Introduction

fter sixty-six years and more than fifty attempts, New Mexico finally achieved statehood in 1912. New Mexicans had cause to celebrate. Before the celebration could begin, though, a state constitution had to be written, and our first state leaders had to be elected. Once admitted as our nation's forty-seventh state, New Mexico was more eager than ever to create a modern image of itself to attract more tourists and settlers, draw new investments, and otherwise benefit from its brand-new political status.

The purpose of this chapter is to teach you about

how New Mexico's state constitution was written; what the constitution guarantees; who were chosen as our first state officials; how New Mexico tried to promote itself in its new role as a full member of the United States; how homesteaders attempted to create new farms; and how some New Mexicans felt the sting of racism in direct and indirect ways.

Becoming a State

The State Constitution of 1910

New Mexico's Enabling Act of 1910 required New Mexicans to write a state constitution in preparation for the day their territory would become a state. New

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# TIMELINE

1898

Indian Day School, the first movie made in New Mexico, is produced by a Thomas Edison company

1901

Blackdom is founded by Francis Marion Boyer

1908

Folsom is flooded; George McJunkin finds prehistoric bison bones

1909

Spanish-American Normal School is founded in El Rito

1910

Congress passes New Mexico's Enabling Act The New Mexico state constitution is written at the state constitutional convention in Santa Fe

The citizens of New Mexico approve the state constitution, 31,742 to 13,399

Pres. William Howard Taft and the US. Congress approve New Mexico's state constitution

1912

President Taft signs New Mexico's statehood bill

New Mexico's first state governor, William C.

McDonald, is inaugurated

New Mexico's first congressmen and senators are sworn into office in Washington, D.C.

D. W. Griffith films The Pueblo Legend, starringMary Pickford, at Isleta Pueblo

Black boxing champion Jack Johnson defeats

Jim Flynn in a controversial nine-round Las

Vegas bout

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Opening of the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego

1916

Elephant Butte irrigation project completed and dedicated

1919

Julián and María Martínez create their first black-on-black pottery

1921

The first Black student is admitted to the

University of New Mexico (UNM)

1927

Archeologists discover Folsom Man, based on George McJunkin's earlier discovery of prehistoric bison bones outside Folsom

1929

Blackdom is abandoned

Clara Belle Williams is the first Black student admitted to New Mexico A&M

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1910 constitutional Mexicans had had some experience in writing state constitutions, having convention written three previous documents in 1850, 1872, and 1889. Each had been written to help prove New Mexico was ready to rule itself as a state. None of these earlier constitutions had been approved. Now, however, with New Mexico on the eve of statehood, its leaders knew they must write a safe and sane" constitution not only to rule their future state, but also to avoid Washington's rejection when statehood had never been so close at hand.

New Mexicans prepared to write their constitution by holding a constitutional convention in Santa Fe. A hundred delegates were elected, representing every county in the territory. The vast majority (seventyone) of delegates were Republican, with fifty-five of them known as Old Guard, or conservative members of their political party. Twenty-eight delegates were Democrats, and one, G. P. Patterson of Chaves County, was a socialist, although his fellow delegates so shunned Patterson that they declared he had smallpox and insisted he be quarantined in isolation for the rest of the convention.

The remaining politically acceptable delegates included some of the richest, most powerful citizens of New Mexico. The greatest number of delegates were lawyers (thirty-two), ranchers (twenty), or merchants



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(fourteen). Other delegates included bankers, doctors, newspaper editors, a Ollege president, and at least one saloonkeeper. With thirty-five Spanish qakers, all proceedings at the convention were conducted in Spanish e. well as in English. All delegates were either Hispanic or Anglo males, meaning that women, Native Americans, Blacks, and other minorities were not directly represented.

The convention began at noon on October 3, 1910. Although Charles A. Spriers of San Miguel County officially presided over the conœntion, Solomon Luna of Valencia County was clearly the most powermember of the political gathering. By 1910, Luna was the wealthiest sheep rancher in New Mexico and a dominant figure in the Republican party on the local, territorial, and even the national levels. An Old Guard Republican, Luna chaired the constitutional convention's most important committee, the Committee on Committees. This committee oversaw Solomon Luna

. twenty-seven other convention committees, each ofwhich wrote a section of the final constitution. Luna was said to be so powerful that he influenced each committee's work and only had to raise an eyebrow to dictate the results ofvotes taken on the convention floor. Other Republican leaders included Thomas B. Catron, the oldest delegate at seventy years of age, and Thomas J. Mabry, the youngest at twenty-five. Harvey B. Fergusson ofAlbuquerque led the Democratic minority.

