

## “We Navigated by Pure Understanding”

### Bishop George T. Sevey’s Account of the 1912 Exodus from Mexico

*Michael N. Landon*

During July and August 1912, thousands of Mormon colonists fled the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution (fig. 1). As bishop of the Colonia Chuichupa ward, George Sevey led his ward members out of war-torn Mexico and into the United States. The scene was not unfamiliar. During the nineteenth century, Latter-day Saints had fled from Missouri and Illinois, and thousands more had experienced the great exodus across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley. Such epic events enrich the heritage of Latter-day Saints, providing cultural meaning and shared identity forged by hardship and tragedy. Perhaps the effort to chronicle flight from persecution and intolerance grows naturally from a scriptural tradition that highlights the journeys of strangers and pilgrims looking for safe havens in an insecure world. Bishop George Sevey’s understated leadership role in the exodus of his ward suggests that he did not imagine himself a larger-than-life Nephi, nor did he suppose his ward’s exodus had great relevance to mankind. But, like Nephi, he thought it worthy of recording for posterity. Bishop Sevey’s memoir of the exodus (pp. 77–101 below) captures a lesser-known chapter of Mormon history and provides a snapshot view of the dynamics of Mormon ward leadership in an extreme situation.

As 1912 dawned, Chuichupa’s Latter-day Saints were both prosperous and secure. Railroads, mills, “lush ample range,” and fine flocks and herds gave every indication of “glittering prospects.” Sevey thought rumors of revolution and war “too remote to affect us.” He identified “individualistic” attitudes of ward members, and resulting “factions,” as his largest challenge.<sup>1</sup>

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1. George T. Sevey, “The Story of Chuichupa,” Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection (1880–1985), Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

**Fig. 1.** Detail of scouts in exodus from Mexico, August 1912. This photograph bears the label “Scouts No. 1,” probably referring to the scout company number. The scouts were likely charged with spotting federal or rebel troop movements. (See Joseph Barnard Romney, “The Exodus of the Mormon Colonists from Mexico, 1912” [master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1967], 94.)

The images included in this document capture the exodus of the main body of men and do not include images of the Chuichupa men, whose exodus experience is described in the accompanying document. However, these images capture some of the landscape that both groups encountered.

All photographs in this document were taken by John Edmund Wall.



By midsummer, the revolution’s resulting warfare would forever change the lives of Bishop Sevey and those of his ward members, who were forced to flee the ever-increasing violence. Although war-zone anxieties surface in Sevey’s account, he emphasizes the “unity and good feeling” that characterized the exodus. A distinctly Mormon pattern of leadership emerges, with thirty-one-year-old Sevey leading older, more experienced men on what they perceived as a perilous journey. Sevey’s willingness to receive counsel but also to decide and, acting on faith, to lead deliberately into the unknown unified the group. Sevey is not given to overstatement. He candidly notes that “divergencies of opinions” and strong-willed personalities marked the exodus. It proved no small wonder, then, that “the operation was carried on with a minimum of conflict.” Although Sevey is not explicit on this point, in his mind the tragic exodus produced the

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Saints, Salt Lake City. See also George Thomas Sevey, “Reminiscences,” n.d., Church Archives; and Margaret Shumway Sevey, ed., *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey* (Mesa, Ariz.: Lofgreen Printing, 1981).



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desirable effect of eroding the individualism of ward members and creating a more genuine community. As he wrote, “Chuichupa people never before or since have achieved the same degree of unity and good feeling as was evidenced at the time of the so called exodus.” Referring to his style of leadership during this period, Sevey said, “There were never any orders given, we navigated by pure understanding.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Mormon Colonies and Porfirio Díaz**

Between 1885 and 1905, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints established settlements throughout Mexico’s northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora, including the colonies of Chuichupa, Díaz, Dublán, García, Juárez, Morelos, Pacheco, and Oaxaca.<sup>3</sup> These settlements served as a

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2. George T. Sevey, “The Story of Chuichupa.”

3. Latter-day Saints often named their colonies after Mexican national figures. Colonia Chuichupa and García differed from this pattern. The name García was the

haven for members involved in plural marriage fleeing United States marshals in the wake of antipolygamy legislation. For many Latter-day Saints trying to avoid capture and prosecution for “unlawful cohabitation,” the economic policies of the Porfirio Díaz regime in Mexico, which actively sought foreign immigration, colonization, and investment, offered a viable solution to the difficult plight. Díaz rose to prominence in Mexico’s successful struggle to remove the French. He later turned against the leader of the anti-French revolt, Mexican president Benito Juárez, and, after Juárez’s death, against his successor, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada. The Díaz coup prevailed, and, beginning in 1876, he ruled Mexico for essentially three decades.<sup>4</sup>

During Díaz’s rule, Mexico experienced unprecedented peace and, at least on paper, spectacular economic growth. Encouraging foreign investment, the Díaz regime helped Mexico’s infrastructure develop rapidly. Unfortunately, the quick-paced development was matched by corresponding greed and corruption, the dispossession of thousands from their small land holdings, and an accelerating disparity between rich and poor. As author Ronald Atkin noted, Díaz “did much to develop his country. *But he did nothing to develop his people.*”<sup>5</sup> Díaz approved or encouraged economic policies that negatively impacted small landowners in many regions of Mexico, including the northern state of Chihuahua, where most of the Mormon colonies were located. In the early 1880s, the introduction of government-supported land surveys, ostensibly to maximize efficient use of undeveloped lands, dispossessed traditional landowners. Many of the *ejidos*, lands traditionally held communally by local villagers, were “declared vacant, and sold to foreign companies and settlers or allotted to the largest landowners of the Chihuahua oligarchy.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, preferential

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surname of the area’s previous owners, Mariano and Telésforo García, from whom the colonists purchased land. Chuichupa is an Indian term meaning “place of the mist.” B. Carmon Hardy, “The Mormon Colonies of Northern Mexico: A History, 1885–1912” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1963), 84, 93, 99–102, 108.

4. John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 58, 85–86; Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz: Profiles in Power* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), 49, 74–75.

5. Ronald Atkin, *Revolution! Mexico, 1910–1920* (New York: John Day, 1970), 22–23, italics in original.

6. Jane-Dale Lloyd, “*Rancheros and Rebellion: The Case of Northwestern Chihuahua, 1905–1909,*” in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of*

treatment of Americans by the Díaz government generated anti-American sentiment among Mexicans.<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, the very policies of the Díaz regime that created conditions for one of the most violent social revolutions in history simultaneously provided many Latter-day Saints with a sanctuary from the United States Government's antipolygamy campaign. As the Church purchased large tracts of land, many Latter-day Saint families fled to Mexico to establish communities that would flourish for several decades. By the eve of the revolution, more than four thousand Latter-day Saints considered Mexico to be their home.<sup>8</sup>

### The Mexican Revolution

Beginning in November 1910, revolution swept through Mexico, led by Francisco Indalecio Madero and other revolutionaries, including Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Pascual Orozco<sup>9</sup> in Chihuahua.<sup>10</sup> Seven months later,

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*Subaltern Politics*, ed. Daniel Nugent (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 110. Principals in several of the land companies authorized to conduct the surveys subsequently sold surveyed land to the Mormon colonists.

