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George A. Feather

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: George A. Feather
INTERVIEWER: L. E. Freudenthal
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DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 20, 1964
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Southwest historian and professor.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

"The Story of Las Cruces."

1 3/4 hours, 26 pages

(Professor George A. Feather and The Story of Las Cruces, interviewed by L. E. Freudenthal on August 20, 1964.)

F: This tape deals with the men who lived in Las Cruces or in the surrounding country previous to the Civil War. The list is by no means complete, but contains most of those who are more prominently mentioned in historical events.

The first leader who came to what is now Doña Ana County was Pablo Meléndrez. He was not the man who originally applied for the grant, but he was probably the man who financed most of the early undertakings at the town of Doña Ana. The grant was made in 1839, but it required four years before the grantees were able to get together and especially the financing of the crew who were digging the canal. Pablo Meléndrez was elected the first prefect of Doña Ana. After the American occupation of the town, there was considerable difficulty in recognizing exactly what his powers were, until 1849 when he was appointed Justice of the Peace by a military commander at that place, and afterwards had jurisdiction over all of Doña Ana County east of the Río Grande. He was well along in years when he first came to Doña Ana, and was the first man to be elected Probate Judge of Doña Ana County. However, immediately afterwards, his son, Pablo Meléndrez, Jr., took an active part in politics in Doña Ana County and was so successful that in one year, 1876, he ran on the county ticket for three distinct offices--Probate Judge, River Commissioner, and member of the Board of Education--and was elected to all three.. The dealings of the probate judge were curtailed during that same year when the board of county commissioners was set up, and he was also appointed chairman of that body.

The first settler, American, who ever came to Doña Ana County was Francis Flecher. Originally a Frenchman, he first migrated to Canada, then to the United States. No one knows exactly the time in which he came to New

Mexico, but it was in the early days when he was a trapper, although it is very difficult to find any mention of him during the Mexican regime. He joined Doniphan's expedition as an interpreter, and either at Las Cruces or at the garrison from Doña Ana was removed to the new Ft. Fillmore, which had been built several miles to the south of Las Cruces. He remained in the vicinity for the rest of his life. He was married to Barbara Aguirre, who was the daughter of a well-known mining man at that time. In 1849 when the town of Las Cruces was surveyed, he was one of those who received an allotment of land. His house lay just north of the town on the short road which runs from the Alameda to the Country Club. His house was constructed on the south side of this road, and then was one of the finest houses and one of the most lively in the town. His daughter married Cristóbal Ascarate, who was also prominent in Las Cruces affairs, and some of his descendants still live in the vicinity.

With him came another interpreter named Biletus Thomson who also settled in Doña Ana and later was in Las Cruces off and on. He had run away from home at the age of 12 years and joined the Black Hawk tribe of Indians. However, when the Doniphan Expedition was being organized, he ran away from the Indians, joined it as an interpreter, and also left the expedition somewhere in the vicinity of El Paso and returned to Doña Ana. There he married a daughter of Alejandro Meléndrez and set himself up as a farmer on a large scale and as a merchant. Shortly thereafter he set out from Doña Ana along with his brother-in-law, and nothing has ever been heard of the two since.

Two men who came to Las Cruces have lives which have run more or less parallel. Those were James Lucas and Sam Bean. Both had been members of Doniphan's expedition in the same regiment, the same battalion, and the same company. After the Battle of Sacramento, both returned to the neighborhood

of El Paso. The brother of James Lucas had been Vice-Consul at El Paso del Norte; James became his clerk and afterwards held the same position himself. In 1853, he came to Las Cruces where he had a general merchandise store and was elected the first Justice of the Peace for that town. Thereafter he took a very active part in politics and in 1854 was elected the first representative to the territorial legislative assembly in Santa Fe. Afterwards he became quite prominent because of his strong actions in favor of the new territory of Arizona, being very anxious to separate the Mesilla Valley from the government at Santa Fe. Sam Bean came at about the same time. He was married to a daughter of James Kirker, well-known in the southwest as a bounty Indian fighter. In 1853 he homesteaded a small area south of Las Cruces, and in the first general election was elected Sheriff of Doña Ana County. He also was very prominent in the effort to create the new territory of Arizona. Both of the two were southern sympathizers and took an active part on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War, and were obliged to leave the country when the Confederates withdrew. Lucas returned about 1875, but settled in Grant County. Sam Bean returned a short time before, went first to Grant County but afterwards returned to Doña Ana County, where he took no great part in politics thereafter, but was a prominent citizen of Doña Ana.

One of the first merchants in Las Cruces was Henry Cuniff, who had been a trader before the American invasion of the territory, probably making his first trip westward in 1845. In 1849 and 1850, he was post trader at Doña Ana. When the garrison was moved to Ft. Fillmore, he came to Las Cruces and was largely responsible for the creation of the County of Doña Ana, and especially in establishing the courthouse at Las Cruces instead of the larger town of Doña Ana. When the troops came in 1849, they were veterans, and several thereafter left the military service and settled in the community.

Among those were Adolph Lee, who later founded the town of Leesburg; Charles Coleman, who was a blacksmith and farmer (several of his descendants still remain in the vicinity); Conrad Albert, who was a carpenter (he also remained in Las Cruces until his death).

There were two families of Armijos who came to Las Cruces, probably in no way related, or at least very distantly. Isidro Armijo came from Socorro to Doña Ana in 1844. In 1849 he was one of those who received an allotment of land at Las Cruces and remained there thereafter. His son, Próspero Armijo, took an active part in politics and was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1910. The Armijos of Albuquerque were represented by one member of the family who handled the business of the company which then had a freighting line between Chihuahua and Kansas City. Various members served as agents here. Finally, Nestor Armijo, who was largely interested in a ranch in Chihuahua, settled here permanently. His house, which was built in 1876, still stands adjacent to the old site of the Loretto Academy.

Another freight line which ran between Santa Fe, Las Cruces and Tucson was that conducted by Stephen Ochoa. Stephen Ochoa was a member of the Mexican family which had the large hacienda a short distance south of El Paso. He and his partner had a very prosperous freight line and operated on a very large scale, largely on government contracts. After the abandonment of Ft. Thorn, they, along with two or three others, leased the property and used the reservation as pasture for the large number of mules which they used on their freight line. Stephen Ochoa afterwards became a very prosperous merchant and citizen of Tucson.

The first territorial representative in Las Cruces was Benjamin Read, who came from Santa Fe as a tax collector. Since the duties of that office were not very onerous and the only receipts were the licenses granted to merchants and to those who projected entertainment, he also served as writer, copier,

and various other jobs of the same type. However, he died in office while in Las Cruces. He was never in a very prosperous condition because of the fact that he had scrip to one of the land grants in northern New Mexico, and spent most of his property in an attempt to have it patented, which was unsuccessful.

In 1853, after the county had been created, Richard Campbell was named the first Probate Judge. He had come to New Mexico many years before. In 1828 he had driven a flock of sheep to California and brought back horses. However, he was completely interested in the search for gold and silver, and when the Americans first came to the territory they found him living in conditions not prosperous and highly burdened with a very large family. He remained for three years in Las Cruces as probate judge. At the same time that he arrived also came John Jones, who served as sheriff. His services were very short. At that time, the sheriff was also the county tax collector. After a few months, amassing somewhat more than a hundred dollars in his possession, he left the county and disappeared completely, never having been heard of again as far as anyone knows.

The first district judge, who was also United States judge, to arrive in the county was Judge Kerby Benedict from Santa Fe. He held several terms of court in Las Cruces. His history is well documented but belongs more to the northern part of the state than to Las Cruces.

