Over the last thirty-seven years that I have lived in New Mexico, I have wondered how stories become attached to landscapes and why people have a tendency to fill space with meaning. I recall three books in particular that were important to me in trying to understand how a place like Pie Town, New Mexico, came to be the site of many stories. Bruce Chatwin’s *The Songlines* (1987) first encouraged me to wonder about how a parched land, an Australian outback reminiscent of New Mexico’s desert landscapes, could give rise to rich stories and “dream tracks.” Then in 1996 Keith Basso brought the story closer to home in *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. Finally, in 2010 Jean O’Brien, looking at a place much different from our own southwestern desert, traced the replacement of old stories by new ones in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*.

---

**Joan Jensen** is Professor Emerita at New Mexico State University where she taught Women’s History and Recent U.S. history for many years. Her latest book, co-edited with Michelle Wick Patterson, *Travels With Frances Densmore: Her Life, Work and Legacy in Native American Studies* is scheduled for publication in spring 2015. This article is part of a longer collaboration with archaeologist and historian Peggy A. Gerow to create an interdisciplinary “map” of west central New Mexico. The author would like to thank Gerow, Darlis Miller, and the NMHR staff for their help in this preliminary “mapping,” and Joan Myers for her encouragement to investigate this region.
After reading these works, I started to grasp how these ideas on place might all fit together with an unfinished project I had begun many years ago on the history of New Mexico’s Western Highlands. “Beyond” is perhaps the best way to describe this part of west central New Mexico. Geologists roughly define the Western Highlands as the area from Gallup south to Reserve, and Pie Town west to the Arizona border. The San Augustin Plain, Zuni, Quemado, Fence Lake, and the now abandoned Hispanic village of Atarque, are the main place names. Writers and photographers have endowed this part of New Mexico—seemingly empty and sparsely populated—with an aura that makes it deserving of our attention. I begin my inquiry with Joan Myers’s *Pie Town Woman* published by the University of New Mexico Press in 2001.

*Pie Town Woman* is based on a memoir penned by homesteader Doris Caudill. Photographs by Joan Myers, Farm Security Administration photographer Russell Lee, and Caudill illustrate the memoir and supporting text. The making of the book had its own story. Myers explained that in 1995 anthropologist Marta Weigle, who was writing an article on Pie Town for *New Mexico Magazine*, asked Myers to photograph Doris. She agreed that Meyers was the right person to create a book-length manuscript from the memoir and so, six years later, *Pie Town Woman* appeared in print. Following publication Meyers also created a photography exhibit by the same name which toured the state.
More recently novelist Lynne Hinton has used Pie Town as the locale for two books of fiction: *Pie Town* (2011) and *Welcome Back to Pie Town* (2012). Late in 2012, photographer Debbie Grossman labeled a New York gallery exhibit of prints simply, “My Pie Town.” And so the saga of Pie Town, with a population of 283 people in 2012 (one person per square mile), continues in word and image. What, I wondered, had given this story such a long life? And what kind of stories might be lingering “beyond” Pie Town, to make this ripe ground for storytelling? If mapped, how would west central New Mexico look? I use the term *mapping* here to signify not only the stories that road maps tell us, but also an interdisciplinary method that looks at various other ways to describe a region.

Before Pie Town

In 1758, almost two hundred and fifty years before *Pie Town Woman* appeared, the Spanish cartographer Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco had already mapped the European and indigenous presence on these western highlands of what they called Nuevo México. He marked Zuni with a mission and their Salt Lake as Salinas. He drew in Apache rancherias to the south. To the east, he noted the Spaniards had already renamed one mountain range Sierra de Zuni. To the west, Miera y Pacheco simply penned “Tierra Incognita.”

John L. Kessell’s *Miera y Pacheco: A Renaissance Spaniard in Eighteenth-Century New Mexico* (2013) explains this first European mapping of west central New Mexico and the stories that accompanied it. The Spanish story was one of Apache warriors repulsing Spanish troops and continuing to attack farms, ranches, and towns along this northern frontier. Miera y Pacheco accompanied five campaigns launched from El Paso to the fringes of Apachería, but the governors at Santa Fe had other more pressing enemies to the north—Comanches. Protecting Santa Fe and the supply line of the El Camino Real along the Rio del Norte was more important than securing settlement farther west. Attempts to engage Apaches in battle resulted only in skirmishes. Even after governors decided to open a new trail southwest to Janos in Sonora, this frontier was only a secondary concern. Peace with Comanches and tribes to the north remained the main preoccupation of officials and settlers in Santa Fe. To a great extent, Apachería south of Zuni Pueblo remained intact.

The official state map of New Mexico in 1923 shows how U.S. military presence redrew the first Spanish mapping of the Western Highlands. When the American army captured and deported the Diné to Bosque Redondo in the 1860s, some fled southeast to the highlands. The government left the Zuni and the scattered refugee Diné families there, but by 1886 the U.S. Army had deported Apache families, some as far east as Florida, leaving only a few place
names such as “Mangas,” and some bitter reminders among settlers of days when the Apaches occupied the area. Meanwhile, Hispanic families had moved south settling in the 1880s at Rito Quemado and Atarque. Mormons, hoping to convert Native Americans to their faith, established the village of Ramah around the same time. Anglo Americans soon started to carve out ranches.