The delegates worked for seven weeks, until eleven fifteen on the night of November 21, 1910. Predictably, the constitution they wrote was very conservative, very long (more than twenty-one thousand words, compared to about seven thousand in the U.S. Constitution), and, under Luna's leadership, very protective of Hispanic rights. The constitution guaranteed two Hispanic rights in particular. Regarding voting rights, Article 7, section 3, of the constitution protected the right of every citizen to vote regardless of his "religion, race, language or color and regardless of his inability to speak the Spanish or English language. Regarding education, Article 12, section 10, stated that "children of Spanish descent" would never be denied admission to public schools nor ever be "classified in separate schools, but shall forever enjoy perfect equality with other children in all public schools." Hispanic children were never to experience segregated, inferior schools like most Black children faced in southern public schools.

To protect Hispanic voting rights and education, convention delegates created what are called the ironclad clauses in the state constitution.

According to these clauses, to change any part of the constitution regardr

ing Hispanic voting rights and education, three-quarters of the voters in nts the state as a whole and two-thirds of the voters in every county would

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## The Spanish-American Normal School at El Rito

n an effort to train Hispanic men and women to become good teachers and educational leaders, the territorial legislature created the SpanishAmerican Normal School in 1909. Located in El Rito, the school and its mission were considered so important that it was made a permanently funded state institution in the state constitution of 1910. The school was created to train Spanish-speaking teachers to teach Hispanic children not only Spanish, but also English, especially in preparation for work in the business world.

Just as important, students at the Spanish-American Normal School learned about their Hispanic culture. In the words of Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, now a University of New Mexico professor of Spanish, the school instilled "a strong sense of cultural identity and pride" in her and her fellow students when she attended in the 1950s.

Today, the El Rito school is part of Northern New Mexico College.

## A Safe and Sane Constitution

ew Mexico's original state constitution was safe, sane, and conservative in several ways, including:

state governors served four-year terms, without the possibility of reelection; the state government was led by a plural executive, meaning that the governor and other leaders of the executive branch (such as the lieutenant governor) were each elected separately, weakening the strength of the governor to appoint and dismiss fellow members of the executive branch; the legislature only met in thirty-day sessions, weakening the strength of the legislative branch by limiting the time it had to pass new laws each year; the constitution limited women's suffrage, or right to vote, to school board elections, unless a percentage of the male voters in a county voted to deny women even this limited right.

Each of these sections of the constitution has been altered by constitutional amendments since 1912. Now:

state governors serve four-year terms, but can be reelected once; the state government is still led by a plural executive, but since 1964 the governor and lieutenant governor run for election and serve in office as a team; since 1966 the state legislature meets for thirty-day sessions in even-numbered years (like 2012) and for sixty days in odd-numbered years (like 2013); women citizens can vote and run for all offices in all local, state, and national elections.

## Madeline Mills Raised the U.S. Flag

n January 6, 1912, Madeline Mills was the sixteen-year-old daughter of New Mexico's last territorial governor, William J. Mills. Sixty years later Madeline recalled the events of the day New Mexico learned it had become a state:

My father [called from] his office [in the capitol building] . . . to the Executive Mansion [where our family lived). I was at home, and it was about one o'clock [p.m.]. He told me to come right over and hoist the [U.S.] flag because President Taft had [just] signed the statehood bill.

Former governor Miguel A. Otero had had a [U.S. flag with forty-seven stars] made years before in anticipation of [our] statehood. It had been tenderly and hopefully cherished . . . and now it [was the flag l] raised over the Capitol. . . . How very happy it made me.

(Quoted on the sixtieth anniversary of statehood in the Carlsbad Current-Argus, February 15, 1972, the Tucumcari Daily News, February 16, 1972, and the

Lincoln County News, February 17, 1972.)