At the same time, Samuel Jones, also an attorney, came to Las Cruces as Collector of Customs, though he practiced law at the same time. After the Civil War he transferred his residence to Las Cruces. He was the father of William Jones, the county clerk who was killed in 1879 by the Indians under Victorio. One of the very earliest settlers in the Río Grande was Hugh Stevenson, who came to El Paso about 1824. He settled on the north side of the Río Grande at a place called Concordia and was married to a daughter of the Ascarate family, who had a hacienda in that region. He was a merchant and especially a

silver buyer, but is well known in Las Cruces as having begun the mining of silver in the Organ Mountains. At that time he had a mine two or three miles southwest of Organ, which was known then as the Santo Domingo de la Calzada, later known as the Bennett Stevenson. He operated it between the years 1851 and 1859, when he sold it to a group of officers from Ft. Fillmore, who were unable to take possession because of the outbreak of the Civil War. Stephenson died in 1870 at La Mesa. His son was several times county clerk of Doña Ana County, and many of his descendants still live in the vicinity. After the construction of the Las Cruces Canal, Josephus Harris built a mill at the point where the surplus water of the canal was deposited in an old riverbed. This was, at the time, one of the better mills in Doña Ana County since the fall of water was considerable, amounting to seven or eight feet. He established what was then known as a flouring mill, meaning a mill that would grind flour which would satisfy government specifications. He was also aided in establishing the mill by Thomas Bull.

Thomas Bull had been a clerk in the quartermaster's department at Ft. Fillmore. About 1852 he left the service of the military and established a lumber mill, where lumber was sawed in the Organ Mountains for construction of the fort. When this contract expired, he obtained a contract that furnished beef for the soldiers, established the ranch at San Agustín on the eastern side of the Organ Mountains, and made a treaty with the chief of the Apache Indians who were established at that spring, in which he furnished provisions. In exchange, they took care of his herd, which he had at that place. He came to Las Cruces and established a hotel south of the town plaza, which is now the place of St. Genevieve's Catholic Church. But soon afterwards he went to Mesilla where he became the largest merchant and farmer in that region. Most of his farming was devoted to vineyards. He made each year thousands of gallons of wine and of brandy. He later served as probate judge of Doña Ana County and also as sheriff. Emmett Barns conducted a freight line between the towns of Río Grande and Pinos

Altos. He had a large ranch on the Mimbres River and a lease on the property at Ft. Thorn. His operations were on a very large scale until the time of the Civil War. At that time he was present when a Union spy was hanged at Doña Ana and was later indicted for the offense, but the case never came to trial.

Michael Stechs also had activities at Ft. Thorn after its abandonment by the military. Although primarily known as an Indian agent, he was very active in Doña Ana County. He filed the location of some ore-bearing properties lying between Doña Ana and Robledo. Whether he ever developed the property is not known, but later it was used in the production of coal, since in 1869 a miner was killed while working in a coal pit three or four miles from Ft. Selden. Martín Amador came to Las Cruces in 1859 to settle permanently, although he stated later that he and his brother had both been in Las Cruces in 1849. He had operated a freight line between Ft. Fillmore and Santa Fe as well as between Ft. Fillmore, El Paso and Chihuahua. When he came to Las Cruces, he became actively engaged in anything connected with horses. As a freighter he also had a line of stages between Las Cruces and Mesilla, and later became a hotel owner under which he is best known.

James Dicks was a clerk of Ft. Fillmore for several years, either for the quartermaster or for one of the private stores at that place. After the abandonment of Ft. Fillmore, he settled in the valley and had merchandise establishments in both Las Cruces and Mesilla, later moving his business entirely to the latter place.

Pedro Aguirre was one of the earlier settlers in Doña Ana but was largely interested in mining. As early as 1854 he operated a lead and silver mine in what was then called the Soledad Canyon, which is not the same as has received the name today. The mine was above the rock known as the Cueva. It was operated successfully both for its lead content and for the silver. His brother, Modesto Aguirre, had a copper mine some quarter mile north of the present town

of Organ, which he was operating in 1864. Apparently the production was very low, since it is not mentioned in the census of that year.

Established in Las Cruces was a brewing and distillery setup by John May, a brewer, and Peter Duke, a distiller, on the corner of Main and May Street. When the water proved unsatisfactor for brewing, the building was eventually changed into a hotel managed by May called The Río Grande. Peter Duke seems to have disappeared shortly after the Civil War, although he was in no way concerned in the conflict.

The first merchant on a large scale was Antonio Constante, a Peruvian. Late in 1852 or early in 1853, while a wagon train which he owned was on the way to Ft. Webster, it was attacked by Apaches and totally destroyed. Constante never seemed to have recovered financially from this loss, since naturally there was no insurance, and thereafter was either a merchant on a small scale or a clerk in merchandising establishments of other businessmen in Las Cruces and Mesilla.

Of the officers who served in Doña Ana County, few of them seemed to have turned prominent in local affairs. Lt. L.W. O'Bannon, who served in 1849 in the garrison at Doña Ana, seems to have been well established financially, for he loaned considerable amounts of money to farmers and others in the valley. About the middle of the 1850s a group of Frenchmen entered the territory of New Mexico by way of México. Most of these established themselves as merchants in Mesilla. However, one, Eugene Leonart, by far the wealthiest man in the valley at that time, built a house in Las Cruces. In the Census of 1860 he was listed as living in a house with five male servants under the business heading of "Gentleman." At that time the term usually meant a gambler, and it is probable that Eugene Leonart exercised this profession. He also had a business connection in Mesilla with a partner, Eugene Augustin Maurin. It is worthy of note that practically all of these Frenchmen who came in at that time died violent deaths in the Mesilla Valley.

Fr: How did the name of the town of Las Cruces originate?

F: The so-called Camino Real ran along the foothills of the Río Grande some little distance from the valley, which then was impassable. Only at rare intervals when the course of the river approached the foothills was it possible to obtain water for overnight camping. There were perhaps half a dozen of these, not all in the same place, between El Paso and the Jornada del Muerto. One of these was on the arroyo just north of Las Cruces, another on the arroyo now called Las Cruces Arroyo just to the south. Eventually, as people either died on the road and were carried to the overnight camping place for burial, or were killed by Apaches at the camping places, a small number of graves began to appear, each one marked with a wooden cross wherever possible. Las Cruces did not exist or was not known prior to about 1839, since these crosses could be found at almost any of the campgrounds. In that year a group of some 45 people coming down to visit relatives and friends in El Paso were attacked by Apaches and all except two or three were killed. These made their way to El Paso and informed the friends of that place, who returned and buried each of these victims of the Apaches separately, erecting a wooden cross above the graves which were piled high with stones in order to prevent the bodies from being dug up by animals. These crosses made quite a showing, considerably more than were found in any other of the camping places, and the name of Las Cruces was applied to this particular spot. Each one of these camping places had a name which was obtained from some landmark or something that distinguished it from the others of the same type. For instance, the oldest one which received a name was Doña Ana. Doña Ana was the first European settler to die within the limits of New Mexico. She was on Oñate's expedition and died during the trip from Las Cruces to the spot where she was buried. Unfortunately we know nothing about the history of this particular person, except that she was under the age of 12 and over the age of one week. Oñate simply states, "We buried a child." By the way, the first postmaster of Las Cruces was Benjamin Read. He was not too well versed in the

Spanish language and he, in applying for the post office, spelled it "Cruzces."

It was not changed until almost 10 years later.

Fr: How were names spelled?

F: Maurin was spelled M-a-u-r-i-n correctly, although at the time most of the newspapers, according to the Spanish pronunciation, simply stated it M-o-r-i-n.