This state map shows Highway 60, still unpaved, cutting across the upper third of Catron County, crossing from Socorro, New Mexico, to Springerville, Arizona. No town names dotted that long road between Datil and Quemado. Pie Town did not appear on this map, but homesteaders were already creating a cluster of farming villages that soon included Pie Town.

Geologists have also mapped this land west of the Rio Grande Rift. Roadside Geology of New Mexico (1987) maps this volcanic landscape by its “ring-shaped faults, sudden thickening of sheets of tuff, alluvial fans, mudflow remains, and lake deposits.” Roads, those few that existed, wound through these landmarks, occasionally crossing the Continental Divide. The land to the east, around Magdalena, was rich in minerals, which created a late-nineteenth-century mining boom there. The land to the south, around Silver City, likewise rich in mineral...
deposits, drew settlers during a similar mining boom. The area that Highway 60 transversed was also sometimes called the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau, or the Zuni Plateau, in honor of its longest resident people.4

Botanists have added their descriptions to those of geologists. It is composed of what they called the “Great Basin Grassland” and “Pinon Juniper Woodlands.” It has outcroppings of montane forest and just skirts the northern edge of the Chihuahuan Desert. William Dunmire calls it the “least distinctive” of New Mexico’s ecoregions, “somewhat scrubby,” due to heavy sheep and cattle grazing. It has spectacular volcanic rock formations, he admits, and low hills, mesas, and mountains, but few pure strands of grassland. Stands of rye and feather grama grasses only hint at the lush vegetation that once covered the area. Four centuries of European animals did little damage, but from the 1870s on, overgrazing inscribed gullies and erosion. White yucca blooms, pink apache plume, and desert willow still dot the landscape, and in fall, rabbitbrush (chamisa), along with cottonwoods and aspen, lend the land a golden glow. These were terms imposed by the latecomers: to name the landscape was to claim it.5

To encourage settlement, the U.S. government appropriated a large portion of the Zuni homelands. Between 1846 and 1939, the government reduced Zuni reservation lands to a mere stub of its former expanse. In addition to reserving large chunks as federal land and ceding some to the Territory of New Mexico, much land passed into the hands of ranchers. Most of this land functioned as commons open to grazing by the people settled in the area. What land remained the government then opened to settlers. One of the last pieces available for legal homesteading became a perfect location for stories to grow and flourish. Anglo Americans began to overlay their narratives on a land that had already been a source for Native American stories. These indigenous stories about the land continue to influence present-day events in southern New Mexico.

Salt Woman, Ma’l Oyattsik’i Sanctuary Area

Accounts by the Zuni people regard Salt Lake, forty-three miles south of Zuni, as the home of their Salt Mother deity. The lake and the Acoma-Zuni Trail leading to it are sacred to other Pueblo and Diné communities as well. In the territorial period, the U.S. federal government controlled this area and when New Mexico became a state in 1912, that control passed to the state, which leased out the land to companies that sold the salt. The story attached to this land had such power and persistence, however, that the Zuni people continually attempted to recover control of the lake. By the 1970s, Congress had established a process for returning control to Zuni leaders, and in 1986 they were able to assert that control. In 2002 when the state of New Mexico proposed leasing land to the
Salt River Project, a proposal to supply coal to power plants in Phoenix, the Zuni mobilized other Native and non-Native communities to block these plans. These groups argued persuasively that the project would disturb graves and archaeological sites near Salt Lake, and a proposed railway would also interfere with sacred sites and trails. In 2003 the mining company abandoned its plans in New Mexico and moved the project north to Wyoming.6

Ussen, White Painted Woman, and the Apache Homelands

The Chiricahua Apache also mapped their lands with stories. Keith Basso found that process continuing well into the late twentieth century in what is now eastern Arizona. Apaches in western New Mexico had done the same; at least that seemed to be the case when, over a century after the U.S. Army had resettled Apaches from their New Mexico homelands to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, descendants decided to return. These descendants of the earlier Apaches purchased thirty acres of scrubby land along Interstate 10 at Akela Flats, New Mexico, and opened a small casino. When the state barred the casino, they turned it into a smoke shop and a restaurant that featured an impressive photographic history of the tribe. Late in 2011, after receiving reservation status from the federal government, the tribe moved ahead with gathering support from economically deprived southwestern New Mexicans and advertising architectural plans for an “Apache Homelands Casino.” By April 2013, the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County had supported their plans. In April 2014, the New Mexico Supreme Court recognized the Fort Sill Apache as a New Mexico tribe.7

