

NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: J. Pablo Bernal

DATE OF BIRTH: January 15, 1896 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: February 13, 14, 15, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Mr. Bernal's home, Springer, NM

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: October 14, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Eight

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRACTED: April 1, 1999

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Fair, with some tape damage to tapes three and four.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Pablo Bernal was a rancher in Northeastern NM for 70 years (1912 – 1982). He discusses livestock raising and marketing. Also discusses his father's history, which included being forced off the Maxwell Land Grant circa 1897.

DATE RAGE: 1854 - 1982

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Pablo Bernal's father was born in Albuquerque, date of birth unknown. His father and his uncle owned land near Tecolote. They exchanged this land for some on Ponil Creek. This land on the Ponil was claimed as part of the Maxwell Land Grant. Bernal's father was eventually forced off this land. Many of the people who had been forced off the grant took homesteads at Tinaja (north of Maxwell). The Maxwell Land Grant Company paid his father for the improvements on the land on the Ponil, but not for the land itself.

Bernal's father was older when they left the grant. He applied for homesteads in two or three places, but was turned down. That is why they settled at Tinaja where there was no water. Initially, his father built a 20 x 18 one-room house. By 1912, he had turned the ranch over to Pablo.

Pablo attended school only "periodically," because he had to help his father. The school only operated for three months during the winter. He thinks he attained only a third grade education.

Many of the homesteaders were unable to make a living at Tinaja. The Bernal's bought their land when they decided to leave. Pablo still owns his land at Tinaja, but it is leased out.

The Bernal's ran both sheep and cattle on their ranch. The first price for wool that Pablo remembers was \$ 0.12 per pound. Markets for lambs and cattle were almost non-existent. Finally, he began to receive quotes from the markets in Kansas City, which gave him an idea of what cattle were worth. They sold "whatever they found," because there were no fences and sometimes it was difficult to gather the cattle they needed. Eventually Pablo decided to market his cattle in Denver. Describes in detail the process of taking his livestock to Denver. The railroad would figure the cost of freight, and it would be deducted from the selling price in Denver.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

The usual wool buyer in their area worked for Bond & McCarthy. Pablo raised Rambouillet sheep. He sheared in July when the sheep were in better condition. A good shearer could shear 100 head per day. In the early days they paid the shearer \$ 0.02 or \$ 0.03 per head for shearing.

The sheep were herded during the day and brought back to the corrals at night. Pablo started herding sheep when he was six or seven. Describes his fear of being alone when he first started herding.

Pablo lost an older brother when he was age nine and his brother was eleven. Evidently there was an outbreak of diphtheria in the community.

The Bernal's owned about 300 sheep, and the number of cattle was unknown, because the cattle were held with everyone else's. His father's, Gabino Bernal, brand was G.B., and Pablo's was 7h.

Dorsey, who built the Dorsey mansion, controlled nearly all the surface water in Colfax County by homesteading around the "water holes." Later, homesteaders had to dig wells in order to get

water. The wells were dug with pick and shovel and they would line the wells with rocks. On the 160 acres homesteaded by the Bernal's there was a creek that could be cleaned with a "stripper and a plow."

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

In later years Pablo Bernal bought additional property that contained springs. In the 1970's, they piped water out from the springs for livestock use and for use in his home. He could also irrigate about seven acres of land with the new system. He grew alfalfa in the irrigated fields.

He describes marketing all the lambs for the Tinaja community in 1932. He took them to Denver, which was a gamble because there was no market. He was very lucky and sold the lambs for \$ 2.00 a head.

Pablo never sold any of his livestock during the federal government's stock reduction program.

In 1926, Pablo made the decision to sell his cattle and buy sheep because there was a good market for wool and mutton.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

His father was raised on the community land grant at Albuquerque. Discusses that his father joined the Militia during the Civil War, but it was disbanded after a short period of time. After his service, Gabino worked at Fort Union and saved enough money to purchase two freight wagons and oxen to pull them. Gabino would go to the "Salt Lakes" and dig salt and then distribute it to farms and ranches. The work Gabino did at Fort Union was making adobe bricks. There was stiff competition for this work. The older men would take advantage of the younger ones by taking their clean adobe molds (thus slowing the boys down). Gabino got into a physical altercation with a man, and hit him with a mold. Gabino was court-martialed, however he was not found guilty, because everyone was aware of what had been happening.

Gabino Bernal hauled freight between Las Vegas and Mora and Tecolote.

His father married a woman whose last name was Valdez.

NOTE: The remainder of Tape Three, Side A and B are inaudible at this point.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A:

Discusses his memories about when New Mexico was admitted into the United States. They held meetings at the school to discuss the proposed constitution. His father supported New Mexico becoming a state.

Discusses the tradition of holding a wake (*Velorios*) for a particular saint, which was both a "religious and social thing." On the 25th of July they celebrated, and played the game, *Gallo*. Later this game was prohibited.

Discusses the system of justice in Tinaja, and the ideology taught at church, school, and home.

Pablo married Teresta Lopez in 1918 or 1919. They had eight children, who were born at home with Teresita's mother attending.

Discusses the death of his brother in some detail.

Some of his family members were ill during the influenza epidemic of 1918, but no one died.

Describes that his father, Gabino, when he was a boy would accompany buffalo hunters out to the eastern plains of New Mexico, and would dress the buffalo once they were killed.

His father grew grapes at the place in the Ponil. The irrigated farming land there was very fertile. They grew plums and apples there and later Pablo grew fruit trees at his place at Tinaja.