Leonart--L-e-o-n-a-r-t; there is no newspaper report on him since he was a Confederate sympathizer in 1862, long before any newspaper had been printed in the vicinity. Read I have seen spelled R-e-e-d, R-e-i-d, and R-e-a-d. I think that Read is correct; at least his son, who was attorney for the Santa Fe Railroad, spelled it in that manner.

Fr: Why was the county seat established at Las Cruces?

F: Mesilla was a much larger town at that time, but its territory was disputed between the United States and México, and so could not have been chosen. Doña Ana also had double the population, however there were few Americans living in that place, certainly not more than two or three, and none of them were politically minded. It seemed possible that some of the Americans who were interested in politics from Las Cruces were present at the meeting of the legislature. Many people say that it was Isidro Armijo and Henry Cuniff who in Santa Fe persuaded the legislature to adopt Las Cruces as the county seat. At that time Las Cruces was beginning to receive a good number of politically minded people from Texas and especially El Paso, which is probably the reason they had a great deal more political acumen than any of the other towns in the county.

Fr: Were there any historic floods in the period prior to the Civil War?

F: There were none of sufficient severity to be recorded. However, there were a number of pits near the irrigation canal which had been opened by people who were making adobes. A severe flood in 1854 and again in 1855 filled these pits with water, which became stagnant and became a breeding place for mosquitoes. In 1854 the epidemic of malaria became so bad that the surgeon at Ft. Fillmore, who was the only doctor obtainable, advised the filling in of the pits. This was

done, but the land settled and in the following year the epidemic was even more severe. It is said that almost every family had at least one member of the family prostrated, and about 20% of the citizens of Las Cruces died. For that reason, largely, the county seat was moved to Mesilla, since the officers of the court refused to come to an unhealthy place, Mesilla having been only touched lightly by the epidemic.

Fr: How serious was the 1875 flood, which I understand had the largest volume of water for some time?

F: The flood of 1875 was surprisingly large. The water did not come from an arroyo of any size; it came from a very small depression which was only about a mile or two long east of the city. At that time it was called Deluge Gulch. The flood occurred in September when the ground had been well saturated with water and could receive no more. Every house in town south of the present site of the post office fell. Naturally they were all built of adobe and were some 75 in number. The buildings of the Loretto Academy were also lost. For a considerable time thereafter a brush dam was built in order to divert the water from this gulch into one of the larger streams where it could be handled. During the 1880s the newspapers reminded the public practically every year that the dam was in bad condition and should be repaired. Eventually, since no more floods occurred, the dam was completely forgotten and even the name of the gulch is not known at the present time. One of the school buildings at the present time in Las Cruces is built exactly at the bottom of this depression.

Fr: Where were bricks manufactured or obtained previous to the coming of the Santa Fe Railroad?

F: Bricks were built wherever a man who knew how to build them would erect a kiln. The first one that was known was erected at the point where the Las Cruces-Mesilla Road crossed the Río Grande. It was built by Augustin Maurin as use of building material in Mesilla. One of the buildings which he built previous to 1863 still stands on the corner facing the plaza. The northern half of the

building was built in the year 1853. The only way in which we can locate the site of the kiln is from the fact that he forgot to obtain title to the land, and in 1863 he applied for possession of it, stating that his kiln alongside the river was then being used in the manufacture of bricks for the second part of his building. Thereafter, bricks could be made and were made almost anywhere up and down the valley. St. Genevieve's Church is built of brick which was burned in Las Cruces. Many of the other buildings at the same time or in previous years were also burned at any site where the clay was suitable. The floors of the buildings at Ft. Fillmore were burned brick. However, this was a much poorer quality than those which were made thereafter. It is worth noting also that the bricks baked in the Maurin kiln were not as good as those that were afterwards made in and about Las Cruces.

Fr: What was the condition of the roads or highways in those days?

F: The Camino Real, that is to say, the road which ran from Chihuahua to Santa Fe, ran through Las Cruces at a slight angle east of the town as it was first established. It must have been in a very poor condition since the first probate judge, Richard Campbell, as soon as he arrived in the city, appointed five men who lived north of Las Cruces and another five who lived south of Las Cruces to view out a new road, mark it with sticks, stones, or some other means by which it could be recognized; and then apportion to these various people, one of whom was appointed road supervisor, to use all of the men living along that part of the county in working the roads which had never been improved before that time. At that time it was necessary that every citizen, except a few who were excused for various reasons, should spend at least one day in working the county roads. It was under this power that he appointed the road supervisor and ordered the citizens to improve the roads. At that time there was no direct road from Las Cruces east of the Organ Mountains. One road ran from Ft. Fillmore to the Stevenson mine. There has been considerable difficulty in locating the route which the retreating Union soldiers from Ft. Fillmore took.

As a matter of fact they went straight to the mountains, hit the Organs about the vicinity of the Cueva, then ran along the foothills to the Organ Pass.

It is because of this rather long road that Col. Baylor was able to go directly to the Organ Pass and intercept most of the Union troops who were retreating in that direction.

Fr: Who made the survey of Las Cruces and when was it made?

F: The survey of Las Cruces was made by Lt. Trevit, who came to Doña Ana in November of 1849. During the summer a large group of Mexican citizens had been busily engaged in constructing a canal about seven miles in length. As they advanced the work of the canal, the workers and their families lived in some sort of brush huts or other shelters. As the work proceeded southward, when the canal was completed they were at a place called Las Cruces, since the condition of the land did not allow the canal to be carried further. Lt. Trevit came down at the request of the justice of the peace Pablo Meléndrez, and laid out three north-south streets. One of these was called Water, one was called Main, and one was called Church. A year or two later, two more were added though I do not know who conducted the survey. The east-west cross streets were not named. As a matter of fact, they received no names until after 1880. At first a block was reserved, marked "Block 0," although it came between Block 22 and 23, and was reserved for a public plaza. However, due to the peculiar situation at the time, this was eventually lost to the city. In the original survey a half block had been reserved for the church east of Church Street and opposite the present St. Genevieve's Church of Las Cruces. When Las Cruces was chosen as the county seat, there was no building of sufficient size in the town to accommodate the court. As a result, the citizens banded together to build such a building; it is probable that the Armijos and Henry Cuniff furnished the funds that were necessary. The people of the town furnished the labor, made the adobes, and built the building. There were no titles to the land since titles were not given until the probate judge reached the town. The building was built on the public plaza

with the idea that when it was no longer necessary as a courthouse it could be used for other civic purposes. However, in 1855 when the epidemic of malaria struck Las Cruces, the people were in no condition either physically or financially to build a church, and the women of the town, since they had no recourse to medical assistance, were very much concerned about the religious situation in the town, there having been no building erected on the lot reserved for that purpose, except a small jacal. There was at that time no priest in Las Cruces, the town being served from Doña Ana. As a result they demanded that the building which had been used as a courthouse be given as a church in order that a priest might conduct mass and other services within the city. This was granted. A building was bought for the courthouse; however, it was used only for one session of the probate court since the district court moved to Mesilla at that time. With the result, in order to obtain possession of the church, the county probate judge, Richard Campbell, deeded the east half of the town plaza to the church for use as a church school or other similar purpose. The west half of the block afterwards came into possession of the church in 1886-1887, by a means which is not yet fully understood.

Frank Flecher, very often spelled Fletcher and pronounced "Fletcher" by the Americans although he was a Frenchman (the correct spelling was Flecher and pronounced "Fleshay") was known as Francois, Francisco, or Frank, depending upon the language in which he was addresses, since he spoke fluently all three of the languages, as well as some Indian dialects.

Chaffre Martinelli was listed as a Frenchman, although as a matter of fact he was born in the Piedmont and was an Italian. However the Piedmont at that time was in the possession of the French.