The defeat and removal of the Apache from west central New Mexico remained one of the epic western wars because it lasted over four hundred years. When Gen. Nelson A. Miles and the U.S. Army finally routed, rounded up, and deported the last of the Apaches and their families, Americans declared the West was won. No sooner had the war ended to plaudits from the East, than the Apaches occupied a new space in the saga of the West. The term Apache even entered the French language to signify a “hooligan or tough,” a term that some Bohemian writers happily applied to themselves. Some Anglos adopted their own symbolic versions of Apache opposition. During the 1970s, for example, as historians began to explore the history of these Apaches in greater depth, they became an important symbol of resistance to the Vietnam War. Poet Edward Dorn, who taught western literature at Kent State a year after the killing of four students there by National Guardsmen, wrote that he came to see the students as “irreconcilables,” with Kent State acting as General Miles and the U.S. Army. Dorn published his “Recollections of Gran Apacheria” in 1974. Ironically, the U.S. Army was happily assuming the Apache mantle as well. In 1981 the U.S. Army named its most advanced attack helicopter “the Apache.”8
The Anthros

A wide-angle view offers other interpretations that move beyond stories focused on Pie Town and, more recently, Native activists. Anthropologists have been roaming through the Western Highlands for more than a century looking for indigenous stories. William Clements, in *Native American Verbal Art* (1996), listed by name fifteen anthropologists who had visited Zuni between 1879 and the 1990s. His was just a partial list. It is a long roster, including many women. The first woman was Matilda Stevenson who, between 1894 and 1915, published nine articles and books about the people at Zuni. Stevenson stands near the beginning of a long tradition of non-Natives writing down the stories of indigenous peoples attached to the land, starting with the story of Salt Woman. In 1916 anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber, spending the summer at Zuni, wrote to Elsie Clews Parsons that eight anthropologists resided there. Parsons had already been there twice and returned again in 1917 and 1918. Anthropologist Ruth Bunzel spent every summer at Zuni from 1924 to 1929.9

The list of anthropologists who have studied the Diné is also long. By the time Terry Reynolds arrived at Ramah to conduct her field work in anthropology in the 1960s, so many anthropologists had visited that community that Native people were telling stories about their visits. Because the Ramah Navajo were never assigned a reservation nor under the eye of a government agent, anthropologists often chose to establish their own relations to the Ramah community, assuming they were “real” Navajos. Reynolds was told that the community even joked about keeping a special hut for anthropologists to stay. In fact there were some families who regularly took in these scholar tourists and depended on them for a summer income.10

Perhaps the largest invasion of the Zuni Plateau by scholars occurred in the 1950s. Called variously the Rimrock Project, the Harvard Five Cultures Values Study, or the Values Study, this team of thirty-seven field researchers and twenty-eight analysts—anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and one lone historian—under the direction of anthropologist Clyde Kluckholn conducted research in the Western Highlands from 1949 to 1955. According to anthropologist Willow Powers, a $200,000 Rockefeller Foundation grant, its second largest during those years, funded the Rimrock Project. The Values Study was to be run out of the newly formed Harvard Laboratory of Social Relations, which Kluckholn directed. The plan was to study how different people of one area, when faced with similar problems, developed distinct values over a period of five years. After studying the project in detail, Powers concluded that the project as a whole offered few new methods or theories of utility to anthropologists. The project’s main published volume, *People of Rimrock: A Study of Values in Five Cultures*, hastily completed after Kluckholn’s death by project
coordinator Evon Z. Vogt and research associate Ethel M. Albert, revealed that individual scholars had published an array of scholarly articles. Whatever stability the project offered these scholars was probably due not to the leadership of Kluckholm but to Vogt who was deputy coordinator of the project from 1949 to 1953. His presence also enabled the project to achieve acceptance and support by the locals under study since he had grown up in the area. It also helped that the study provided an important supplement to their meagre incomes.

The Rimrock Project produced one book that remains an important study of two Zuni Plateau cultures during the early twentieth century. Vogt's *Modern Homesteaders* analyzes the interactions of Texas homesteaders at Fence Lake and Hispanic settlers at Atarque, two small villages west of Pie Town. Vogt ventured to the edge of these two cultures tracking their uneasy contact and conflict.

Although Vogt never wrote his memoirs, his work remains the epitome of careful anthropological methods. He protected the identity of the people he studied and made himself the ideal participant-observer. He was not only central to the project as organizer but was responsible for what success it did have in documenting at least these two cultures. Vogt had deep roots in the region; his father, Evon Z. Vogt Sr., had arrived in 1903 from Chicago in hopes of curing his tuberculosis. In 1918 after working as a ranch hand and feeling healed, he brought Evon's mother, Shirley Bergman, as his bride to join him on a ranch he had purchased near Ramah. There is a vast archive of family memoirs and photographs of those years at the ranch, recently tapped by Vogt Jr.'s younger sister, Barbara Vogt Mallery, for her own memoir.