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| have to approve. With Hispanic voters representing more than a quarter of all voters in the state and as many as 90 percent of the voters in some counties, the odds of these rights ever being lost were close to zero. As suggested by their name, it was as if these clauses of the constitution were protected with nothing less than iron. | New Mexico welcomed to the Union cartoon, 1912 |

Several modern political reforms, such as women's sufrage, prohibition, and the election of state judges, were debated at the constitutional convention but quickly defeated. The Constitution of 1910 was clearly "safe and sane" because without "radical" political ideas the odds of congressional approval were very good. After two months ofpublic debate, the voters ofNew e Mexico approved their new constitution by a great majority, 31,742 to 13,399, on January 21 , 1911; voters approved a small change in the amending process, known as the Blue Ballot, later that year. New Mexico sent its "safe and sane" document to Pres. William Howard Taft, who approved it on February 24, and then to the U.S. Congress, where it was approved without major opposition in August 1911.

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Statehood celebration Only one step remained before statehood would be achieved. Surparade in Albuquerque, rounded by New Mexican leaders, President Taft officially signed New 1912 Mexico's statehood bill at exactly 1:35 p.m. on January 6, 1912. As he signed the long-awaited bill, Taft declared, "Well it is all over. I am glad to

### Interviews on Statehood

oments after President Taft signed New Mexico's statehood bill, a reporter from the Albuquerque Evening Herald asked several leading citizens what statehood meant to them. Here are some of their enthusiastic replies:

* Nestor Montoya, a Spanish-language newspaper editor and author said, "There is no question that New Mexico will now enter upon an era of prosperity. Capital will come here for investment, and business will pick up right away";
* T. N. Wilkerson, attorney, said, "Well, we will have our own

[elected] officials [at last)";

* M. Marshall, an Albuquerque merchant, confidently declared,

"Statehood is the best thing that ever happened to New Mexico."

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give you life. I hope you will be healthy." New Mexico's long wait—and struggle—for statehood had ended at last.

## First State Leaders

New Mexico's first state leaders entered office within weeks after President Taft signed our statehood bill. On January 8, 1912, New Mexico's first two Congressmen, Republican George Curry and Democrat Harvey B. Fergusson, took their oaths ofoffice in the U.S. House of Representatives. Although the press reported that Curry and Fergusson were greeted with generous applause," as the newest members of Congress New Mexico s representatives were assigned to desks in the last row ofthe House chamber.

New Mexico's first U.S. senators were sworn in in Washingtom D.C., on April 2, 1912. Before the Seventeenth Amendment of 1913 allowed for the direct election of senators, the New Mexico state legislature had elected Thomas B. Catron and Albert B. Fall. It had taken eight ballots and much discussion before Catron and Fall were finally chosen from a field of thirteen Republican and Democratic contenders. Fulfilling a lifelong goal, Catron would serve in the Senate until 1917; 'ur-Fall served until 1921.

lew New Mexico's first state governor, Democrat William C. McDonald,

he was sworn into office with great fanfare on January 15, 1912. Elected toin November 1911 over his main rival, Republican H. O. Bursum,

### Governor William C. McDonald

ew Mexico's first state governor was born and raised in New York before arriving in the gold-mining town of White Oaks, New Mexico, s- in the spring of 1880. After ten years in mining, he entered the cattle business, eventually owning his own ranch under the "Bar W" brand. Rising through the ranks of the Democratic Party, McDonald ran as his party's first candidate for state governor in 1911. Winning 31,035 votes and a majority in 65 percent of New Mexico's twenty-six counties, he was inaugurated and served a four-year term in office, 1912 to 1916.

According to attorney and historian William A. Keleher, who knew many governors in his fifty-year career, McDonald was "in my estimation, the nearest approach to an ideal governor" largely because he was so honest.

(William A. Keleher, New Mexicans I Knew: Memoirs, 1892—1969 [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983], 138.)



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Gov. William C. McDonald's inauguration, 1912

McDonald arrived in Santa Fe on a special train from his home in southern New Mexico.

As many as seven thousand New Mexicans greeted McDonald when his carriage, escorted by the New Mexico Mounted Police and the First Regimental Army Band, approached the capitol building on January 15. Seeing McDonald, the crowd broke into "deafening cheers," according to a reporter on the scene. Although a winter day, the weather was comfortably mild as McDonald took the oath of office at exactly 12:29 p.m. Seven former territorial governors sat in attendance to witness the great event.

Governor McDonald's inaugural address was brief, but it is significant that he identified public school education as the new state's "first concern." New Mexico's future leaders could only be wise and successful if they were well educated as children. In the governor's words, "The past is history, the present is the dawn of the future. It is to the future we look and that future will be what we make it.