Fr: When did the cross streets receive their names and how were they chosen?

F: They seemed to have received their names in 1880 or 1881, since after the publication of the Río Grande Republican they seemed to have become already established. This was first published in 1881. Thus Lohman Street, which was

then the southern most street in the town, was named for Martin Lohman. Most of the streets have some connection with the people for whom they are named. Martin Lohman was married to the daughter of Jacob Schaublin, who owned a mill which still has the name of El Molino. Lohman first came to Las Cruces about 1880. He worked previously in a store which is situated where John's Newsstand is now located. Later, two of his brothers came to join him. He was afterwards sheriff of Doña Ana County. Amador Street was named for Martín Amador who built the Amador Hotel, which still stands. Bowman Street was named for George Bowman, who came to the country in the early 1870s in connection with the land office, and afterwards had a bank and various other business interests in Las Cruces. May Street was named for John May who had a brewery at the corner of Main and May, and afterwards a hotel at the same location, called the Río Grande Hotel. Griggs was named for a merchant in Mesilla. He was already dead at the time that the street was named for him. He previously had had a store on the corner of Main and Griggs Street; however, he had sold this long before the street received its name. Organ Street, of course, was named for the mountains. Las Cruces Avenue was first called Railroad Avenue. Afterwards for some reason it was changed and became Las Cruces. Court Street was named for the first courthouse built in Las Cruces, the site of which was donated by the land company which developed that part of Las Cruces which lies west of the canal. Hadley Street was named for Hiram Hadley, a Quaker from Indiana who first came to Las Cruces as a land agent. Later he organized a school which was later to become the nucleus of the New Mexico State University. Mountain Avenue was developed much later and received its name because of its nearness to Organ Street. Lucero Street was named for Joseph Lucero, who owned the land at the corner of Lucero and Main. Piccacio Street was the old road which led to Piccacio, which was once the place where the road crossed the Río Grande on its way westward. Mesilla Street is so called because it was at one time the main road from Las Cruces to Mesilla. On the west side of the canal, Alameda Street was named

because of a park, a health sanitarium which was opened at the north end of the street of that name. Meléndrez Street was named for Pablo Meléndrez, the probate judge at the time this addition to Las Cruces was developed in 1881, and Armijo Street was named for the man who had sold the land to the development company.

Fr: Was Joseph Lucero also known as José Lucero?

F: Yes, he was the same man. José and his brother Felipe were alternately sheriffs of Doña Ana County for several years soon after 1900.

Fr: Can you tell us more about the Las Cruces Canal--how it received its name, how it was developed, and where it came from the river?

F: The Las Cruces Canal was developed in much the same way as most of those that were undertaken in the civil colony grants. A group of people assembled and dug the canal. In exchange they were to receive the land which was to be cultivated by the irrigation; also, if they were available, town lots if a new town was to develop somewhere along the end of the canal. In the winter of 1848, after a garrison had been established in Doña Ana and the country became safe, a group of people gathered and developed and built the canal, which probably issued from the river at the first bend south of Doña Ana. The Doña Ana canal itself had its headgate at the bend in the river about three miles above that town. The Las Cruces canal parallels the Doña Ana canal and was approximately a mile or so longer, and finally ended when it was no longer possible to extend it between the river and the bank of the foothills. At the end of it, as was customary in most cases, there was a mill site where the water from the canal was returned to the river.

Fr: What caused the change in the course of the Río Grande, which left Mesilla on the same side of the river as Las Cruces?

F: The years 1862, '63, and '64 were very rainy all throughout New Mexico. In the year 1862, there was already some danger that the river might change its course, and all the farmers between Piccacio and La Mesa were ordered to report

to work on the dam. The case was so serious that those who failed to report were fined and obliged to renew their work later. In 1864 the season was so rainy that, according to the government reports, there was no corn grown anywhere in New Mexico and all of it had to be brought in at great expense from the East for the cavalry horses. At that time the canal, which supplied water to Precinct 5 of Mesilla and all the towns farther down on the western side of the river, had a headgate near the present site of the town of Piccacio. In fact, there were two headgates adjoining each other and separated by a dike. One of these irrigated the land which is now west of the river at Piccacio, the other one ran down the valley and irrigated everything on the west side of the Río Grande as far south as agriculture was possible. In order to obtain all the water from the river, even in times when the water was low, this canal was very carelessly dug to the level of the bed of the river. Usually it was customary to have the headgate several feet above the river bed and raise the water to flow into the headgate by means of baskets or some sort of an obstruction. However in this case, very injudiciously it was dug down to the bed of the river. In 1865 there was a tremendous runoff. Four or five million acre feet is said to have run down the Río Grande and it washed out the headgates completely of the westside canal. When it returned to normal, it abandoned its course between Las Cruces and Mesilla and flowed down the old course of the westside canal. It is probably for that reason that the river is so straight between Piccacio and Mesilla Dam.

Fr: When did the railroad first reach Las Cruces?

F: The first trains, which ran from Rincon to El Paso, passed Las Cruces early in June 1881. The roadbed had in many places been built well down in the river valley, and as a result for several years thereafter there were long delays when the river floodswashed out the railroad tracks, and they were obliged to be moved to higher ground. Another place where the railroad continuously suffered from soft ground on the tracks was immediately south of Doña Ana. It

was at that point where a worktrain consisting of an engine and several cars was buried in the quicksand. The engine was removed later, but the cars still remain deeply buried in the river bed. The track was not well balanced for several years, and very often after rains in the late summer the road between Las Cruces and El Paso was so soft that the trains could not pass or were sometimes delayed for several days. The rock for balancing the roadbed of the Santa Fe Railroad was obtained at a place now called Radium Springs.

Fr: Did Indians ever attack Las Cruces?

F: Indians never approached close to Las Cruces. They very often came to within a mile or two in order to steal stock. One of the largest raids was conducted against the ranch of Flecher, which was about a mile to the north. Many of the Las Cruceans were of course killed by Indians, but not in the town itself. The Organ Mountains were very dangerous for freighters or others who were passing to Tularosa or parts east of the Tularosa Basin. Very often Indians came from the south, as there was a refuge near Canutillo covered with bosque in which they could conceal stock for several days before it could be discovered. There were sometimes reports that Indians had actually entered the town, but it is more probable that in those cases they were Americans who had put on mocassins for the occasion in order that their tracks might be considered those of Indians. _____ was killed at the Cueva rock east of Las Cruces in 1869. Some people still believe that he was killed by Americans who were dressed as Indians.

Fr: How did the town bring back the county seat from Mesilla?

F: In the election of 1881, _____ was elected representative from this district. During the campaign, it had been said that nothing could be done about the removal of the courthouse from Mesilla to Las Cruces. However, shortly after the legislature had met, several prominent people of Las Cruces disappeared, and in a single day--probably with the help of bribes or some other similar means--both the Senate and House in Santa Fe passed a bill changing the county seat from Mesilla to Las Cruces. The first notice that the Mesilla people had of the change was

received in the telegraphic report that the bill had been already passed. However, Las Cruces had no place in which a court could be housed. The first courthouse in Doña Ana County was purchased in 1866. Previous to that time, buildings had been rented for the use of the court and the books were kept in the houses of the county officers themselves. However, three persons from Mesilla contested the election at first, and later at a bond issue the matter was brought up before Judge Driscoll at Mesilla, and he determined that the bond issue of \$30,000 was illegal since there had been irregularities in many of the voting precincts. However, the people of Las Cruces were determined to have the county seat moved as soon as possible. Wagons were sent over, accompanied by armed men who seized all the court records and any others records available, and stored them in the building on Main Street which belonged at that time to Guadalupe Ascarate. They were not available for nearly two years. In order to provide a suitable place for the holding of the district and United States courts, Martín Amador, who had built a new house on Amador Street (one which existed until less than a year ago), agreed to rebuild his old building east of Water Street for the purpose of the court. The construction was carried out in 1883. The building was built with a high hall in the center which permitted the holding of court sessions, and a strong room was provided for the cages of the jail. This was in use for almost a year, until finally a new election was held, bonds were voted, and a courthouse was built on a block donated by the New Mexico Town Improvement Company. This building served until about 1930, when it was replaced by the present courthouse.