7. Historians debate the level of anti-Americanism present in the Mexican Revolution. For Latter-day Saints encountering hostility from the Pascual Orozco faction, see Bill L. Smith, "Impacts of the Mexican Revolution: The Mormon Experience, 1910–1946" (PhD diss., Washington State University, 2000), 64. Some resentment toward Mormons by Chihuahuan conservatives supporting Orozco arose because Mormons, like other Americans, "were exempt from import taxes and duties on agricultural implements," which gave them a decided advantage over native Mexican competitors. Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854–1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 98. Also, the fact that Mormons, recent arrivals to the area, "took advantage of the 1905 law to increase the size of their already flourishing communities of Duablan and Juárez" undoubtedly generated anti-American resentment. Lloyd, "Rancheros and Rebellion," 108, 129.

8. George F. Gibbs, secretary to the Church's First Presidency, reported the number of Latter-day Saints who fled Mexico's revolution at four thousand. "Church Not Trying to Build New Zion," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 18, 1915, 9.

9. See Michael C. Meyer, *Huerta: A Political Portrait* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 226–27; *Enciclopedia de México*, 12 vols. (Mexico City: Enciclopedia de México, S. A., 1975), 9:1228–30.

10. Works about the revolution and the principal participants are obviously very extensive. For an excellent treatment of the revolution in Chihuahua, see Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). As Villa was from Chihuahua, the location of most Mormon colonies, Katz's monumental biography presents detailed insights into conditions in that state during the revolution.

the Díaz regime collapsed. In May 1911, the worn and aged dictator Porfirio Díaz resigned and left Mexico for exile in Europe. The following September, Madero was elected president. More conservative than many of his supporters, Madero failed to dismantle elements of the former Díaz regime and alienated some revolutionary supporters. Although he distrusted many of the former military officers of the Díaz regime, particularly Victoriano Huerta, Madero did not anticipate betrayal. In February 1913, he was overthrown by Huerta and subsequently assassinated, probably under Huerta's orders.

Even before his murder, some of Madero's former supporters, most notably Pascual Orozco, openly revolted against him. During this period, violence and brutality increased dramatically, a pattern that characterized much of the subsequent revolution.<sup>11</sup> With increasing frequency, the various warring factions placed demands on Latter-day Saints for supplies and horses. However, it was Orozco's forces, known as *Colorados* or Red Flaggers, whose actions finally triggered the Mormon exodus from Mexico. In April 1912, the Mexican federal army defeated the *Colorados* in four consecutive battles. Beaten, weary, and short of supplies, the rebels retreated to the area of the Mormon colonies in northwestern Chihuahua and soon demanded the guns owned by the colonists.<sup>12</sup> When José Inéz Salazar,<sup>13</sup> one of Orozco's leading generals, demanded the disarmament of all Mormon

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11. The savagery of the Mexican Revolution is evident in the population decline that Mexico experienced between 1910 and 1920, with as many as two million persons disappearing. Scholars have debated the number of deaths caused by the revolution in their efforts to accurately determine the true causes of the decline. For an analysis, see Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Human Cost of the Mexican Revolution," 2001, [www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/missmill/mxrev.htm](http://www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/missmill/mxrev.htm).

12. The issue of guns in the Mormon colonies is more complex than revolutionaries simply needing arms and ammunition. Evidence that Mormons, in addition to guns they already possessed, had acquired additional modern firearms from the United States contributed to demands by *Orozquistas* that the Saints turn the weapons over to the revolutionary forces. For an analysis, see B. Carmon Hardy and Melody Seymour, "Importation of Arms and the 1912 Mormon 'Exodus' from Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 72 (October 1997): 297–318. See also Ralph C. Vigil, "Revolution and Confusion: The Peculiar Case of Jose Inez Salazar," *New Mexico Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (1978): 146–47.

13. José Inéz Salazar, one of Orozco's leading generals, made conditions difficult for the Mormon colonies by his demands for weapons. After Orozco's defeat, Salazar fled to the United States but by 1915 returned to Mexico, switched his loyalty to Villa, and participated in several campaigns during 1916 and 1917. Smith, "Impacts of the Mexican Revolution," 239–40; Vigil, "Revolution and Confusion,"

colonists, the Juárez Stake president, Junius Romney,<sup>14</sup> quickly implemented a plan to remove the Saints back to the United States, rather than leave those under his stewardship defenseless.

### The Exodus

President Romney reached an agreement with Salazar that called for Mormons to relinquish their arms in exchange for safe passage of Mormon women and children, who were safely evacuated in late July and early August 1912.

After prayerfully weighing his options, President Romney decided to evacuate the men also. In the early hours of August 1, President Romney sent messengers instructing that Juárez, Dúblan, Pacheco, García, and Chuichupa men gather to a place known as the Stairs, about ten miles west or northwest of Colonia Juárez<sup>15</sup> (fig. 2). Colonists from Chuichupa