As Governor McDonald concluded his remarks, the crowd shouted,

Three cheers to the stars and stripes!" In the words of an eyewitness, "The flag of the nation waved from the dome of the capitol, directly over the actors in this great political drama. The band burst into an exultant strain of patriotic music." Prolonged cheers and happy laughter filled the air. A gala ball, with music, dancing, food "in plenty," and women in

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beautiful gowns, lasted into the night. Hundreds of congratulatory telegrams poured into Santa Fe from every part of the state and the country. According to former territorial governor L. Bradford Prince, "The new state was born. The territory was no more.

## Working to Improve New Mexico's State Image

New Mexicans had worked hard to be seen as both modern and prosperous during their struggle for statehood. Now that the territory had become a state, they continued their efforts to impress individuals who might help advance New Mexico's political and economic fortunes. Their efforts met with mixed results.

## Early Movies

Moviemakers have long been welcome in New Mexico and the Southwest. They have been fascinated by the region's beautiful scenery, mild climate, low costs, and, perhaps most important, varied cultures. In fact, a film company owned by the inventor of modern motion pictures, uth- Thomas Edison, shot New Mexico's first movie at an Indian pueblo.

Indian Day School was filmed at Isleta Pueblo in 1898. Lasting only fifty naldseconds, it showed a group of Isleta children being led out of and back andinto their school—twice.

Tom Mix

dingThe next movie made in New Mexico was filmed shortly after ingstatehood was achieved in 1912. The film crew included the most day,famous producer of his time, D. W. Griffith, and perhaps the most officefamous movie actress of all time, Mary Pickford. Twenty minutes tten-long, A Pueblo Legend featured Pickford as a Hopi maiden who heroically saved her Pueblo Indian friends in battle. Unfortunately, ifi-few of the Native American characters in the film were played by first Native Americans, and Griffith made little effort to accurately porful tray Pueblo Indian culture during the week he shot the film at pastIsleta Pueblo.

lookRomaine Fielding arrived in New Mexico with his movie crew the following year. Brimming with talent and energy,

ted, Fielding directed, produced, and acted in movies he wrote as ess, they were being filmed. Fielding filmed as many as a dozen short overand feature-length silent movies in New Mexico, including The tant Golden God in Silver City and The Rattlesnake in Las Vegas.

filled Tom Mix, the most famous cowboy star of his day, filmed in about two dozen silent movies in Las Vegas from 1914 to 1916.

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The citizens of Las Vegas so admired Mix that they experienced a "Mix craze" while he starred in the movies he made in town. Everything, from Mix scarves to Mixed drinks, was named in his honor. New Mexico children enjoyed Tom Mix cowboy films so much they "went to see him [with] every dime [we] could get," in the words of author Max Evans.

Early movie making helped New Mexico by bringing new business to the state, at least while films were in production. More important, movies made in the Southwest gave moviegoers across the country an opportunity to see and appreciate New Mexico's beauty and economic potential. Ironically, the same cultures that had attracted moviemakers to New Mexico were seldom portrayed fairly or accurately, a problem that persists in many movies to this day.

New Mexico at the Panama-California

Exposition of 1915—16

Built with American skills and finances, the Panama Canal was considered one of the greatest engineering achievements in all of history when it opened on August 15, 1914. Thanks to the new canal, ships

### Movie Making in New Mexico

he movie industry that began in New Mexico in the late nineteenth century has expanded and prospered ever since. Starting with Mary Pickford and Tom Mix, other famous movie actors and actresses who have worked in New Mexico include:

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| Kevin Costner | Katharine Hepburn | Sean Penn |
| Billy Crystal | Dennis Hopper | Christopher Reeve |
| Bette Davis | Jennifer Lopez | Jimmy Stewart |
| Clint Eastwood | Jack Nicholson | John Travolta |
| Henry Fonda | Edward James Olmos | John Wayne |

Some movie producers have said New Mexico's landscape and cultures are so important to their films that New Mexico itself is like another star actor in their movies.

As might be expected, most of the movies filmed in New Mexico have been Westerns, but other popular films have been made here as well. Some of the most famous Western—and other—movies made in New Mexico include:

could travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific without sailing around South America's dangerous Cape Horn, cutting eight thousand miles and thirty days off the average trip from New York City on the East Coast to San Francisco on the West Coast. To celebrate this remarkable accomplishment, the city of San Diego, California, planned an international exposition with large exhibits from several Latin American countries and southwestern states.