Fr: What was the place called "Las Liebres?"

F: In the early days in Las Cruces when lots were allotted, there were certain people whom the foremost citizens considered undesirable. These were not able to file upon lots, so they selected building sites south of Lohman Avenue at the base of the foothills on what is now Solano Avenue and built a town called Las Liebres. It was quite well known until about 1865. After that it seems

to have disappeared as the town of Las Cruces began to expand, and until about 1890 occurred very frequently in deeds which still made descriptions of sites as being in the old town of Las Liebres. The use of the term now seems to have entirely disappeared.

Fr: When was the Academy of the Sisters of Loretto built?

F: The Academy of the Visitation, which was the official name of the academy conducted by the Sisters of Loretto, was first begun in the year 1870, when Bishop _____ made a trip to Kentucky and obtained the promise of some of the sisters who would conduct the school in Las Cruces. The land purchased then largely consisted of sand hills apparently under ownership, since he purchased a lot here and a lot there at a very low price since they were apparently not considered of very great value, and a small academy was built in 1870. However, this was entirely destroyed by the flood of 1875. A considerable amount of the land (which was riverbed) flooded at the time, and it was realized that it was not suitable. So much grating work was done until the land on Lohman Avenue was brought to the street level and a new building was built at that time. The Academy was meant not only for girls from Las Cruces, but from all over New Mexico, and especially the daughters of Americans in México. It was at the time one of the foremost academies in the country within many hundreds of miles. It was not an expensive place; the tuition for nine months, including all expenses--board, lodging, books, and tuition--was \$200.00 per year.

Fr: Was this the first school in Las Cruces?

F: There had been schools in Las Cruces before, usually conducted by itinerant teachers, lasting sometimes for two or three months in the year, usually in the Fall. In about 1875 there was a small amount of money available for the payment of teachers. In the year 1879, for instance, in Las Cruces the amount was \$200.00, which was available for the payment of teachers and the conduct of the schools. However in that year, there was considerable confusion since

two candidates--one from each of the political parties--wished to become schoolteacher. As a result, the money was divided, \$100.00 to each one, and each held a school lasting for two months. But they were held simultaneously, so that some of the children attended one school and some attended the other, instead of extending it over a four-month period. In 1880 however, Martín Amador and various other prominent citizens of Las Cruces decided to build a schoolhouse, since previously school had been held in rented rooms which were often quite unsatisfactory. Among the families who were interested in this proposal were those of Henry Cuniff and the Luceros. Martín Amador himself had no children of school age at the time; nevertheless he donated a part of his property which lies on Alameda and Amador and by public subscription a schoolhouse was built, which the paper described as a very fine building of two rooms, only one of which was used at that time. This met with considerable opposition from many people who considered that public schools were immensely inferior to those conducted by the Church, and the argument became so bitter that the priest at that time was recalled and replaced by Father La Seine in the year 1882. The school was still in operation; however, later in 1883, the land was purchased by Martín Amador and is now the property of the school system and is occupied by the administration building of the public schools.

Fr: Mr. Feather, I receive the impression from your earlier remarks that only girls went to the Loretto Academy, but I know from my own knowledge (having attended that school) that boys also went there. Can you tell us about those days?

F: From time to time parents would become dissatisfied with the conduct of the public schools, especially because of the crowded conditions or because at that time, since teachers were not accredited all over the state, some of them were incompetent to carry on their duties. As a result, the Sisters of Loretto were often persuaded to receive boys, which they sometimes did for a period of several years. Eventually they returned to the teaching of girls

only. This was especially true about 1890, when the new educational law came into effect in New Mexico and the schools were tremendously overcrowded. In the year 1893, there were somewhat more than 300 pupils in the Las Cruces public schools with only three teachers, the intermediate class having an attendance of 137 with a single teacher. I am quite ready to admit that they did accept boys. As a matter of fact, I know it from my own experience. Shortly before the Academy of the Visitation was abandoned and the teachers moved to El Paso, my own son attended for a period of two or three years.

Fr: Is the building called "El Molino" the oldest in town?

F: It could well be. It was built very substantially since the people who had charge of it were millers on quite a large scale. Of course, when the town was first settled, the place where the water is returned to the riverbed was an exceptionally fine mill site since there was a fall of several feet. It belonged first to one of the early citizens; later it was purchased by Thomas Bull and James Harris, two very wealthy people, who later sold it to a man and his wife named Draper, who also were quite wealthy. Afterwards it passed into the hands of the Lisinsky brothers, for whom it was managed by a Swiss named _____, and eventually it was managed by Jacob Schaublin. The mill ground a surprisingly great amount of both cornmeal and wheat flour, considering the fact that it was entirely operated by water power. Schaublin purchased a steam mill which he held in readiness in case that the water power should fail. But as far as is known, it was never used. Naturally the river failed occasionally in the late summer, but that was usually during the period of the year when no wheat was available for grinding. As far as is known, the mill was used during its entire existence driven by water power. The building was very substantial; afterwards it was used as a residence by Martin Lohman and it could well be that it is still the same building that was built in the early 1870s.

Fr: Was there another mill in Las Cruces?

- F: Yes. A mill was established in the early 1870s using the surplus water from the Doña Ana Ditch. It was located at about the point where Highway 70 joins Highway 80; that is to say, at the northern end of Main Street. It was first built by Tulley and Ochoa, which was at that time one of the largest trading outfits in the southwest, having their headquarters at the site of old Ft. Thorn, and usually having as many as a dozen or more wagon trains on the road between Kansas City, El Paso, and Tucson. It was managed for many years by _____ Lucero, the father of José and Felipe Lucero, the Doña Ana County sheriffs. Practically all of the wheat that was ground there in the early years was used in filling Army contracts. However, when the right to use the water power was given to Tulley and Ochoa, it was agreed that they must mill the wheat grown by the farmers on the Doña Ana Ditch for three bits a bushel, which is now 37 1/2¢. How long that tariff remained operative, I cannot say.
- Fr: The first merchants in Las Cruces were mostly people who came up from El Paso or who owned freight lines. Some of the retail merchants who first opened up in the town were James Lucas, John Bryant, and Theodore Miller. Miller didn't stay long. He soon returned to El Paso and entered the mercantile business there. James Lucas was from a family of politicians, first in Pennsylvania and later in Missouri, and finally he came to New Mexico. In all of these locations they had held prominent political offices. Lucas was the first representative to the legislative assembly from Doña Ana County in the Territory of New Mexico. At the end of the Civil War, at the approach of the California Column, he left New Mexico along with most of the other Confederate sympathizers and did not return until 1879, when he settled in the Grant County region. There he held the office of public school superintendent for at least one term. Little is known of John Bryant. He was a merchant but he also took out many licenses for public functions in the town.
- Two freight lines were Tulley and Ochoa, whose business in Las Cruces was managed by Jesús Ochoa, and the Armijo Brothers, who were located in Albuquerque,

and Rafael Armijo was the agent in this part of the country. They first came in well before the Civil War, and were merchants on a very large scale. During the war, they were obliged to leave, since they were Confederate sympathizers, and they went down to México, where the family owned a very large grant of land and considerable numbers of cattle. During the Civil War, their affairs were entrusted to a man named Reyes Escontrías, who was probably not a very dependable man. After the war, it was found that he had absconded to México, taking along not only property of the Armijos, but also the collections which he had made as sheriff of Doña Ana County. At the time it was stated that the Armijos owned property in Doña Ana County to the value of \$200,000.00, which was a considerable sum in those days. Unfortunately, little is known about the case, but it probably would have been very interesting. Escontrías escaped to México but was brought back on the charge of kidnapping. There seems to be no record of who was kidnapped or of the case in the courts. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment. After the year was over, he was served with a _____ patria, which means he must not leave the country until the case was finally settled.