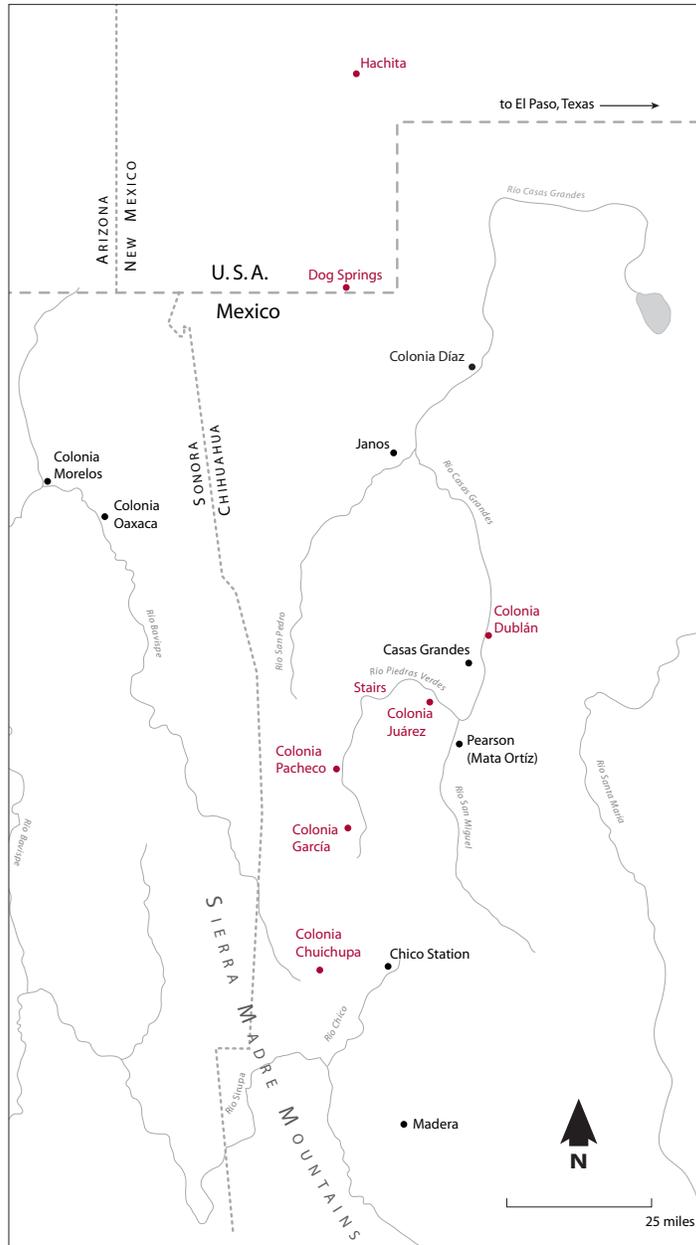
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<sup>14</sup>5–70; Karl E. Young, *Ordeal in Mexico: Tales of Danger and Hardship Collected from Mormon Colonists* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 234; *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia, Biografía y Geografía de México*, 4 vols. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1995), 4:3,060.

<sup>14</sup>. Born in St. George, Utah, in March 1878, Junius Romney traveled with his parents to Mexico in 1886. From 1890 until the exodus, the family lived in Colonia Juárez, where Romney was called as Juárez Stake president in 1908. For more complete biographical information, see Nelle Spilsbury Hatch and B. Carmon Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border* (n.p.: Ernestine Hatch, 1985), 579–89. See also Joseph B. Romney, “The Stake President’s View of the Exodus from the Mormon Colonies in Mexico in 1912,” in *Times of Transition*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2003), 129–38.

<sup>15</sup>. It seems that the exact distance and direction to the Stairs from Juárez is not known. George T. Sevey wrote that the colonists were to meet at “a place called the ‘Stairs,’ situated some *ten or twelve miles north west from Juarez.*” (Sevey, “Story of Chuichupa;” emphasis added.) A secondary sources states, “All the men of the five colonies were to meet at the ‘Stairs’ in the mountain *about ten miles from Colonia Juárez to the west.*” (Karl E. Young’s *Ordeal in Mexico* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968], 65; emphasis added.) A third source states, “President Romney planned a rendezvous at the ‘Stairs,’ a strategic spot *about seven miles northwest of Colonia Juarez*, to gather all the men from the colonies and prepare for flight to the United States.” (Annie R. Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz* [Salt Lake City: By the author, 1972], 347; emphasis added.)

The Colonia Diaz colonists had already left Mexico. Clarence F. Turley and Anna Tenny Turley, *History of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico (The Juárez Stake, 1885–1980)* (n.p.: Lawrence Brown Lee and Marilyn Turley Lee, 1996), states that when the “women and children from the upper colonies were being evacuated to



**Mormon Mexican Colonies and Places Associated with the August 1912 Exodus**

**Fig. 2.** Hiding the Juarez Stake records at the Stairs, early August 1912. The three men are identified as (left to right) President Romney, Red Top Jones, and Eli A. Clayson. (John Ray Wall, Biographical Sketch of John Edmund Wall, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.)

were to meet those from García and Pacheco and then travel north to the Stairs. Neither the Pacheco nor the García men waited for the Chuichupa men at the appointed rendezvous locations, however, presumably because Salazar's forces were near. Pacheco's colonists arrived at the Stairs on August 3 and García's on August 5.

On August 8, it was decided that Chuichupa men were taking too long and



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El Paso, . . . the Colonia Díaz people were advised to flee immediately across the border" (67.) And flee they did:

It was decided that the townspeople would go overland, cross the international boundary line at the Corner Ranch some 19 miles northwest of Colonia Díaz, and proceed to Hachita, New Mexico. . . . About six o'clock that night, July 28, 1912, the Díazites crossed the international boundaryline. They made camp at the Corner Ranch nearby. They had traveled nineteen miles in eight hours. They finally arrived at Hachita, New Mexico, on August 3, 1912. (Turley and Turley, *History of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 68–69)



**Fig. 3.** Main body of men crossing the U.S. border into New Mexico, August 9, 1912. The colonists crossed the border two or three miles east of Dog Springs, New Mexico. (See Romney, “Exodus of the Mormon Colonists,” 101; and Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 1954], 201.) The saints appear to be entering through an opening, marked by wooden posts, in a barbed wire fence that likely indicated the Mexico–United States border. The Chuichupa men entered the United States at this location on August 11, 1912. (George T. Sevey, “The Story of Chuichupa,” Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection [1880–1985], Church Archives.)

those already assembled at the Stairs should proceed toward the United States border, which they safely crossed on August 9<sup>16</sup> (fig 3).

Meanwhile, Chuichupa men left their beloved mountain valley on August 6. On August 7, the Chuichupa men arrived at the point where they were to rendezvous with the García men, only to find that the García men had moved on. Somewhat discouraged, Sevey’s group followed García’s trail toward Scott’s Peak. On August 8, the Chuichupa men reached the rendezvous point near Scott’s Peak, where they expected to meet men from Pacheco, only to discover no other Mormon colonists waiting for them. On August 9, the Chuichupa men reached the Stairs, again disappointed to

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16. This brief account of the main exodus is taken from Joseph Barnard Romney, “The Exodus of the Mormon Colonists from Mexico, 1912” (master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1967).

find that they had been left behind. The next day they encountered the Mexican federal army, which allowed them to proceed. On August 11, the Chuichupa men led by Bishop George Sevey crossed the United States border, and shortly thereafter they found their wives and children safe.

### Biographical Sketch of George Thomas Sevey

George Thomas Sevey served as the bishop of Colonia Chuichupa, the southern-most colony in Chihuahua. He was born in Pine Valley, Utah, August 7, 1881, to parents George Washington Sevey<sup>17</sup> and Martha Ann Thomas.<sup>18</sup> As Martha was the elder George's third wife, they moved to Mexico to avoid prosecution for practicing plural marriage. The younger George and his parents settled in Colonia Juárez but within a few years had also acquired property in Chuichupa, where George worked for his father, primarily as a teamster. George married Isabelle M. Johnson<sup>19</sup> in 1904, and they lived in Colonia Chuichupa where he served as ward clerk, as Sunday School superintendent, and then as ward bishop. He celebrated his thirty-first birthday during the exodus.