Vogt Sr. had an unusual combination of sophisticated urban and backcountry skills. He carried a tuxedo in his saddlebags for weekends with the wealthy merchants of Albuquerque and Las Vegas, yet scrambled for jobs during the Depression. He ended up as editor of the *Gallup (N.Mex.) Gazette*, while Vogt Jr. and Shirley Bergman Vogt managed the ranch. Aunt Dorothy Bergman, later Dorothy Bergman Martinez, who had joined the family at Ramah, worked as a trader and eventually married into the nearby Atarque community. Vogt Jr. took what jobs he could find as a ranger before managing to get a legacy scholarship to the University of Chicago and then a job teaching at Harvard. Having hosted visiting anthropologists earlier allowed him to interact comfortably with both local and academic folks. He chose to spend the rest of his working life at Harvard and never again returned to write further about his homeland on the Plateau or his experiences there. Like other anthropologists, he turned his attention to Latin America, and when he died in 2004, he was remembered for his work there.

If Vogt understood the conflict between Texan homesteaders and Hispanic villagers at Atarque, he did little to stop the disintegration of the village during
the World War II years. The village had patiently built the local sheep economy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but that economy collapsed as new settlers imposed their own proprietal practices. New ranch owners fenced the open range, excluding Hispanics from what had been a commons for their sheep. New Zealand sheep raisers undercut prices for both wool and lamb. The once-thriving villagers had few remaining resources. The homesteaders at Fence Lake had managed to control the politics of the local economy, successfully arranging for the paved road from Gallup to Zuni to bypass Atarque. Cut off from local and national resources, young people left in search of wage work. The village was gradually abandoned and became part of private land closed to outsiders. Despite Vogt’s book, an unpublished dissertation by Florence Kluckholn from the 1930s, and a memoir from 2007 by Pauline Chavez Bent who grew up there, the story of Atarque has not attracted much attention from storytellers.15

Ramah, founded in the late nineteenth century, has not attracted much attention from storytellers either. As a Mormon community, Ramah’s ties led northwest to Salt Lake City. Ramah owed its history—and its economic and social stability—to Mormon pioneer policies and cultural patterns. Thus it was able to survive lean times. Anglo, monocultural, and cooperative, the entire region northwest of Pie Town was sometimes referred to as Ramah. And yet one does not have the sense that this Mormon culture was studied with the intensity of the other communities. Certainly, the Five Cultures Values Study referred to the Mormon community, but somehow that story remained marginal to—even foreign to—the more popular stories of Native and non-Mormon Anglo cultures.16

Surprisingly, Quemado, the main village of the Zuni Plateau, attracted even less attention from scholars or novelists than Atarque or Ramah. In many ways, Quemado was the most typical of the plateau communities. Hispanic families originally settled there in the 1870s, and then Anglos bought land nearby for ranches, and the town developed a particular Southwest quality. Two cultures coexisted, not quite totally segregated but not integrated either. As a regional market town, Quemado was economically more secure than Atarque. As a bicultural town it served both Anglo and Hispanic settlers. On the Magdalena Livestock Driveway, Quemado became a stop where dusty cowboys could find a place to overnight and prepare for the next stretch of their cattle herding along the 125-mile trek from St. John’s, Arizona. In 1918 the secretary of the interior officially designated a five-mile swath from Datil through Quemado as open range. When the cattle drives declined and veteran cowboys settled there, Quemado became known for its expert rodeo performers. And yet it too escaped the attention of storytellers. Quemado has never had its stories told in a similar fashion to either Zuni or Pie Town.17
Quemado benefited from the government economy as well as from the surviving ranch and farm families who remained. Government jobs not only helped the Vogt family survive the Great Depression on the plateau, but the infusion of money from government projects also helped many others persevere. Most of the stories by those who visited or made their home on the range in the Western Highlands of New Mexico and its scattered farming communities do not assign much of a role to the federal government. Yet it was a major actor behind most of these stories. The government, of course, had encouraged farming and ranching with its original transfer of Apache homeland and great swaths of Zuni land to Anglo and Hispanic families through homesteading. It boosted the local and regional economy by purchasing provisions for its many army forts. Agricultural extension agents in the early twentieth century
advised farmers and ranchers on how to increase their productivity on existing land.

With the New Deal and the dry hard times, the government expanded its direct aid to ranchers and homesteaders. Although both groups later insisted the government had not given them assistance, the New Deal helped both groups survive. The New Deal government did make its role opaque by operating mainly through federal and state agencies already in place, hiring men to work on roads through the Works Progress Administration (WPA)—paving U.S. Route 60 and building schoolhouses, for example. It made loans to farmers and ranchers, and even paid ranchers to employ farmers to work on ranch improvements. Enrolling sons in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the federal government sent most of their pay back to families so they could stay on their land. The government sent young CCC men to dig wells, and put in stock tanks, pens, and fences along the Magdalena Livestock Driveway. Extension agents helped families increase their subsistence farming and to can and share produce with other local families. Extension agents continued to help farmers diversify, urging them to add small dairy enterprises to their dryland and subsistence farming. Those new roads and schools were to lead most of the people off the land to better urban opportunities during and after World War II. Their time on the Zuni Plateau, however, became a part of those stories that blossomed and spread. Russell Lee, a federal propagandist for the type of rural life that the government sought to sustain, provided the images to spread the vision of self-sustaining communities emerging in the backcountry. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Soil Conservation Service employed men to construct stock water tanks, terraces, and water spreaders, as well as forest fencing. The WPA paid for school construction and road work. There were two CCC camps at Quemado. The state also provided relief to some families.