When New Mexico was invited to participate in the PanamaCalifornia Exposition, Governor McDonald jumped at the opportunity. The governor knew that this would be an ideal chance to promote New Mexico's resources and cultures. Having won the prize for the best exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held in St. Louis in 1904, New Mexicans were confident they could create an equally impressive exhibit in San Diego.

New Mexico's exhibit building in southern California was certainly unique. To celebrate the state's Spanish and Indian cultures, exhibit planners designed a structure to resemble the Spanish colonial mission church at Acoma Pueblo. Inside, the building was decorated with art by some of the best-known artists in the state. The exhibit's director, anthropologist Edgar Lee Hewett, stressed historical and cultural

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| Billy the Kid (1930) | The Milagro Beanfield War (1988) |
| The Salt of the Earth (1954) | Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade |
| Lonely Are the Brave (1962) | (1989) |
| Easy Rider (1969) | Lonesome Dove (1989) |
| Butch Cassidy and the | Young Guns I (1988) and Il (1990) |
| Sundance Kid (1978) | City Slickers (1991) |
| The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez | The Avengers (2012) |

(1982)

New Mexico has been the site of so many Western movies that a whole western town has been built as a permanent movie set. Located south of Santa Fe and built in just five months in 1969, the Eaves Ranch is said to be so realistic that visitors have to be reminded the place is not a real western town preserved since the 1870s. Tours of the set are available to the public.

Movie making has become so important in New Mexico that it brought more than a billion dollars into the state's economy during 2006 alone. Sixty-four movies of all kinds were filmed in New Mexico in just three years, from 2003 to 2006.

New Mexico's state flag

New Mexico's exhibit building in San Diego

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#### New Mexico's State Flag and Song

ew Mexico was such a new state that it had yet to create a state flag when the San Diego Panama-California Exposition opened in

1915. Lacking a flag to fly over the New Mexico exhibit at the exposition, Santa Fe attorney Ralph Emerson Twitchell designed one. It had five main features: a U.S. flag in the upper left-hand corner to stress the state's loyalty to the nation; the New Mexico state seal in the bottom right-hand corner; the number forty-seven (representing New Mexico's status as the forty-seventh state) in the top right-hand corner; the name "New Mexico" running from the bottom left-hand to the top right-hand corner; and all on a field of turquoise to remind people of New Mexico's famous blue skies.

The state legislature officially adopted this design on March 19, 1915.

By 1920, many New Mexicans sought to create a new state flag to better represent the state's unique character and several cultures. A contest was held for the best new design. Dr. Harry P. Mera of Santa Fe won the competition with a flag that featured the ancient Zia sun symbol in red on a field of gold, with red and gold representing the colors of Spain, New Mexico's original ruling country. Mera's design, sewed by his wife Reba Mera, was adopted by the state legislature exactly ten years after New Mexico's first flag had been adopted in 191 S.

New Mexico's flag is considered to be one of the most beautiful state flags in the United States, but it has created controversy. The state legislature never asked Zia Pueblo for permission to use their sacred sun symbol

accuracy in all murals, paintings, and architectural models on display. A specially produced movie with scenes from as far north as RatÓn and as far south as Deming was shown more than 630 times in 1915 alone. Thousands viewed the production and, most important, learned more about New Mexico than they had ever known before.

New Mexicans were also well represented at another unique exhibit called the Painted Desert. Here, Native Americans from several tribes, including the Navajo, the Apache, and at least five pueblos, lived and