Shortly after the exodus, Sevey returned to Mexico, where he stayed during most of the tumultuous year of 1913. He returned to the United States in early 1914 and tried to make a living in Arizona. In 1918, Sevey again made a short trip to Mexico, noting, "I had now been away from my

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17. George Washington Sevey was born in Le Roy, New York, in 1832. In 1849, while traveling to the California gold fields, he became ill and was left in Salt Lake City. Once he recovered, he remained in Salt Lake City, where he joined the Church in May 1853. In 1885 he fled with his families to Mexico, where he died in Colonia Juárez in June 1902. For more complete biographical information, see Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 605–9; and Margaret Sevey, *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey*.

18. Martha Ann Thomas was born in January 1857 in Salt Lake City and was twenty years old when she married George Washington Sevey. When George's other wives died, Martha, who was completely deaf from the effects of scarlet fever during childhood, assumed the responsibility of caring for the children of George's other families. She died in Colonia Juárez in April 1920, having returned after the exodus and outlived her husband by eighteen years. Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 607–8; Margaret Sevey, *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey*, 4.

19. Isabelle Melissa Johnson moved with her family to Mexico in 1889. For additional biography information, see Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 341–42; AncestralFile v.4.19, AncestralFile number (AFN) 1GZ1-HP, available at <http://www.familysearch.org>.

beloved Chuichupa Valley for six years and during that time not a day had passed but I yearned to be there.”<sup>20</sup>

In 1919, after selling his property in Chandler, Arizona, Sevey once again moved to Chuichupa, but financial reverses made it impossible to remain. Within a few years, he was back in the United States, where he lived out the balance of his life, primarily in Arizona and California. He died in February 1975 in Chula Vista, California, and was buried in Mesa, Arizona.<sup>21</sup>

The following (pp. 77–101 below) is his retrospective account describing his efforts to safely evacuate the members of his ward to the United States in July and August 1912. George T. Sevey’s account of the exodus and his biography have been published in Margaret Shumway Sevey, *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey*. Two earlier, variant copies also exist and are located in the archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City: George T. Sevey, “The Story of Chuichupa,” Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection (1880–1985), microfilm of typescript; and George Thomas Sevey, “Reminiscences,” [n.d.], typescript. Sevey’s “The Story of Chuichupa” appears to be Sevey’s earliest exodus account, reflecting his actual language, and is the version used in this article. Occasional details found in “Reminiscences” and in *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey* but not found in “The Story of Chuichupa” will appear in the footnotes. Although “The Story of Chuichupa” included details of Sevey’s other experiences in the colonies, only the portion relating to the exodus from Mexico is included here.

Since the typescript was almost devoid of paragraph breaks, for the reader’s convenience the text has been arranged in paragraphs. Later typewritten or handwritten insertions are noted by angle brackets < >. In a few cases, Sevey’s consistent misspellings of some surnames is corrected in the text. Occasionally a missing word, letter, or punctuation is added in brackets [ ] for clarification. With the exception of these editorial standards, the text has been left intact.

George Sevey’s exodus narrative describes events of July 24 through August 12, 1912 (fig. 4). Because the events and narrative can, at times, be confusing, two tools are provided to help readers navigate Sevey’s document: a map and a timeline. The map highlights some of the places mentioned in Sevey’s document. Sevey mentions place names that cannot be

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20. Margaret Sevey, *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey*, 59.

21. Margaret Sevey, *Trails and Trials of George Thomas Sevey*; AncestralFile, AFN 8FRR-XJ.

found on modern maps, presumably because the Latter-day Saint colonists gave their own names to locations named differently by the Mexicans. Some map locations, therefore, are an approximation. Great care has been taken to ensure that the map is as accurate as available information allows. The timeline highlights major events of each day between July 29 and August 12, offering a brief overview of Sevey's detailed exodus account.

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**Fig. 4.** Men and wagon on the way to Hatchita during exodus of Mexico colonies, August 1912.

## Timeline of Colonia Chuichupa's 1912 Exodus

**July 29**

Chuichupa Saints advised begin preparations to evacuate women and children and to turn guns over to Salazar's men.

**July 30**

Chuichupa Saints prepare to evacuate women and children.

**July 31**

Women and children leave on train from Chico River station to El Paso, Texas.

**August 1**

Women and children arrive in El Paso; Men return to Chuichupa and prepare to leave colony.

**August 2**

Men continue preparations for exodus, establish a camp a few miles from town, and are informed to leave immediately to meet up with Garcia men.

**August 3**

Chuichupa men leave town in morning but remain at nearby camp. Salazar's men retrieve guns left in the colony.

**August 4-5**

Chuichupa men told to travel as quickly as possible to general rendezvous point at the Stairs.

**August 6**

Chuichupa men begin journey toward the point where they were instructed to rendezvous with men of Colonia Garcia.

**August 7**

Chuichupa men find rendezvous point, deserted and continue on toward Scott's Peak, where the men of Colonia Pacheco are to be waiting.

**August 8**

Chuichupa men encounter three young men from Salazar's army, do not find the Pacheco men at the appointed rendezvous point, and arrive at Piedras Verde River.

**August 9**

Chuichupa men arrive at the Stairs, where they find a deserted camp. They follow the trail of the main body of men to Tepacita Wash, near Casas Grandes.

**August 10**

Chuichupa men encounter the Mexican Federal Army and are allowed to continue on to U.S. border.

**August 11**

Chuichupa men cross U.S. border at Dog Springs, New Mexico.

**August 12**

Chuichupa men arrive in Hachita, New Mexico, and take train to El Paso.

## Excerpt from “The Story of Chuichupa”

The Chuichupa ward or town . . . sat near the south end of the valley which snuggled against the back bone of the western slope of the mighty Sierra Madre [Mountains]. This little town held the distinction of being the most southerly organized ward in the church up to this time. The people had worked hard and suffered much hardship to create prosperity and make the little valley a desirable place to live. For not withstanding its natural beauty and surrounding grandeur, there were many disadvantages, many difficulties to contend with. The growing seasons were short, the soil not too fertile, however, fair crops of oats, potatoes, and sometimes corn, also all sorts of garden vegetables could, with proper cultivation and with some barn yard fertilizer, grow and do well. Cattle raising and cheese making was, I think, the main money crop.

Chuichupa had reached its peak of prosperity during the year 1911. There was harvested over 30,000 bushels of oats, much oat hay, many tons of potatoes, tons and tons of full cream cheese, much of which would compete with anything that Wisconsin had to offer. Several thousand head of cattle roamed the lush ample range that surrounded the town on all sides. A saw mill and a shingle mill was being operated for the benefit of the town's consumption.