Yet it is the ranchers and homesteaders who take center stage in the major stories of the 1930s. Two popular books cemented the idea of Anglo Americans settling an open space. Published in 1936 and 1941, both accounts ignored the role or assistance of the federal government, Native communities, and Hispanic villages. They reimagined a gigantic struggle between ranchers and homesteaders. Conrad Richter’s Sea of Grass and Agnes Morley Cleaveland’s No Life for a Lady were national best sellers, subsequently reprinted many times.

Richter’s novel sketches a larger-than-life rancher “Colonel” Jim Brewster in this sea of grass, on his “empire of grass and cattle,” with his “fabulous herds,” and with “his word the law.” Brewster is seen through the eyes of his nephew who describes him as “a man of vitality and power,” with “pitchfork eyes,” like “some rude territorial czar.” The life of Brewster and the open range is eventually replaced, constricted, and fenced in by the homesteaders. Although Brewster's
wife, Lotte, who comes from the East, hates the area enough to run away from it and her husband, she finally returns, reconciled to it.20

This same theme of ranch life as difficult for women is sketched by Agnes Morley Cleaveland. Although No Life for a Lady is labeled a memoir, Cleaveland also sketches her slain engineer father as larger-than-life, with abilities that amount “almost to genius,” while her mother is “dependent upon menfolks.” Daughter Agnes sees her family story in relation to an older tale, the Swiss Family Robinson, one extremely popular in the early twentieth century. The patriarchal Robinson family was stranded on an island somewhere, and the mother was peripheral to the action. Cleaveland sets her family, as it was in fact, in the land west of Datil. Although the story centers on this fatherless family and its widowed mother, Cleaveland over-emphasizes her mother’s inability to cope with the life that becomes “No Life for a Lady.” Combining her life with the literary traditions of patriarchal men, and the father now gone, Cleaveland fills that space with her brother, Ray. Again told through the eyes of a young person, this time a girl, the story arches around the same story that Richter told, one of ranchers and the land being displaced and defaced by homesteaders.21

These stories bring us back to the fascinating photographs by Russell Lee. Taken in 1940 when he spent two weeks in Pie Town, his images tell the story visually of his ideal homesteading community. Lee’s photographs placed Pie Town on the American map. A revival of interest in the Farm Security photographs of New Mexico communities in the 1970s and 1980s refocused attention on Pie Town. His photographs of Pie Town produced a story that only
the camera could tell so vividly. The images pictured the daily existence of the homesteaders. They document their success in replacing the ranchers as the dominant social and economic group in west central New Mexico, in fashioning a community that supported its members—in melding the best traditions of community independence. Lee focused on Doris Caudill, who then, in turn, became the Pie Town Woman who lived to tell her story to that second photographer, Joan Myers. It was Caudill’s life that Myers retold in image and text. Both Doris in the past and Joan in the present confronted again a now seemingly empty land.22

The residents of Pie Town themselves chose this story of community and independence as their favorite. Local historian Kathryn McKee-Roberts gathered oral and written histories for what became almost an official history of Pie Town. At gatherings for talks about Pie Town in 2013, aging residents testified to the sentiments that made them feel they were part of a larger community, one bound together by picnics and suppers, and ultimately, love for their neighbors. Almost no one mentioned Quemado, the other town that Lee had visited. Lee left stunning photographs of the rodeo riders there.23

Cowboys on their horses at a rodeo, Quemado, New Mexico. Russell Lee’s photographs of Pie Town settlers in 1940 are often reprinted. His photographs of cowboy culture in Quemado, where cowboys herding on the sixty-five mile long Magdalena to St. Johns Livestock Driveway stayed overnight and where local rodeos attracted both ranchers and homesteaders, are seldom used to represent the culture of the region. Photograph by Russell Lee; courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Digital Collection, digital image no. LC-DIG-fsa-8a28867.
About the same time that Myers was finishing her manuscript, which emphasizes the homesteader’s story, another group was creating, or trying to create, another story of the land. Remember the Salt River Project, which the Zuni Nation had blocked? The Project began buying up leases for its future coal-mining operation in 2000, triggering a state law that mandated a study of the land. Anthropologist Peggy Gerow created a map to accompany this story. Her compilation of land claims in just one section north of Pie Town is a jumble of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and state lands, plus railroad, stock-raising, and homestead lands. Is it any wonder that folks preferred the simpler versions that the other stories presented?24

In 2011 Lynne Hinton simplified once again that complex issue over land claims to recast Pie Town’s community spirit in a novel titled Pie Town. She whipped out a sequel, Welcome Back to Pie Town, the following year. Hinton seems an improbable storyteller—a mystery writer and minister in the United Church of Christ. Her Pie Town is mixed ethnically with Hispanics, Native Americans, and Anglos caught up in a small-town epic. Although the main female character, a single mother, provides one thread, it is the male protagonist, a Catholic priest,
who changes most, sinks his roots into this land, and finds his community. This place becomes Hinton’s ideal parish, one that rebuilds the local Catholic church. The women of the town form the chorus and the soul or power of the community.25