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| in on, lainthe (ico'I on:erAera, spaint10dels profrom as far hown 1915 •d the nporaboutxhibit -ribes, d and | on the state flag. In fact, many companies and organizations have used the sun symbol on their products without permission and with no thought of compensating Zia Pueblo in any way. Most recently, pueblo leaders have suggested that the state pay Zia as much as $45 million for having used their sun symbol on the state flag for more than eighty-five years.In the same year that New Mexico adopted its first state flag, Elizabeth Garrett composed "O, Fair New Mexico." Blind from birth, the daughter of Sheriff Pat Garrett once said, "My father tried to bring peace and harmony to our country with his guns. I would like to do my part with my music." In 1917, the state legislature adopted "O Fair New Mexico" as the state's official song. The song's first verse and chorus are as follows: Under a sky of azure, O, Fair New Mexico Where balmy breezes blow, We love, we love you so, Kissed by the golden sunshine Our hearts with pride ocrflow, Is Nuevo Méjico. No matter where we go. Land of the Montezuma, O, Fair New Mexico, With fiery hearts aglow, We love, we love you so, Land of deeds historic, The grandest state to know Is Nuevo Méjico. New Mexico.worked in a living exhibit designed to foster a better understanding and appreciation of Indian cultures. Indians performed their native dances, cooked their native foods, and made their native arts and crafts. While many visitors learned from the exhibit, others did not, describing what they saw as "queer customs" and refusing to respect Indian beliefs, such as the one that their spirits would be lost if Indians were photographed before performing certain ceremonies. Many Native Americans from the exhibit, however, saw parts of the country they had never seen before, including the Pacific Ocean. Others, like Maria and Julián Martínez Of San Ildefonso Pueblo, shared their strikingly beautiful art with thousands of new admirers.New Mexico's display at the Panama-California Exposition was such a success that it received five awards, including a prize given to the best state exhibit. New Mexico's exhibit building has long since been |

### María Martínez

aría Martínez was born and raised in

San lldefonso Pueblo. As a young married woman she learned the fine art of pottery making, an art that had almost been lost in New Mexico's pueblos with the use of more modern enamelware.

Quite by accident, María and her husband Julián developed a new black-on-black pottery design in 1919, a unique design that soon made

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the couple world famous. Unlike many artists, María gladly shared her art and methods with others, including her neighbors at San lldefonso, her children and grandchildren, and countless visitors at world's fairs in St. Louis (1904), San Diego (1915), and Chicago (1934). Although she became well known and might have lived in Santa Fe or anywhere else in the world,

María remained true to her roots, her values, and her art by living her long life in her Pueblo Indian home in San lldefonso.

María Martínez and members of her family with some of their pottery

remodeled in what is now San Diego's Balboa Park, but the structure became the model for Santa Fe's Fine Arts Museum when it was constructed and opened in November 1917. The museum remains a major landmark on the northwest corner of the Santa Fe plaza, where it continues to draw thousands of visitors to promote a most positive image of New Mexico.

## Homesteading

As a result of good publicity and the availability of open land, many newcomers moved to New Mexico to farm in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Thousands came to homestead on the eastern

r One Statehood at Last, 1910—15 37

plains, one of the last large areas of public land in the West. To acquire land, homesteaders simply had to pay a small filing fee and "prove up," meaning they had to live on the land and work it for five years.

Living on the eastern plains and working it for five years was no easy task, though. Families found little wood to build homes, much less to make fences or use as fuel. Crops were difficult to grow with little rain, frequent dust storms, and regular invasions of insects, mainly grasshoppers. Few farmers could afford to dig deep wells, and many had to haul water from long distances, A homesteading family making fire a constant danger. Schools were few and literally far between. Neighbors lived miles apart, and social activities were rare, leading to feelings of extreme isolation. Towns with stores, doctors, and lawmen were usually days away.

### Homesteading in a Boxcar

he Collins family moved from Oklahoma to Union County in northeastern New Mexico to homestead in 1915. With little wood or other building materials, the family resorted to living in a deserted boxcar. Sisters Lula and Ruth Collins later wrote of life in their unique rural home:

Trying to fit a family of seven into a boxcar house took some doing, but Mother was ingenious. Soon three iron bedsteads were fitted re into the corners—one, a double bed for Mother, Daddy, and Baby

 1- Louise; and two small ones where two children would sleep on each.

A big cook stove, a homemade table, some trunks, a water stand made from a box, a dressing table (also a box), and a small mirror on the wall above the dressing table: these comprised the necessary furnishings..

[But our] most precious possessions were our books.... We were delighted when Mama had time to read to us. . . . Our books added not only physical beauty to our stark [boxcar home), but they also added enrichment to our simple lives..

(Lula Collins Daudet and Ruth Collins Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon [Ardmore, PA: Dorrance and Company, 1980), 5—9.)

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Conditions were so difficult that homesteaders often believed the government was betting they could not survive for five years on public land. So many farmers failed to prove up that their deserted farm buildings on the open plains reminded observers of gravestones or memories of nowdead dreams. Many former homesteads reverted to open range or became parts of larger cattle ranches. The population of most eastern counties dropped drastically between the census of 1910 and the census of 1920. In Roosevelt County alone, the population fell from 12,064 citizens in 1910 to only 6,548 in 1920. Furthermore, what was true for white homesteaders was also true for Blacks.