A railroad was being completed through the mountains from Casas Grande to Madera and was a good market for all of our surplus products. The railroad was completed in the spring of 1912. A station was established at a point on the Chico River, about twenty miles from us, especially for our convenience. This would greatly alleviate one of our greatest problems, that of transportation, and would make possible some of our individual activities such as lumbering and manufacturing of lumber products. Etc, Etc.

**[July 24, 1912]** This is a general picture as it was July 24, 1912. The crops promised to exceed the 1911 crops. Being encouraged by the glittering prospects, we felt the urge toward greater accomplishments financially, socially, educationally and religiously.

Little did we dream on this 24th of July of the ominous catastrophe that was soon to strike such [a] devastating blow to our placid contentment and impassioned dreams. True, we had heard the constant rumor of so called revolutionary war, too remote to affect us, so we thought. Hadn't we been assured time and again, that we were where the Lord wanted us? Hadn't the Lord been with us and helped us to prosper? Our own local prophets from our own little pulpit had testified their firm belief that this was one of the special places of refuge for the saints when calamitous times would come upon the earth? Besides we were so far away from the beaten track of the revolutionary vagabonds.

So in our beloved little village <we proceeded to plan and put into execution one of the greatest celebrations of Chuichupa history with> a parade, rodeo events and races, topped with a big dance at night which consisted mostly of quadrilles, some polkas, reels, schottisches, an occasional waltz executed by the holding of hands. The fond embrace was taboo in all of our dances, nevertheless no dancing anywhere was ever enjoyed more than was those lively steps marked to the vigorous notes of the fiddle accompanied by the sonorous vamping of the organ. God was still in His Heaven, and all was well with the world! For the next three days the people returned to the daily routine of cultivating crops, riding range, manufacturing cheese and butter, and performing regular household duties. I myself was operating a small saw mill a mile or so west from town, was also engaged in milking cows and manufacturing cheese on shares for Ray Farnsworth.<sup>22</sup>

**[July 29, 1912]** I am going to give some dates here that are as nearly correct as I can remember them. On the morning of the 29th, about sunup, Dave Brown,<sup>23</sup> my first counselor came to the mill (where I was milking cows [and] straining the milk into the cheese vats) with a report that during the night a messenger had arrived with a message from the Stake Presidency, that trouble was in the offing at the lower colonies and that Brother Hyrum Harris<sup>24</sup> would arrive sometime during the day with full information and instructions. Dave seemed to be very much concerned over the situation, as Salizer [José Inéz Salazar]<sup>25</sup> was making impossible demands upon the colonists. I, myself, being of a phlegmatic nature, didn't feel too much perturbed, feeling that the Lord would surely intervene, and the threatening storm would pass over. Brother Harris arrived as I remember, in the evening of July 29th.

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22. Raymond Alonzo Farnsworth moved with his parents to Colonia Pacheco and then to Colonia García. AncestralFile, AFN 1Lo6-BS; Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 181.

23. For biographical information on David Albert Brown, see Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members, Church Archives; and AncestralFile, AFN 1XBJ-PS.

24. Counselor to Juárez Stake president Junius Romney, Hyrum Smith Harris also served as president of the Mexican Mission in 1903 and again in 1905. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 2:120; “Twentieth Century Mission Presidents Index,” Church Archives; AncestralFile, AFN 1LMD-S1.

25. Sevey spells “Salazar” as “Salizer” throughout his autobiographical accounts. Spelling is standardized to “Salazar” in this text.

A general meeting was called and the following information was given. Salazar, on his arrival, had unloaded his troops and equipment at the stock pens near Colonia Dublán, and forthwith demanded an interview with the leaders of the Mormon Colonies. President Romney and counselors and some of the other brethren responded to the summons and met with Salazar, I think at Casas Grande. These were his demands; the mormons were to turn over all of their guns, ammuniton, horses, saddles, and any other munitions of war which they might possess, and he, Salazar, would guarantee protection for the colonies. President Romney pointed the fact to Salazar, that in as much as there were many roving bands of irresponsible renegades operating throughout the country, and that he, Salazar, was not sure of his ability to maintain his protection against the on coming Federal Forces. In the meantime, the colonists would be at the mercy of even a small band of renegades, and it would be unthinkable what could happen to their unprotected wives and children. With a glowering scowl Salazar retorted after this fashion, "Mr. Romney, our big guns are now trained on those beautiful homes in Dublán, unless you comply with my demands, those houses will be reduced to rubble. We will ransack the town and take what ever we want. This same course of action will follow through with Colonia Juarez and all the other Mormon Colonies."

This certainly came as a tremendous shock to the brethren and for the moment must have caused profound consternation. President Romney then replied as he had no choice personally but to accede. He was only the spiritual leader and held no jurisdiction over their affairs, he would need time to call the people to get them to accede. This respite was granted by Salazar and the people, that is the Priesthood, was called together and having no choice, agreed to comply conditionally. That their women, children, and the more aged men be permitted to have safe conduct to the United States by train or otherwise. To this Salazar agreed.

However, this is not the whole story; being of pioneer stock, most every family possessed from one to four or five guns of different caliber and vintage, and most every family did own a modern fairly high powered gun, so it was decided to see to it that each man would be supplied with a good modern gun and turn all the rest over to Salazar and after the women and children were in safety, the men would take to the hills and await events. Then Brother Harris advised us to immediately begin to prepare to fit our plan into the general plan of the Stake. In the mean time, it was still hoped that providence would intervene, that would make the exodus unnecessary, but we would be prepared for all eventualities; this was the keynote of Brother Harris's advice.

**[July 30, 1912]** On the morning of the 30th the people began to prepare to leave. Some of the people were a little dispassionate about the whole thing and had to be urged to action, as they were still not prepared to accept it as the ultimatum, believing that interposition would still become a fact. The evening of the 30th, a messenger came bearing the news that [Colonia] Juarez, [Colonia] Dublán, [Colonia] Pacheco and [Colonia] Garcia were all on the move [to send their women and children to safety] and for Chuichupa to be at the Chico [River station] by the 31st as a train would be waiting to take them [the Chuichupa women and children]. Howard [Howd] Veater<sup>26</sup> had already been sent to Chico [Station] the day before to order the train. So this was it, no longer did the people hesitate. All night could be seen the yellow light of kerosene lamps glaring through the windows of every house, pounding of hammers could be heard nailing down boxes of dishes and other treasures to be buried in the ground, against the day of our return, which would certainly be soon. It had been decided that all wagons would meet at the public square loaded and ready to move at sunup of the 31st. Our baggage was not to exceed 100 lbs. per adult and 50 lbs. for each child.