Yet another “Pie Town” woman was created by the photographer Debbie Grossman. She attracted attention in New York with her “My Pie Town.” She wanted images of a Pie Town filled with women, and so in her prints she replaced the faces of the men in Russell’s photographs with her own face, creating a sort of “her land” where the men disappear and only women survive. When I introduced Grossman’s photographs to local Pie Town residents in a recent talk, many were offended. So too were some of the photographers. Did another person have the right to tamper with the Farm Security Administration photographs for their own purposes? Regardless of the appropriateness, Grossman’s project revealed once again the ability of this small rural community in a faraway place to attract regional and national interest.26

Meanwhile, other groups were busy covering still more stories over this land. Two events in the 1970s gave rise to new forms of mapping in popular culture. The first event occurred east of Pie Town on the Plains of San Augustin when in 1972 Congress chose that location to construct the Very Large Array (VLA), a radio astronomy observatory. The VLA remains sprawled across the Plains of San Augustin, fifty miles west of Socorro, a scientific outcropping that dwarfs the adjacent Boy Scout Double H High Adventure Base. The second event, coming six years later in 1978, was the creation of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST), part of which winds through New Mexico, crossing Pie Town, El Malpais National Monument, and the old Zuni-Acoma Trail.

The VLA provoked both scientific and popular stories. The U.S. Congress was feeling flush, ambitious, and pro-space science when it appropriated over $78 million to establish the VLA in 1972. The VLA’s scientific story was that David S. Heeschen, who received his doctorate in astronomy from Harvard University in 1954 and helped establish the Harvard Observatory Radio Astronomy Project’s telescopes, began work at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in 1956. He stayed on to become acting director and then director from 1962 to 1978, during which time he fostered the building of telescopes at the observatory in Green Bank, West Virginia, at Kitt Peak in Arizona, and the VLA in New Mexico. Each of the twenty-seven VLA antennae dishes measures over 80 feet high, weighs 230 tons, and can be relocated as needed via rail tracks with a lifting locomotive. All face up into outer space.

Popular culture adopted the VLA enthusiastically. The movie Contact (1997) is the best known and remembered, especially for the gathering of young people facing skyward waiting for word from outer space. Although word from outer
space is yet to come, a proliferation of writing on the VLA has arrived—a combination of science-fiction films, serious documentaries, such as Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos*, songs, novels, and comic books. Scientists appreciate having the tools to explore outer space, but Americans are content to identify with space exploration science through books and other media.27

Besides outer space exploration, a growing number of Americans wanted to see the earth up-close. In response, Congress established a series of national hiking trails during the 1970s. The CDNST, although created in 1978, depended upon a line created much earlier by geological surveys. It was simply, as one author termed it, “a geographer’s abstract term,” to indicate a hydrological divide of the Americas. Shown as a line on maps, often in red, this Continental Divide extends from the Bering Strait to the Strait of Magellan. It separates, as standard descriptions explain, the watersheds that drain into the Pacific Ocean from those river systems that drain into either the Atlantic or Arctic Oceans, or the Gulf of Mexico. Once established officially, the Great Divide, as it is sometimes called, immediately became another way to locate this western land, for a segment extends along the Rocky Mountains of the United States and thus through western New Mexico.

The New Mexico CDNST portion starts at the Mexican border west of Antelope Wells in the Animas Mountains, crosses Interstate Highway 10 at exit 14, runs through western New Mexico just east of Silver City, crosses Highway 12 near Aragon, winds through the southeast edge of the Ramah Indian Reservation and the Cibola National Forest, crosses Interstate Highway 40 at a place called Continental Divide at exit 47, then winds its way north into Colorado west of the Cumbres Pass. Small signs announce its presence on the interstate highways that intersect it. Some state highways do announce the Continental Divide when they cross, for example State Highway 15 at Pinos Altos. Thousands of cars and trucks pass these signs each day with hardly a notice. But the Divide too carries the freight of stories.28

Stories located near this imaginary line labeled the Continental Divide flourished in the eastern part of the country during the early twentieth century. Books and even plays used the term as a metaphor for a location somewhere in the west and for regional culture itself. William Vaughn Moody’s play *The Great Divide* was the most popular among a flurry of western-based plays that crowded New York stages in the first decades of the twentieth century. *The Great Divide*, with its threatened rape of an eastern woman who ventured west, its forced marriage, its final reconciliation of a western male and an eastern female, east and west, had no whiff of racial or ethnic intermarriage. The white western male was the barbarian. Although the original incident upon which Moody’s play was based took place in Arizona, he visited New Mexico and chose to use
The Great Divide as his title to metaphorically discuss sexual, regional, and cultural tensions. Thus, the geographic east-west divide became a major popular theme in western literature hungrily devoured by easterners. In 1990 the New Mexico Repertory Theatre claimed this play as one that symbolically treated the divide between western and eastern cultures in New Mexico.29