Blackdom

New Mexico's African-American population was small, but significant, in the first years of statehood. Numbering only 1,628, or less than 1 percent of the population in 1910, Blacks were never protected with ironclad clauses in the state constitution of 1910. Nor was Black culture ever mentioned in New Mexico's state exhibit in San Diego. A Black homesteading Most Blacks in New Mexico lived and labored quietly, simply glad family to be free from slavery and far from the South, where Blacks faced discrimination, segregation, and racial violence on a daily basis.

In fact, some Black families fled to New Mexico to escape the prejudice they had experienced in other parts of the nation. While thousands journeyed to the North and many moved to other parts of the West in what was known as the Great Migration, several Black families came from the South to create an all-Black communit-y on the eastern plains of New Mexico. Called Blackdom, the settlement had been founded in 1901 by Francis Marion Boyer, who had first walked from Georgia to New Mexico in 1896. Boyer recruited as many as twenty-five Black families to homestead on open land sixteen miles south of Roswell. With a peak population of three hundred residents, Blackdom eventually boasted a school, a store, a Baptist church, and, from 1912 to 1919, a U.S. post office.

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### Elephant Butte Irrigation Project

arming and ranching in the arid lands of southern New Mexico and west Texas became far more possible and profitable with the building of the Elephant Butte dam and reservoir from 1911 to 1916. Building the 301-foot-high, 1,674-foot-long concrete dam required amazing engineering skill, performed by an army of able New Mexico workers.

Sadly, a small community (San José) and an old military fort (Fort McRae) were abandoned, submerged, and lost forever beneath the forty-mile long lake. Once the project was dedicated on October 19, 1916, however, it helped countless others with needed irrigation and flood control.

The Elephant Butte project created the country's largest man-made reservoir and the world's largest dam to that date in history.

(Robert Julyan, The Place Names ofNew Mexico [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico

Press, 1998], 121, 135, 315; interpretive signs at Elephant Butte State Park.) Elephant Butte Dam under construction

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#### George McJunkin and the Discovery of Folsom Man

eorge McJunkin, a former slave, migrated to northeastern New Mexico from his native state of Texas in 1868 while he was still a teen. Hired as a cowhand on a ranch near Folsom, New Mexico, McJunkin became so respected for his hard work and cowboy skills that he was eventually made ranch foreman.

A disastrous food in August 1908 left normally three-foot-deep arroyos more than ten feet deep in and around Folsom. Checking these arroyos for possible survivors of the flood, McJunkin found larger bison bones than he had ever seen before. Collecting and examining the bones, the ranch foreman tried to convince others he had made an important discovery of an unusual prehistoric animal. No one, though,

 George McJunkin would listen to an uneducated former slave.

Five years after George McJunkin died in 1922, archeologists took a closer look at the cowhand's collection of bones and found something remarkable. There, between two of the ancient animal's ribs, they discovered the imprint of an arrowhead made by ancient man and used to kill this large prey. Archeologists concluded that based on the age of the bison bones, humans must have lived in New Mexico twenty thousand years ago, much earlier than scientists had previously thought. George McJunkin had helped to discover what became known as Folsom Man, in one of the most significant finds in archeological history.

The people of Blackdom enjoyed working on their own farms and living in peace as a separate community. In the words of a woman resident, the town was "filled with good neighbors and . . . beautiful New Mexico sunshine." What it was not filled with, however, was accessible, life-giving water. Facing terrible drought conditions, most residents moved on. Even Francis Boyer left Blackdom to found a new Black setdement at Vado in the better-irrigated southern Rio Grande Valley. By 1929, the noble racial experiment at Blackdom had been abandoned, a failure caused by nature far more than a lack of human will.

Statehood at Last, 1910—15

#### Jack Johnson Fights Jim Flynn in Las Vegas

lacks in New Mexico experienced more direct forms of prejudice. Jack

Johnson won the heavyweight championship of the world when he defeated Tommy Burns on December 6, 1908, becoming the first Black boxing champion in history. Upset that a Black man had defeated a white champion, racist whites searched for a "great white hope" to win the crown from Johnson.

