph Trumbly to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:575–76.
45. April 15, 1890, letter from C. de Baca to Prince, NMSRCA: Prince Papers, 121:577–78.
46. July 25, 1890, Salazar to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:591.
47. August 8, 1890, letter from John Martin, Frank Ogden, and J. B. Allen to Knights of Labor National President Terrence Powderly, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:621–23.
48. August 11, 1890, Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway memo, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:628–29.
49. Undated notice, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:584.
50. August 3, 1890, letter from J. W. Barney to Senator P. B. Plumb, NMSRCA: Interior Department Territorial Papers, 8:601–4.
51. See July 23, 1890, letter from Prince to New Mexico Chief Justice O'Brien, and July 28, 1890, letter from Secretary Noble to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:589 and 607; and July 15, 1890, letter from Benjamin F. Butler to Noble, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:563.
52. Larson, "White Caps of New Mexico," 177.
53. July 9, 1890, letter from Butler to Noble, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:565.
54. July 21, 1890, letter from O. D. Bartlett to Butler, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:621.
55. July 21, 1890, letter from F. Leduc to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:594–95.
56. July 30, 1890, letter from Judge James O'Brien to Prince, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:614–15.
57. July 23, 1890, letter from Prince to Noble, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:582–83.
58. NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:610.
59. August 12, 1890, letter from Prince to General Nelson Miles, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:614 and 634.
60. August 18, 1890, letter to Powderly, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:621–23.
61. August 12, 1890, letter from Prince to Noble, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:639–43.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. August 20, 1890, letter from Prince to Noble, NMSRCA: Interior Department, 8:639–40.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. Schlesinger, "Las Gorras Blancas, 1889–1891," 123.
69. Tobias Duran, "Francisco Chavez, Thomas B. Catron, and Organized Political Violence in Santa Fe in the 1890s," *New Mexico Historical Review* 59 (1984): 291–310.
70. Charles Siringo, *Cowboy Detective: A True Story of Twenty-Two Years with a World-Famous Detective Agency* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey, 1912).
71. December 15, 1891, letter from U.S. Attorney Eugene Fiske, NMSRCA: TANM, 121:671–72.
72. For a review of the broad political backlash against Las Gorras Blancas, Los Caballeros, and the Partido, see Anselmo Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin: Evolutionary Transitions of Las Vegas Grandes and Its Pobladores" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 1990).
73. Hayter, "Barbed Wire Fencing," 203.
74. Madeleine Noble, "The White Caps of Harrison and Crawford County, Indiana: A Study in the Violent Enforcement of Morality" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1973).
75. C. Raish and A. M. McSweeney, *Economic, Social, and Cultural Aspects of Livestock*



*Ranching on the Espanola and Canjilon Ranger Districts of the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests: A Pilot Study* (Albuquerque: U.S. Forest Service, 2003).

76. C. W. Dahms and B. W. Geils, *An Assessment of Forest Ecosystem Health in the Southwest* (Washington, DC: U.S. Forest Service, 1997).
77. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 12, 1894.
78. Miguel A. Otero, *My Life on the Frontier, 1882–1897* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939).
79. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, April 12, 1894.