The Great Divide, in fact, became more firmly planted in the West of the imagination, when Congress began seriously discussing the establishment of the CDNST. A continuation of the grand national parks design of the nineteenth century and modeled on the Appalachian Trail, the CDNST was envisioned to follow as closely as possible the geographical line and extend from the Mexican to the Canadian borders. Limited to travel by foot and horseback over pieces of land where the environment remained “relatively unaltered,” the trails were planned to provide high-quality recreational experiences while respecting the natural environment. Using primarily government-controlled lands, the CDNST eventually

Detail of Map of the Continental Divide Trail. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1978, the trail brought thousands of hikers to Pie Town, where they often camped before tackling the stretch of the trail north to El Malpais National Monument or south to the Gila National Forest. Photograph courtesy U.S. Geological Survey.
wound through over three-thousand miles of five western states—790 of them in New Mexico—connecting national forests, wilderness areas, monuments, and BLM lands. From the Gila National Forest and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness, the trail crosses the Continental Divide near Coyote Peak and then turns east. Reaching Pie Town, hikers buy food, camp, and catch up on journal entries. Next, they head toward the El Malpais National Monument, cross the old Zuni-Acoma Trail, enter the Cibola National Forest, pass the Zuni Mountains, and continue north to Grants.30

Although several enthusiastic hikers have published guides, it is the journal entries that reveal the diversity of hikers and their reactions to the land they walk over. So-called “thru-hikers” attempt to hike the entire trail, sometimes over a period of years. Other more casual hikers choose lengths of the trail to dawdle along or picnic near. Thru-hikers usually take trail names and post their journal entries on the Internet. One retired seventy-one-year old pastor chose “Medicare Pastor” as her trail name. She explains in her online journal that she had camped and hiked all her life, but started long-distance hiking when she was sixty: “I am not a thru-hiker (I am only half crazy[.]) I am a long section hiker generally doing 300–500 miles in a stretch a couple times a year.” She hoped to complete the CDNST, but as a gardener and active church pastor, she concluded: “Life is full of so many interesting things to do. Too many things to do, too many trails to walk, not enough life. But I do what I can. And life is good.”

Yet her journal is a new way of writing about the land and a person’s journey over it. “Chavez and Marlin Canyons have some disgusting cow ponds,” she writes, but advises hikers to “hang in a little farther,” for “a lovely solar pump/tank right by the road just past a cluster of brown ranch buildings—lovely water . . . and 7 miles before Pie Town has a cooler of water set out on the road by Beauchamps.” At Pie Town, where her blisters popped, she reports: “My feet are glad to be not walking and I have a bed to put my sleeping bag on.” She stayed at the “Toaster House” hostel three miles out of Pie Town, where a local woman welcomed hikers and asked only for a donation. Then Medicare Pastor headed into Pie Town for pie—Mexican apple with green chiles and pine nuts—and sent an e-mail to her daughter. After forty-four miles of blistering, literally, Medicare Pastor rested two days at Pie Town, found snacks left in the hiker box, and welcomed more hikers arriving at the hostel. Now with more than ten other hikers at the hostel, Medicare Pastor attended a spaghetti benefit dinner where people came from as far away as south of Reserve to pack the Community Center, bid on locally-made desserts, and dance. The hostel owner and the café staff both organized and played in the band. “Don’t miss Pie Town. Quite a place!” Medicare Pastor exclaimed. The locals and visitors kept alive the ideal and practice of “community.”31
Other stories and maps continue to appear. Today, brochures of the Apache homelands welcome tourists. Descendants of Hispanas, ranch women, and homesteaders add their memoirs. We continue to be fascinated by the stories that are attached to this part of the land called New Mexico. It is a land that attracts stories, the perfect locale to enlarge and explain human activities. In the end it provides a setting for Euroamericans as well as Native American and Hispanic people to tell their stories. It is good to know them and to revisit them, if not for history, then for the ways in which different cultures have attached stories to the land. We are in fact a land of storytellers.

Wisdom, as anthropologist Keith Basso declares, does sit in places. And certain places provide ideal locations for this local wisdom. But so too do other human characteristics sit there. We gain some sort of wisdom by looking more closely at how people live together, in harmony or disharmony, and how they regard the places in which they live. My favorite quote from this area is still one attributed to a Diné elder at one of their community sings, which were open to all. Ray Boyett, a homesteader from Fence Lake attending one of those sings, asked a bilingual trader to translate the speech for the assembled people who lived in the area. The trader explained that the elder had said that they were all living in another people’s country, and being treated nicely, and that they should be nice to them in return. Boyett regretted that the homesteaders had no elders to give them similar advice—to remind them that they were living on borrowed land.32

Notes


2. Marta Weigle had also written earlier about Pie Town. Although most of her work focused on other parts of New Mexico, when she looked at photographs of west central New Mexico, Pie Town was her favorite, especially by Farm Security photographer Russell Lee. Over a third of Lee’s photographs she included were of Pie Town. For both Lee and Weigle, Taos Pueblo, Hispanic villages of northern New Mexico, and Pie Town became the iconic places of memory. See Marta Weigle, ed., Women of New Mexico: Depression Era Images (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Ancient City Press, 1993). See also Nancy Wood, Heartland New Mexico: Photographs from the Farm Security Administration, 1935–1943 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 22.