After the Civil War, numerous people opened up small businesses in Las Cruces. John Ward had a hotel, S. A. Coster was a butcher, J. C. Grogan made saddles, Peter Duke and John May were distillers and brewers, Augustin La Count was a baker. The merchants were Jesús Ochoa, John Zoler, Antonio Constante, Chaffre Martinelli, Henry Cuniff, and Eugene Leonart, who also lent money to other merchants, other industries, and apparently was a capitalist of considerable influence. John Zoler later went to El Paso, as did also Alfred Bushos. Antonio Constante was a Peruvian. He had come to New Mexico in about 1850 or 1851, but suffered the misfortune of having an entire wagon train, which was en route to the Mimbres Valley, captured by Indians who

killed all the livestock and destroyed all the property. Thereafter he was only a merchant on a very small scale. Chaffre Martinelli was from the Piedmont. He was rather young in years at the time that he came to Las Cruces, and later went to Rodeo, which was then called Colorado, where he established a mill. In 1880 he was killed by cattle thieves and bandits belonging to the Evans Gang. Henry Cuniff remained in Las Cruces during his entire lifetime. Several times he went into the mercantile business, and as often would sell out in order to accept some public office, either by election or by appointment.

About this time Louis Rosenbaum established himself in Las Cruces as a wholesale and retail merchant. He was evidently a man of considerable capital, since he financed most of the post traders on the nearby forts. Certainly he provided all of the capital for the post at Ft. Cummings. In 1879, having accumulated a considerable fortune, he left the country and returned to New York.

At the same time were Harry and Charles Lisinsky, who established a business on the site of the present John's Newsstand, and later maintained branch offices in at least seven towns from El Paso to Tucson. The Lisinskys were especially interested in mining. Probably a good part of the profits from their mercantile transactions went into loans to prospectors with the prospect of obtaining at least part of anything that might be discovered. Eventually this paid off, for prospectors from Silver City discovered an intensely valuable mine at the district which is now called Morenci and Clifton, Arizona, which was eventually sold for \$3 million. They also maintained cattle ranches, being owners along with a man named Davis of the San Agustín Ranch on the east side of the Organ Mountains. Sometime about 1870 a Swiss named Newma Raymond came over at the invitation of the Lisinskys and established himself as manager of one of their branch offices at Paraje, on the

northern side of the Jornada del Muerto. When the stage lines from El Paso to Santa Fe ran into difficulties, the contract was taken over by the Lisinskys and given to Newma Raymond to manage. It was extremely successful. When the Lisinskys returned to New York in 1881, Raymond was given the charge of the store in Las Cruces.

The two Freudenthal brothers who had come also as clerks in the Lisinsky store, moved down Main Street to a site opposite St. Genevieve's Church, and there they established a store of their own. In addition, later they also operated the Don Barnardo Hotel. The firm name was Louis Freudenthal and Company. The same company also had interests in El Paso and possibly in other towns. When Louis Rosenbaum left the city, the business was divided among two relatives. Desauer maintained a store at the corner of Griggs and Main, occupying the half block now used by the post office and the Herndon Hotel. He later became a contractor. It is likely that most of the retail business was taken by the Blums, the heavier by Desauer.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: George A. Feather
INTERVIEWER: S. H. Newman
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 15, 1972
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 30B
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 30B
TRANSCRIBER: _____
DATE TRANSCRIBED: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Southwest historian and professor.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Martin Amador.

1 hour (15/16 tape speed); 14 pages.

G. Adlai Feather of Mesilla Park, New Mexico
Interviewed by Bud Newman
September 15, 1972

F: What did you want to know about Amador?

N: Well, I just want to know a little more about him. The story is this: I sent out about a year or a year-and-a-half ago letters to most of your New Mexico libraries inviting people to write in and be guest editor in this column of mine, "Southwest Archives" in Password. Mrs. Barrett, Assistant Librarian at NMSU, wrote a very nice paper. Actually the paper had been given as a speech to the Doña Ana County Historical Society several years back--I believe that's what she said--but, anyway, she describes the Amador Collection. It's a very nice description but she doesn't give me any idea who Amador was. He was a contemporary of my grandfather. I don't think it's publishable the way it is. I thought I would rewrite it and keep her name on it.

F: Have you seen the collection?

N: I've seen parts of it.

F: It's all in two rooms now up at the Citizen's National Bank.

N: But nobody over there seems to know who Martín Amador was. I want to know who he was and which of his descendants gave the collection to NMSU.

F: It was bought with the building and the building was sold necessarily. It belonged to Martín Campbell. He sold it and retired and went to Mexico. He was in very bad health. Now I don't know whether Martín is alive or not. He was a member of the Rotary and he dropped out about three years ago and went to the hospital.

N: You're not talking about the first Martín, are you?

F: No, his grandson, Martín Campbell. I was a good friend of his as long as we used to attend every Wednesday at the Rotary.

N: Campbell, now he's the one who sold the hotel?

F: Well, he sold it to a group up here who didn't pay that much down on it; and they went ahead and did a lot of reconstruction. Then, when the contractor came around to get the money, they threw him out. They refused to pay until Martín had to take it back. In the meantime, the money he had received (he had already gone to México and lived for a year down there), he couldn't afford to pay off the bank. So the thing was sold for the mortgage plus the amount due to the contractor and other debts they'd run around town. They were in debt to the liquor companys for, oh, I understand they had to pay for the liquor that they used for five or six months. They took it over and sold it to the Citizens Bank. The Citizens Bank made bank out of it. The best part of that collection /the Bank/ saved /since/ the furniture and everything went with /the sale/.

N: Who was responsible for selling it to the bank?

F: Well, Martín Campbell. When they threw it back to him, he had the mortgage that they'd taken out on it--he had that to pay plus all their debts. He didn't have the money, so it was sold. I don't know who arranged it, but people were worried here about what might happen to it. Then the Bank took it. They rebuilt the whole inside for a bank but they kept the outside /the same/. Then the furniture, a lot of it was just junk, they took it up here to the old convent. One of the three or four people who are directors of the recently-formed bank, they just bought a new bank, was the man that bought the convent up there and they sold off a lot of the things. I went up there pretty well arranged with the check-book 'cause there were some things that I wanted to bid on, /but/ I found out that those weren't up for sale. Most of the stuff they had for sale

was bedroom furniture and old _____, and they sold all that off. They didn't sell anything valuable, the bank kept those items. They have two rooms upstairs in the bank that aren't changed, they used those for the museum. Next door to it, on the corner they have another room that's reserved for the historical society. We now have all our light stuff papers and everything else stored up in that....

N: This is now the Citizens Bank. Now what year did all this happen more or less?

F: About five years ago.

N: Really, that recent? They've only had the Amador Collection about five years?