**[July 31, 1912]** At the appointed time the caravan had assembled and just as the first rays of the sun showed above Juniper Ridge the procession moved out at the signal given toward the east, and toward a destiny that presented dire misgivings and troubled uncertainties. What will be our future, what will be the end, was the thought paramount in the minds of all. Little did we think “<that years would pass by before we would cast [our] gaze upon our”> beautiful valley with all its summer beauty, turned by the summer rains to a carpet of deep rich green splashed with fabulous coloring of gorgeous flowers which abounded in limitless profusion everywhere.

Our gaze is now turned toward the north, there lies field after field of corn, oats, and potatoes, clothed in that deep rich verdure which promises abundant harvest mature products. My eyes roam around the horizon with its undulating pattern with its stockade of Ponderosa Pine drawn around the valley as though meant for protection from any evil thing that might try to enter. There stands our little houses we called our homes, looking pitifully lonely. They were not much for houses as houses go, most of them. They were either made of rough unpainted lumber or rough adobe. But

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26. For biographical information on Simeon Howd (“Howard” in Sevey’s text) Veater, see Ruby Spilsbury Hatch, “Emily Almeda Brown Veater,” Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection; and AncestralFile, AFN 2F68-JF.

they were more than houses to us, or even homes. We had built them with our own hands, and they were our sanctuaries. We had knelt around the family altar and prayed as a family for God's blessings and He had blessed us, and we by the same token had thanked Him. With saddened hearts and poignant memories we proceeded on our journey, arriving at the Chico Station, in due time, where the train was waiting to take our precious cargo of women and children to the U.S.A. and safety.

As quickly as possible the passengers were loaded into two passenger cars and all of the baggage into a freight car. The time had now come to say our good byes and part with our loved ones. For myself, I think that never had I experienced such emotional upheaval as I did during that period of good byes. As I stepped onto the platform of the car and down the aisle, and looked into the faces on either side, and saw the tear dimmed eyes and the grim, bewildered expressions, I suddenly turned all soft inside, and a tight knot rose in my throat that seemed to threaten strangulation. I stepped to the opposite side of the platform and struggled for composure, and managed somehow to force a smile, which at best was a feeble, g[h]astly grin. As I passed through the cars shaking hands, it suddenly occurred to me that some of those dear eyes that I looked into, I never again would see during this life.

As I stepped down to the ground after the last hand shake, the train had already begun to move forward. For a few moments I know I stood in a daze watching the billowing smoke as it poured from the stack, listening to the violent coughing of the engine, the pounding of the drive rods as they rolled the wheels over the steel rails. I stood like one in a trance, from which I did not recover until a long poignant wail emerged from the engines steam whistle [that] announced its preparation to dive into the blackness of the Cumbre Tunnel.<sup>27</sup> I came to with tears rolling down my cheeks. This was indeed embarrassing, I hesitated turning around, but as I stole a peek through the misty environment I could discern that stronger men than I were all but sobbing, all I think wept unashamed.

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27. The Cumbres Tunnel was on the rail line connecting Madera to Pearson and at the time was one of the longest rail tunnels in the world. The site known as Pearson to the colonists (after the name of the Pearson company) was actually, and today still is, called Mata Ortiz. Madera was connected to Pearson by the rail line to allow the company to tap the nearby timber resources. Turley and Turley, *History of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 213–14; Harold W. Taylor, comp., *Memories of Militants and Mormon Colonists in Mexico* (Yorba Linda, Calif.: Shumway Family History Services, 1992), 181–86.

We now called a hurried council and decided to pull all wagons back over the ridge into the Musica, a creek about two miles back towards home. We would stay there until we were sure that our folks would get through. There was considerable anxiety over the possibility of the bridges being burned ahead of the train, as the blowing up of tracks and burning bridges was a sort of set pattern for the red bandidos.

At this point, I will go back to the beginning of the exodus. Brother Harris advised by authority of the Stake Presidency that all phases of the “operation exodus” should be under the direction of the bishopric, consequently, we, the bishopric, decided that Dave Brown first counselor, would be the most efficient one to handle the situation where the women and children were concerned, as he spoke Spanish fluently and was a man of outstanding persuasiveness and personality, and if anybody could talk their way through a difficult situation, Dave could.<sup>28</sup> That would leave the handling of the men’s side of the situation up to myself and second counselor Wilford S. Davis.<sup>29</sup>

Dave was to send telegrams back to us from Casas Grande, where the guns were to be turned over to the red flaggers sometime in the afternoon, of the same day we received word through telegram that the train carrying our people had passed through all right and was headed for El Paso.

[**August 1, 1912**] Sometime after midnight, August the first, another telegram came through informing us that they had crossed the border into El Paso. Imagination alone could draw a picture of the vast feeling of relief that swept over us, letting down tension to a point where we could catch a few winks of sleep; the first in over forty hours for most of us.

Some of the men who had accompanied the caravan out from Chuichupa on horse back had returned home immediately after the train had left the Chico Station. Their mission was to begin the preparation for the final exodus of the men.

We who had stayed with the wagons broke camp about sun up, August 1 and began our return journey home where we arrived at sometime about

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28. An account of the exodus of the women and children based on Dave Brown’s oral history is found in Karl Young, *The Long Hot Summer of 1912: Episodes in the Flight of the Mormon Colonists from Mexico*, Charles E. Merrill Monograph Series in the Humanities and Social Sciences, no. 1 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1967).

29. Wilford Salisbury Davis moved to Chuichupa from Colonia Juárez in 1904. For more information on Davis, see Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; AncestralFile, AFN 1QJV-85.

noon or shortly after. The rest of the day was spent in making preparation to move out, although, as yet we hadn't received word definitely that that would be the policy.

That evening a meeting was called for the purpose of effecting an organization to determine the course of action in any or all exigencies and also to settle the question of leadership. For myself, I felt very deeply my own inadequacy to assume leadership. I knew there were others who had the same feeling about me, however, after some debating over the proposition, the matter was put to a vote, and almost, not quite, unanimously it was decided to follow the instructions of the Stake Presidency. This threw the responsibilities directly in my lap. I accepted the situation humbly and prayerfully, and I want to say here, that from this point forward to our crossing of the line into the United States, that some ten or twelve days later, with the exception of a few divergencies of opinions, the operation was carried on with a minimum of conflict, I want to express here my profoundest appreciation for the loyal and hearty support that was given me by those good men of Chuichupa. God bless them, many have passed onto a better life and I hope to be able to be worthy to join them some day. There was not a single one of them that didn't bind themselves to me in the bonds of love by their generous considerations, over the entire period of that hectic trip.