Jim Flynn, a Colorado fireman, was signed to fight Johnson in Las Vegas, New Mexico, on July 4, 1912. While most states had banned boxing matches by 1912, New Mexico had not yet created a state law banning the sport just six months after achieving statehood. Governor McDonald and many other New Mexicans were embarrassed by this neglect; in the words of a minister in Belén, hosting a boxing match in New Mexico was against "the best interests of this state materially, morally, and spiritually." Dozens of petitions opposing the bout arrived in the governor's office, including a petition from the citizens of Laguna Pueblo pointing out the irony that "white men tell us not to fight and then fight themselves and set a bad example for our people."

Despite these protests, the fight went on as scheduled. The match drew unfavorable attention not only because Johnson was Black, but also because his wife was white at a time when miscegenation, or interracial marriages, was illegal in most parts of the United States.

The Johnson-Flynn fight took place in Las Vegas before a crowd of five thousand spectators, including several hundred "disgraceful 'ladies.'" Flynn was no challenge for the champ, however, and disappointed those who thought he might be their long-awaited great white hope. Although the fight was scheduled to go many more rounds, Governor McDonald had previously ordered a state lawman to mercifully stop the match in the ninth round before it became a bloodbath. Johnson left New Mexico, never to return, but not before feeling the sting of racism when a Santa Fe newspaper described him as "grinning like an ape" early in the fight. Mercifully for New Mexico, the Contest received little press attention or criticism outside the state.

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Johnson in training camp at 2008 North Gonzales St., Las Vegas,

New Mexico

#### Racism in New Mexico Schools

ther forms of racism against Blacks occurred in scattered events during the first years of the twentieth century. At Albuquerque High School three Black students were about to graduate in 1907 when prejudiced city residents objected to school officials. Rather than cause a confrontation, school authorities had the three girls transferred to a high school attached to the University of New Mexico, where they graduated without further opposition.

Faced with such prejudice, Black leaders organized the Albuquerque Independent Society in 1912, which became a branch of the new National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1914. With the new organization's influence, Birdie Hardin became the first Black student to graduate from Albuquerque High, in 1914. The local NAACP branch raised money to help pay Birdie Hardin's tuition to attend UNM, but the university denied her admission. With NAACP persistence, UNM finally admitted its first Black college student in 1921. It took another thirteen years before Clara Belle Williams was admitted as the first Black student at New Mexico A&M, now New Mexico State University. Three years later Williams became the college's first Black graduate; a building on the NMSU campus is named in her honor.

## Conclusions

New Mexicans had struggled to finally achieve statehood by 1912. Their representatives at the constitutional convention of 1910 wrote a "safe and sane" constitution and proceeded to select our first state leaders, from our first state governor, William C. McDonald, to our first U.S. senators, Albert B. Fall and Thomas B. Catron.

New Mexicans knew, however, that much more work needed to be done after 1912 to promote their new state and attract new settlers, investors, and visitors. They succeeded in promoting their state, especially at the Panama-California Exposition, and in attracting many new settlers, especially homesteaders on the eastern plains.

New Mexico suffered several setbacks as well, especially with natural disasters, like draughts, and human failings, including a prizefight clouded by racism. Having celebrated statehood with great joy and anticipation, New Mexico's first steps as a new state proved small, slow, and often controversial.

TIME TO DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

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| 1 How well were the people of New Mexico represented at the state constitutional convention of 1910?1. Who benefited most directly from the new state constitution of 1910? Who did not benefit as directly?
2. NVhy was the state constitution of 1910 considered a "safe and sane" document?
3. Who had to approve New Mexico's state constitution before it could be used?
4. How did New Mexicans react to the achievement of statehood?
5. Was New Mexico promoted accurately and well in early movies by Mary Pickford, D. W. Griffith, Romaine Fielding, and Tom Mix?
6. What did homesteaders need to do to prove up? Were most homesteaders successful? Why or why not?
 | 1. Why did Francis Marion Boyer found

Blackdom? Was the town a success? Why or why not?1. How did Jack Johnson feel the sting of racism in New Mexico? How did George McJunkin feel the sting of racism? How did Black students feel the sting of racism? How did Native Americans feel the sting of racism at the Panama-California Exposition?
2. What aspects of New Mexico would you have been proud of if you had lived in these first years of statehood? Why?
3. What aspects would you have been less proud of if you had lived in these first years of statehood? Why?
4. What lessons can we learn from these first years of New Mexico's statehood?
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