6. The literature on Zuni, and especially the Zuni Salt Lake and Fence Lake Coal Mine Project is quite large. See Eliza McFeely, Zuni and the American Imagination (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); T. J. Ferguson and E. Richard Hart, A Zuni Atlas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), especially their Map 32, “Area and Dates of Zuni Land Taken”; and E. Richard Hart and T. J. Ferguson, eds., Traditional Cultural Properties of Four Tribes: The Fence Lake Mine Project (Salt Lake City, Utah: Institute of the North American West, 1993). Ferguson and Hart’s maps tell eloquently the story of encroachment beginning with Apache and Navajos fleeing from U.S. troops who entered Zuni lands from 1858 to 1868. By the 1870s, Mormons, miners, ranchers, and Hispanic settlers had arrived. The completion of the railroad in 1882 led to large-scale lumbering, mining, and ranching, as well as to homesteading by small-scale farmers. My thanks to Darlis Miller for providing copies of material relating to the Fence Lake Mine Project and to Peggy A. Gerow for providing a copy of her book. See Peggy A. Gerow, Eighty-Two Miles from Nowhere: Historical Overview Study for the Fence Lake Coal Mine Project (Albuquerque: Office of Contract Archaeology, University of New Mexico, 2003). Following the early missionary efforts of Catholics were Protestants who began proselytizing in the late nineteenth century. See Ellen Cain, “A Window on Zuni: Taylor F. Ealy and Missionary Labor in New Mexico, 1878–1881,” New Mexico Historical Review 88 (fall 2013): 375–411.


8. For poet Edward Dorn, see Way West, Stories, Essays & Verse Accounts: 1963–1993 (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), especially “Recollections of Gran Apacheria” (1974), 103–20. Although the military had earlier adopted the practice of naming helicopters after Native American tribes, this was the first to be named after the Apaches.


10. Terry Reynolds, in discussion with the author, April 2013. The Ramah Navajo literature is likewise quite extensive, but has not captured the public imagination to the extent of the Zuni stories.

11. Willow Roberts Powers, “The Harvard Five Cultures Values Study and Postwar Anthropology” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 1997); and Evon Z. Vogt and Ethel


14. Ibid.


17. Gerow, Eighty-Two Miles from Nowhere, 37.

18. Ibid.

19. See Thomas C. Donnelly, ed., Rocky Mountains Politics (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 219–32; and Richard Melzer, Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933–1942 (Las Cruces, N.Mex.: Yucca Tree Press, 2000), list two Quemado camps but do not include any discussion of them. For an excellent study of a CCC camp, see Maria E. Montoya, “The Roots of Economic and Ethnic Division in Northern New Mexico: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” Western Historical Quarterly 26 (spring 1995): 15–35. Some young men went to a CCC camp near Santa Fe, others to Silver City, Apache Creek, and Willow Creek, according to scattered notes in the Magdalena (N.Mex.) News, 2 January 1936 and 4 April 1940. See Kathryn McKee-Roberts, From the Top of the Mountain: Pie Town, New Mexico and Neighbors (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: Roger Cofin, 1990), 148, 160.


22. Joan Myers, Pie Town Woman: The Hard Life and Good Times of a New Mexico Homesteader (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001) has a great deal of information about the Farm Security Administration (FSA) studies and Russell Lee. The literature about the FSA photographers is extensive.

23. McKee-Roberts, From the Top of the Mountain. For Quemado rodeo photographs by Lee, see Peter White and Mary Ann White, eds., “Along the Rio Grande:” Cowboy Jack Thorp’s New Mexico, The New Deal and Folk Culture Series (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Ancient City Press, 1988), 204. Thorp headlined with the Ringling Brothers in 1935. Weigle, Women of New Mexico, also included one female rider, 105.


28. William Jackson Palmer, *Report of Surveys Across the Continent, In 1867–’68. On the Thirty-Fifth and Thirty-Second Parallels, for a Route Extending the Kansas Pacific Railway to the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco and San Diego* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Selheimer, 1869), 20, identified the “crest of the continent” and the “water shed of the continent” at “Navajo Pass,” northeast of Zuni, and one hundred miles west of the Rio Grande. Interstate 10 now crosses the Continental Divide five miles west of Thoreau, New Mexico.


30. A number of hiking guides have told the story of its formation. See especially Bob Julyan, *New Mexico’s Continental Divide Trail* (Englewood, Colo.: Westcliffe, 2001). The use of GPS and cell phones has changed the tenor of the hike, making it much safer and easier to track. Improvements to the trail have been continuous as well.