[August 2, 1912] All day of the second of August, preparations went on. Store goods were carried deep into the sequestered places of the mountains and cached away into large dry caves. Horses were driven into out of the way places, also cattle, in vain hopes that they would not be found by any roving bands of rebels that might show up. A camp was established at the rock quarry, a few miles N. W. from our town. It was to be a temporary rendezvous in case of necessity. During the night of Aug. 2, messengers brought word that the men from [Colonia] Juarez and [Colonia] Dublán had abandoned their towns and fled to a place called the "Stairs," situated some ten or twelve miles north west from Juarez. It was an ideal place for a camp, a sort of rolling basin with plenty of good pure water,<sup>30</sup> and protected with high bluffs on the east from where any invasion was likely. There were but two trails entering the basin from the east, they were narrow and easily defended. Also, the men from [Colonia] Pacheco was retiring to a point near Scotts Peak, where they would await our arrival. The Garcia men were also headed for a point west from [Colonia] Garcia,

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30. In published account, "grass for animals" is added.

where we would later join them, and from where we were to leave immediately for our initial rendezvous, as Colonel Ponce, with seventy five men would arrive at our town some time next morning, for the purpose of picking up what ever munitions of war we might possess.

**[August 3, 1912]** So again we were kept busy all night long and left town next morning about nine or ten o'clock, with all the plunder we could pick up and manage, and went into camp at the rock quar[r]y. I with two or three others stopped at the point of Temple Hill where we could see clearly all that went on within the valley. Supplied with a powerful pair of binoculars we were able to pin point all that went on. We had hardly gotten located when the Reds began stringing into the valley along the regular wagon road. They took lodging in the most prosperous looking houses. Shots were heard, which we learned later were aimed against hogs, beef and poultry.

I had sent a message to camp of what had transpired so far. After some time I left for camp leaving men to keep watch. As I was nearing camp I met the entire outfit coming on a high gallop. The messenger that I had sent in seemed to have arrived very much excited, stating that the Reds were coming right on through the valley following our <trail> and were shooting all over town. He didn't know but what they were shooting the few Mexican people left in town. So here, there were guns out of scabbards and all set to do battle. That is exactly what these boys would have done, had necessity required it. Having allayed the excitement, we went on into camp and proceeded to move the main camp a little farther away as fast as possible, and to a more satisfactory position strategically, keeping strong guard out in several localities night and day during the night of August 3.

**[August 4-5, 1912]** On August 4, we had succeeded in establishing our entire camp, I think, on the Second of May Creek.<sup>31</sup> It had been arranged through the last messenger from [Colonia] Garcia to meet someone whom they would send to the mouth of the Juan Dios, by noon of August 5 to get further instructions of how to proceed. It was still being hoped that providence would intervene and that we would not be forced to make the dreaded move. But, nevertheless, I took Jim Jesperson<sup>32</sup> and kept the

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31. Published version notes it as simply "May Creek." Sevey may have meant the "Fifth of May Creek" in the original typescript, which is the date the Mexican army defeated the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1812.

32. James Andrew Jesperson moved with his parents to the colonies in 1896. For additional biographical information, see Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 334-37; Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; and AncestralFile, AFN 41HB-3M.

appointment at the place designated. We found Jim M[a]cDonald<sup>33</sup> and Charles Martineau<sup>34</sup> waiting; they brought word that we were to proceed with as much speed as possible to make our way to the general rendezvous at the "Stairs." We were to pick up the Garcia boys, then the Pacheco boys and all go on to the "Stairs" where we would meet and join the main body of men from all the Colonies. Jim and Charley were to escort us to the Garcia bunch.

Arriving back at camp that evening we organized more fully for convenience of travel. There were some forty men, so we organized into groups, I think, about five or eight groups. I am not sure about this point, it was either five groups of eight, or eight groups of five. I'm inclined to remember it was the latter, anyhow the groups were chosen as to relation, natural friendship, congeniality, Etc. Each group chose their own captain. They would camp, cook and pack as a group. Ben Johnson<sup>35</sup> from my group was appointed captain of the pack train with a man from each group to assist in that rather burdensome task.

There were about one hundred head of horses in the whole outfit, most of which were owned by a few men such as, Howard Veatre [Veater], Williams, Davis, Brown and Ben Johnson. Some owned no horse at all; but these men were all furnished mounts. These men very generously agreed to throw all horses in one remuda, then the captains drew lots and one by one went in and selected horse by horse for his group, until, all men were mounted. Someone may have the top horse of someone else, but these guys were real sports and very few complaints were made. Then the pack animals, one for each men [*sic*] in the entire company, were selected in like manner. I think I should mention here, that Sam Brown<sup>36</sup> who was one of our local store owners, had very generously placed all his store goods at the disposal of the community and they could pay at some future

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33. For biographical information on James Alexander MacDonald, see Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; AncestralFile, AFN 3HDZ-Po.

34. For biographical information on Charles Henry Martineau, see Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; AncestralFile, AFN 1VXL-R5.

35. Benjamin Lynn Johnson was George T. Sevey's 's brother-in-law. AncestralFile, AFN 1GZ1-GJ.

36. For biographical information on Samuel James Brown, see "Life Story of Samuel J. Brown, 1946," Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection; Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; AncestralFile, AFN 1XBJ-K4.

date. I think much of the provisions we carried with us, were from Sam's stock.<sup>37</sup> George Brown<sup>38</sup> stated to me later that most of the people paid up over the years.

Coming back to the story, after all the details of organizing had been effected, there arose a problem that presented a real tragedy. Nearly every family had a family dog. Of course these dogs had been brought along. There were some of the most intelligent canines assembled here that I have ever known. They, many of them were descended from very intelligent animals. Old Tige, who belonged to my very good friend Dave Brown, had done many things that would vie with things Rin-tin-tin or any other dog would do. I mention this in passing. That the appreciation of the situation be more keenly realized, these were not just dogs, they were most of them trained cattle dogs and in a cattle country they were in many instances more efficient than men could be. These were not house pets, they were pals to their masters, and traveled the range with them, slept by the campfire with them, stood guard at night, always ready at their masters bidding, to perform any duty as he understood it. You may imagine how these men felt after serious and sane deliberations it was decided for the safety of the camp, and the hardship on the dogs, taking them overland hundreds of miles through mountain trails and over hot waterless deserts, they were to be mercifully relieved of their lives by bullet. Each man had the privilege of taking the life of his own dog or turn the job over to a general executioner. This gruesome bit of business was dispatched quickly [and] efficiently even though the heart tugs were tremendous, with white faces and trembling lips, these men grimly did what had to be done. Even now after the passing of so many years when this incident is brought to the focus of my memory, sadness surges my soul and tears at my heart.

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37. This was undoubtedly a wise move by Brown, since the Colorados were pillaging everything in sight. By allowing the colonists to use his supplies with a promise of future payment, he minimized, but did not eliminate, his losses. After helping the women and children reach the Chico railroad station to leave Mexico, Brown wrote, "I returned to Chuichupa where I employed a pack train to pack out and hide in caves a considerable amount of merchandise which was all finally taken by the local Mexicans and for which I never received remuneration." "Life Story of Samuel J. Brown, 1946."