F: Oh, it was there in the hotel all the time. It was scattered all through the hotel--pictures and furniture. The hotel was built with the long rooms on both sides. Then upstairs is a long hall about 120 feet, and they had some of these on exhibit. It was quite an attraction of the hotel. But when they bought it, they took all of the best things that they had of historical or artistic value and put them in the two rooms and sold all the rest of the furniture. The furniture they sold was no loss to the museum or to history. I bought a little of it, but was quite disappointed because...well, I wasn't disappointed, I was glad that they--that things that were really valuable were kept by the bank. Emmerich on this side bought this place up here, this development and Simpson on this side _____ down the road, they were two of the original organizers of the bank.

N: Do you remember where Martín Amador was from?

F: I don't know. Only by tradition--and I think it's sound--that he was a

freighter that freighted for Fort Fillmore. Then he married a girl named Ruiz in Juárez who probably had plenty of cash. He doesn't appear very much in the newspapers and records at all until he began to blossom out about the middle of the '70s. He and another man had a store, and he evidently did a lot of freightin'. He had a lot of horses. He had a corral and leased horses. That was up there. His old house was knocked down about five or six years ago. He built that first. He had a store in Silver City and one down here. Whether he ever went to Kansas City as tradition says and ran a freight line, I don't know.

N: Was this possibly during the '50s or the '60s?

F: No, this was during the '70s. He was engaged in that business but he really didn't appear very important until the middle of the '70s. Apparently he had been doing that because he was a teamster when he first came, and I think he was interested in horses and freighting all the time. But I don't know, he doesn't appear in the records and there is nothing except a few references earlier into his life regarding horses. He had that corral. Now, I don't know whether this is true, but the record, the repetition is, but it's only orally, that when they were at Fort Fillmore, they had American horses that were no good out in this country but were wanted very much in Mexico for coach horses /because they were/ bigger. And they had a rule that if you owned your own horse, you could go over to Santo Tomás, which was where all the soldiers kept their mistresses, or to Mesilla, which was a rowdy place where they had bailes, or if you wanted to be respectable, you could go to Las Cruces. But if you had an American horse, you had to put it in the stable--you couldn't just tie it out and have it stolen. Now, that, I have never found out, never seen it actually written. And Martín Amador didn't do any writing himself. Then, in '74, I know he had

a store here--well, not here but he had one in Silver City with a partner and he did some freighting there. But he never appeared....I never.... actually heard about Martín Amador's train. All the other trains they kept track of, Varela, _____, and everything else, but they never mentioned Martín Amador in any of the reports. And he didn't own any land. Of course, there was no newspaper at that time except in Mesilla and it was about '74 or '75 that he really began blossoming out as a first rate citizen. /I/ mean _____ first rate, but leading citizen in Las Cruces. He built this house across the road that was raised about 1876 or '77. That was quite well publicized because the editor of the Las Cruces paper, the /Río Grande / Republican, boarded there--he had an apartment in that house. He gave a good deal of the story of Martín Amador. He boarded at the Amador residence not the hotel.

N: What year was that now?

F: That was in the '80s, but he /the editor/ went backwards to... He gave a lot of reports about things that happened backwards.

N: Oh, I see. So this is the Río Grande Republican?

F: Río Grande Republican. I didn't find Martín Amador mentioned in the Mesilla papers at all, which of course are not complete. He apparently was more in Silver City and freighting. I knew he had a freight to Chihuahua, and this descendent said he used to run a freight line to Kansas City, but I'm real doubtful about that.

N: Did he start the hotel?

F: Yes. He had a hotel in his house. Before that time he lived on a house at the corner of Amador and Main--that's his old house. It was torn down recently. He used that as a boarding house for a while. Now he never had

a license; of course, hotels didn't need a license. He never had a liquor license or anything else...doesn't appear in the records at all. He was a heavy Republican, a Republican leader. He built that house across the road where the hotel is, and then across from there, Celso Amador owned what was then a vacant lot, until recently.

N: Was that his son?

F: I don't know what the relation of Celso was. [He was Martín's nephew.] He wasn't Amador's son. He was either a brother or a cousin or something, but he was about the same age as Martín. They had this, as you probably read, this transfer of the courthouse from Mesilla to..... They pulled a fast one on Mesilla -- Falamon (?) and Southwick and Barela and those people. Lawyer Newcomb was elected state senator in 1878. And they promised that, They had to build a courthouse and everybody in Las Cruces said, "Oh, yes, Mesilla is the proper place. It's a bigger town," and so forth. Everybody rested quietly until about the first of January. The legislature met on the 4th. About the 1st of January Rynerson and Newcomb and various other people just disappeared on various errands. Oh, one of them was going to Dallas, "Oh I'm going this way," and other places. There's no mention of Santa Fe. On the night of the fifth, first day, Newcomb, of course, knew his way around and Rynerson had been a senator before -- they knew their way around, they had their bulging hip pockets. News came down that on the second day the county seat had been transferred to Las Cruces.

N: The Santa Fe Ring hit again.

F: Well, in 1882 they put up a bond issue, and the bond issue passed. But Bristol was president here and they had a lot of potent politicians in

Mesilla--they threw out three... As usual, they threw out three of the precincts for irregularities. So they took the case to Bristol. They protested that the election wasn't legal because three precincts had not been allowed to vote on the bond issue. And Bristol said, "That's right, the bond issue is no good." So they had to put it off until late in 1884. But in the meantime, the people in Las Cruces were hot about getting that courthouse over there because there was all those people coming down from Tularosa. The United States Marshal was a nephew of General Sherman (and though he finally left the state owing about \$10,000 to everybody) and he got the good idea.... They just passed this law regarding the Mormons--that you couldn't have more than one wife and if you had one wife you had to be married to her. So he went over to Tularosa and arrested practically the whole town. Nobody over there had been married. Protestants like to say, "Oh the priests charged such...fees," fees that they couldn't afford it. Well, that wasn't the reason. It was /a/ type of infamy to be married and not give a fiesta. The fiesta is what cost money. It was much better to just go live together as the, _____ could afford it. So he had them all arrested and brought over here. Well, they had to stay here two or three weeks...a couple of weeks, because they were all summoned on the first day of court. The court lasted a couple of weeks, and Las Cruces wanted that. So they went over one time and the courthouse had been legally moved. They took all the records and stored them over at Ascarate's house, which was torned down before the... Then they had to have a courthouse so they got Martín to take a.....it was apparently just a little corral with an outside wall. Now that was in 1883. This hotel does not go back later than that. The newspaper was watching Martín; they

had a notice about Martín Amador's progressiveness and his republican spirit. They needed to raise some money to help pay for the hotel so they could have an 1883 court there. He did, and it cost him \$2,000. But you know, the enthusiasm is hard to convert into cash, and they could only collect \$200. I forget whether it cost \$2,000 or \$4,000. But he got it back, because next door to him La Point had the saloon.

N: Lawrence La Point?

F: Yes. He built the house on Church Street and traded it to Lawrence La Point for the saloon. In those days, when the court came in, at least four or five people from out of town would come in and set up saloons because that was the principal recreation. Three or four organizations would come over to help maintain the lawyers and the various other people. He had the saloon right next to the courtroom. If you were in a hurry or if you had been a witness on the hearing, you could just walk across-- there was a courtyard on the other side. He had it painted in white, then had it painted as though it were made of stone, but the joints were just painted on. A picture appeared in the paper in 1883 sometime, and the court was held there. They didn't get the courthouse built 'til 1884, /the/ next year.

N: About what year do you recall Martín Amador died?

F: Well, it was after 1900.

/PAUSE/

N: (reading): Río Grande Republican, September 3, 1892. "Jacinto Armijo and Martín Amador were two candidates for Probate Judge in 1875. The Las Cruces Band was present and rendered some excellent music. The occasion of the meeting was helped out by the frequent firing of anvils. Amador,

of course, had the best of the discussion. The most pleasant feature of the evening was the music furnished by the band." /Laughter/.