NOTE: A large portion of this side becomes inaudible at this point, and then resumes.

His father lived on the place in Ponil Creek for 17 years, before having to leave. Pablo describes that his father swapped his place at Tecolote for the land in the Ponil creek. Describes again the problem with the Maxwell Land Grant Company.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE B:

Continues to discuss the settlers leaving the Maxwell Land Grant.

TAPE FIVE, SIDE A:

Sibling's names were Soloman, Genoveo, Delfida and Carmelita.

Genoveo died at approximately nine years of age. Soloman took a homestead that abutted the Gabino Bernal homestead when he reached the age of 21.

Pablo Bernal was taught to read and write by his 15-year-old sister Delfida, who attended school in Cimarron before the family moved to Tinaja. She also taught her uncle's children and neighbor's children. Delfida taught the children both English and Spanish. She also acted as the father's interpreter, as he did not speak English.

Delfinda married a Chavez, whose family came from Ocate. They were "well-to-do," owning 5000 head of sheep.

Discusses the settlement of the Maxwell Land Grant. The present day Raton Highway was a "boundary-line." The Bernal and Chase Ranches were to the north of the highway and the other settlement was to the south. When the people who had settled the grant were forced off, most settled on homestead claims in the Tinaja area.

Pablo's father bought out the Tinaja homesteaders, as they realized they could not make a living dry farming 160 acres. His father had the advantage over most of the Tinaja homesteaders, because he owned two freight wagons and hauled goods from the railhead in Las Vegas to local areas.

Gabino Bernal, Pablo's father originally traded land that he owned in Tecolote for the place at Cimarron. The original owner of the ranch at Cimarron had shot a man and needed to get out of the area. The fact that there was so little currency in the state led to this kind of a barter system.

Discusses the failure of the Maxwell Bank. The depositors were eventually paid back in “three or four years.”

The Bernal’s raised mostly Hereford cattle, but with a mixture of Longhorns. They were better suited for the rough country around Tinaja. He usually did not have to do a great deal of supplemental feeding in the winter. There were some protected areas on the mountainside, and he did occasionally cut hay and stack near these areas. His ranch had springs, which did not freeze over in the winter.

TAPE FIVE, SIDE B:

Discusses snowstorm in 1913. Usually the cattle and sheep could eat oak brush if there was a great deal of snow.

States that his father always had a large supply (a wagonload or two) of staples in hand for the winter. People also would shot deer, although they were “protected,” and it was not a “public thing.”

Some of the area ranchers worked at nearby coalmines to earn extra money. One or two family members worked the mines, while others stayed on the ranch to work.

Discusses his practices during lambing season. He used a system of cross-fencing to manage his sheep. His other neighbors did not.

He attended courses offered by the Extension Service of New Mexico A & M College. He believes the only rancher from his area who attended the courses.

TAPE SIX, SIDE A:

Discusses some of the techniques taught by the Extension service. How wool is sheared, the fleece tied, and then how it is packed into sacks. Discusses grading wool, the buyers were aware of conditions in the local areas because they were living in all the small communities. In other words, they knew the condition of the sheep, and hence the wool before the sheep were shorn.

Pricing of wool – impact after WW II after because of the development of synthetics.

Discusses the patron saint of agriculture, San Ysidro. The church at Tinaja is dedicated o the saint. He discusses the place of the saint in the people’s belief system, and the celebration of the saint usually held in the summer.

TAPE SIX, SIDE B: Blank

TAPE SEVEN, SIDE A:

Describes getting bitten by a rattlesnake in the finger. He became paralyzed – first his hand, then his arm and then his side. He was hospitalized for nine days recovering from the bite.

Mr. Bernal married his second wife Amalia in 1946. His first wife died in 1938. (He married his first wife in 1919).

There were many buffalo bones at his ranch in Tinaja. He approximates about 200 skeletons. He thinks they were shot there. He noticed many arrowheads, but now there are neither buffalo bones or arrowheads, as they have been picked up by people. He also described camps used by American Indians along the creek bottom. There are petroglyphs in the canyon walls where the Tinaja and Eagle Tail Mountains meet. The Kiowa Indians were nearby Tinaja.

When Gavino Bernal, Pablo's father, was a young boy he would herd livestock for the wagon trains traveling the Santa Fe Trail. It took six months to make the trip.

Captain José Antonio Chávez raised a militia in New Mexico during the Civil War to serve for the Union. Gabino served only about six months and instead of pay was given a bonus when he mustered out, but he lost the bonus.

TAPE SEVEN, SIDE B:

Later, Pablo Bernal was assisting his uncle with some problems arising from his owning land in three different school sections. Pablo found his father's bonus sewn into his uncle's ledger. Since his father was dead when it was found, no one could cash the bonus and once again it has been lost or misplaced.

A document was produced and read into the record. The document dated 1910, was a certification that Gabino Bernal was mustered into the New Mexico militia in 1863.

Discusses powerful interests in Colfax County. One group of men were associated with the Maxwell Land Grant, and the other group formed around Dorsey. He stated that they "controlled everything in the State of New Mexico." He stated that the "Native" New Mexicans were at a disadvantage because of being unable to read and write.

Discusses that many people voted for the state constitution who had never read it, particularly when the only copies were in English.

He believes that one of the biggest impacts in the lives of people he knew was being forced to leave the Maxwell Land Grant.

TAPE EIGHT, SIDE A:

States that the community at Tinaja was "short-lived" because people would get their homestead patent, and then sold them for whatever money they could get.

TAPE EIGHT, SIDE B: Blank