F: Armijo was one of the early settlers here. He was a Republican politician. No, he was a Democrat. No, Amador was the Democrat at that time.

N: They sure did switch back and forth. (Reading): Río Grande Republican, June 13, 1885. "Amador is planning to make a first class hotel adding a second story. There will be about forty rooms."

F: Yes. It was only one story then and they held the courthouse there. Then afterwards he put on a second story and made a hotel of it. It was used first as a private....he leased suites in there.

N: It says here in the Río Grande Republican: "The new courthouse ready for district court March 24, 1884." (Reading): Río Grande Republican, April 8, 1882. "Don Martín has put on a hack between Las Cruces and Mesilla for /a/ fare of 20 cents. This is a great improvement of 50 cents one way or 75 cents round trip, which was exorbitant for a three-mile trip."

F: Yes, you see the court was still over there /in Mesilla/. He put on the hack so that people could get back and forth instead of having to stay in Mesilla. As a matter of fact, most of them stayed in Las Cruces anyway-- Mesilla was no place for a decent lawyer.

N: (Reading again): Río Grande Republican, June 5, 1886. "Martín Amador purchased the residence of Lawrence La Point which adjoined his hotel property. He is also arranging to pump water with a large tank arranged on the upper floor of his hotel by horsepower to supply the establishment and serve as fire protection."

F: That was the first water system and fire protection they had in Las Cruces. He used a horse on a treadmill.

- N: January 8, 1887, Río Grande Republican. "The Amador Hotel is the largest building in town--70 feet on Second Street and 140 feet on Water Street."
Río Grande Republican, November 20, 1889. "Martín Amador received appointment as Deputy Marshal for the Church district. February 18, 1881 he was elected president of a public school association."
- F: He was the one who organized this.
- N: Yes, I remember reading about it. They have pictures of the Amador hotel. August 23, 1890--He was Deputy United States Marshal, according to the Río Grande Republican.
- F: He was never sheriff.
- N: Never sheriff. He was about the only one up here who wasn't.
- F: He was Treasurer and probably a judge, but never a sheriff. He didn't have the establishment--you had to be a merchant. He died after 1910.
- N: Did he start all this collection, I mean, with any purpose or just...
- F: Oh, they were gathered here and there. Some of them I, if you found two or three articles, I'd take a /pencil/ and label them Amador; otherwise, it just appears if somebody else was the most important points of event.
- N: You say his brother Celso....
- F: I don't know what Celso was.
- N:took over the hotel after his death?
- F: No, no. He kept it up. And then /there was/ this fellow named Campbell who died here only eight or ten years ago, /he/ came in as a clerk. He was sort of a traveling businessman and he was head clerk at the hotel. He married Amador's daughter.
- N: Now he was named Campbell and his first name was Martín, too?
- F: No, Martín is the son.

N: Martín Campbell was the son of the first Frank Campbell who married Amador's daughter?

F: Yes. Now what was his name? I knew him very well, he was sort of a character. Campbell had... His wife was very artistic and she gathered a lot of things together. That was Martín Amador's daughter. Of course they were the leading citizens. And a couple of the pictures were painted in the '80s. The one I particularly wanted, I knew it was painted in the '80s because the only buildings West of the... were the new hotel, the railroad station which was built in '81, and the old courthouse which was built in 1884.

N: What was her name, do you recall that?

F: It began with a "A". Actually, it was Corina. Feather is thinking of Adelina. Somewhere in there I have the names and lists of all of his children... They had two children. One of them was a dancer. She taught my oldest daughter ballet--that must have been in the thirties. Then she fell in love with a lumberman. He decided she wasn't well enough educated to get around in his society so he sent her to school two years. I don't know whether it was a university or a finishing school. Then she died in Spain. Campbell had to go there--something about her estate. Apparently she had inherited a tremendous amount of jewelry from her husband. I think Martín went over too. He was over there a year and a half trying to get that estate settled. She died in Mallorca... Her wedding was quite an event, it was during prohibition. And the Mennonites Dunkards had sent two men down with the idea of buying for a colony the Heder Ranch, just above Toluco, which has 600 acres. They stayed at the Amador Hotel. Well, they had ginger ale and gin to celebrate the wedding. I wasn't there, but

Sir Austin told me about it. They had the gin in ginger ale bottles. That's the way it came from the still. They sometimes /gɒt/ mixed /ʊp/. When they /θɒt/ they had a mixture of ginger ale and gin, they'd have two....really mixing two gins. The uproar was at its height, everybody was enjoying themselves, when these two bearded people appeared looking over the rail, horrified, absolutely horrified. And they didn't even spend the rest of the night /ðere/. They managed to get out of town that night; they didn't want to come to this country, and Heder did not sell his ranch to them.

But any accident going in where it happened stopped at the Amador Hotel. It deserved the reputation. Sir Austin was there. He was a feed buyer from a Connecticut firm. He came home one night and he smelled smoke--somebody in one of the second floor rooms had gone to bed smoking a cigarette and his mattress was smouldering--so he called the night clerk. He got in, and when the smoke got thinner, they took the burning mattress and threw it out of the second story window. Well, there was awning on the first story windows, it was the one that faced the canal, and inside was a lady who was staying here because she had a nervous disorder. She suddenly woke up and saw this fire just outside her window, and she went into hysterics, so they rushed in to aid her. The canal was an open canal then. They took the mattress and all this other stuff burning and threw it in the canal, which was full of water. /sɪns the cana/ was full of water, /ðe mattress/ floated down until it got to the bridge that's on the side of the courthouse--a wooden bridge covered with tar--there it lodged and set the bridge on fire. /lɑːtər/

But he was good. He had a lot of horses. In 1884, when the river

submerged the tracks (there's a good article written on that by Mrs. McFee who was then 40 years old and her father was a very prominent lawyer here and a trustee of the college), the railroad cars went off the tracks. Well, they sent a rescue train with an engine and two or three cars to rescue it, and it went off the tracks, too. They didn't have any more engines. They only had two engines. This was a branch line running through El Paso; the main line runs up around Silver City. An engine cost \$10,000, so they wanted their engine back and it was stuck in the quicksand. They finally found it, located it with rods on the other side of the river and about 16 or 18 feet deep. Martín Amador took the job of raising it. He had some long poles cut there about 12 by 16 and 20 feet long and used those _____ poles and he had plenty of horses /to pull/. They raised the engine up. That \$10,000-engine was slightly damaged, but they paid him \$1,000. That was when he built, fixed, that patio. They have a wide gate. The hotel used at least one of those beams and made _____ to put above the doorway. They're still there. Every once in a while somebody will find.../a / plow will...unearth some dirt and they'll find a freight car under there. They want to know where that freight car came from. Well, you know the railroad was so removed, way up the district. They didn't bother about taking out the flat cars--they weren't worth \$1,000, but... They still /appear/. He was a leader in most everything.

But you know, when a foreigner died in this country, and he had no heirs in this country, every Republic official was called to the feast. Amador was Probate Judge when this Frenchman, who owned those two brick buildings on the corner of the Plaza, died quite wealthy. They had some land, /from this estate/--they sold the rest of the stuff off, and he

appointed his son bookkeeper for the land (it was only....thirty or forty acres) at a salary of \$60 a month--just for keeping the books all month. That was protested, and the district court ruled that it wasn't valid, that it was excessive, \$10 would have been plenty. But afterwards, /they/ took it to a higher court. And then probably, I think that people thought that well, Amador deserved that much, so they restored it. He collected, /it/ was all the land was worth after a year. But that happens, that was common practice.