38. For biographical information on George Andrew Brown, see Jane Brown Baclawski, "George Andrew Brown," Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection; Chuichupa Ward, Juárez Stake, Record of Members; AncestralFile, AFN 2PX6-C4.

**[August 6, 1912]** We were now ready to be on our journey and had to travel single file as just one single, narrow trail lay ahead of us, leading over the north peak, from there we took the last look at our lovely valley and town. We just looked, and for specific reasons hardly spoke, just passed on up that winding trail toward the north. that night, August 6th, I think we made camp on top of a flat top mountain where there was a spring and running stream of crystal pure water and abundant lush grass for our stock. From here, we could see back up the trail for miles, and we felt little concern for our safety here.

**[August 7, 1912]** The next day we crossed the Chuichupa River, passed over the mountains which were called "The Blues" and made camp on the Gabalan River, after passing the place which had been appointed to meet the men from [Colonia] Garcia. But they had left and their trail let [led] north. Taking their trail we followed until we made camp on the Gabalan; this was August 7, my 31st birthday.

**[August 8, 1912]** August 8th, we got on our way quite early as we were anxious to catch the Garcia bunch to find out what had happened that they didn't wait for us. We could now travel more compactly and didn't need to be strung out so much. We had appointed Bill Williams,<sup>39</sup> Marion Vance<sup>40</sup> and others to scout the vanguard and the right and left guard. Along about 11 o'clock I had dropped back to the pack train which was kept in the rear of the main body, with a rear guard scout some distance behind the pack train. I had just begun to talk to Ben, when Howard Veater came galloping back and told me in no gentle terms that I'd better get up front where I belonged, as there was a bunch of armed men riding up the trail ahead of us and probably leading us into a trap. I told Ben to hold up the pack train and if shooting started, to shove them out of sight some place. The rest of the men had halted and I gave instructions as I went along the line to remain so. If shooting started to get behind whatever protection there might be, and give them all they had by way of bullets.

I could see three armed men riding up the trail, and Jim McDonald was following them. Some of our men had pointed out a bunch of horses behind a pine thicket. I could just see the feet of the horses, but someone said they thought something was shining through the trees, it might be a

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39. William Easterly Williams was the son of colonies pioneer George Calvin Williams. For biographical information, see AncestralFile, AFN 1QJT-ZM.

40. After the exodus, Marion David Vance returned to Chuichupa and married George Thomas Sevey's half-sister Minerva Elizabeth Sevey. AncestralFile, AFN 2454-LH.

bridle bit, a Concho or metal stirrup. I'll admit, things looked pretty serious. I spurred up and caught up with Jim and asked him what he thought. He said it was any body's guess; it could be a trap or it may be only three men looking for horses. By this time we were within about one hundred yards from the men. We could now see that the horses were a loose band anchored in a little clearing fighting flies. The men now got off their horses with their guns in their hands, but their eyes were on the horses. We also got off, guns in hand, and stepped upon a little knoll close by, keeping a sharp lookout for any hostile move from any direction. The men, after taking a few steps toward the horses, glanced around and saw us. For a moment it looked like they aimed to get behind trees and maybe fight it out, but we waved our hats at them and bec[k]oned them to come over. By this time they had located our whole bunch and decided to come on over.

They were all young, from under twenty years of age, I would guess. They were very frightened young men, one of them especially, he simply collapsed and sat down heavily on a log that was close at hand. It so happened that they were all from Casas Grande and two of them were from families of some of our own family's friends. One was Miguel Portillo,<sup>41</sup> a brother to Enrique, who was educated in the Juárez Stake Academy<sup>42</sup> and was now captain under General Salazar<sup>43</sup> and at the moment, with the red army at [Colonia] Pacheco about three or four miles to the east of us. Another one of the boys was a brother to Silvestre Quevado,<sup>44</sup> who was a lieutenant with Salazar. He also had attended the Academy.

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41. Miguel Portillo was a son of Casas Grandes tax collector Genevevo Portillo Chávez. His brother Enrique was one of Salazar's officers.

42. Like other Latter-day Saint communities, the Mormon colonists in Mexico built an educational facility, the Juárez Stake Academy. It became a focal point for the social and educational life of the colonies and still serves that important function today. For a complete history, see Albert Kenyon Wagner and Leona Farnsworth Wagner, comps., *The Juárez Stake Academy, 1897–1997: The First One Hundred Years* (Colonia Juárez, Chihuahua: The Academy, 1997).

43. Enrique Portillo was one of the five signatories to the formal request sent to Orozco advocating revolt against Madero. His execution by forces of Pancho Villa was witnessed by Mormon colonist Orson Pratt Brown according to a journalist for the *Salt Lake Tribune* who wrote, "Fate decreed that a Mormon leader should see the execution of a revolutionary colonel who had been educated in the Mormon academy in Mexico, had turned against his friends and assisted in destroying their property and places of worship." "Mormon Agent Sees Federal Foe Shot; Colonel Portillo, Educated in L. D. S. Colony, a Traitor to His Old Friends," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 14, 1914; Lloyd, "Rancheros and Rebellion," 131; Smith, "Impacts of the Mexican Revolution," 85.

44. Silvestre Quevado began his revolutionary activities as early as 1908. He was sent to the federal prison at San Juan de Ulúa for plotting against the Díaz

On questioning the boys, we learned that, Salazar was at Pacheco with about 800 men, and that more were at [Colonia] Garcia, also a detachment under Ponce was at [Colonia] Chuichupa.<sup>45</sup> What to do with the boys presented a problem, if we turned them loose, they could report our presence here in the matter of minutes, and, he, Salazar could, and probably would cut us off on both ends, either capture or drive us all deeper into rough mountains. Either procedure would be undesirable for us. If we kept them with us they would be soon missed, and a search would begin immediately, and we could be easily over taken and our act would be considered one of war. In such a case we would be dealt with most harshly.

One member of our party recommended that dead men tell no tales, so we should eliminate them. This of course, was unthinkable. So after due consideration, there were enough of us who were willing to let the Lord in on the deal, and I fully believe that it was inspiration from Him, that George Brown, our interpreter said to the boys for us: Ago on back to your camp and inform the general that we are a peaceful group of men going straight down the big trail to join the men from the other colonies, probably, head on to the United States Border. We will appreciate very much if the general will make no move to stop us. The boys seemed very grateful and shook hands with us warmly, and thanked us generously for our consideration and took off. I'm not sure that those boys ever reported our presence in that neighborhood. By the way, Miguel Portillo could speak good English and he fully understood all that went on during our deliberations. We took a short time out for lunch, then proceeded on our way.

The country [was] fairly smooth and flat here, so we traveled rather compactly, and kept our van right and left guards at a fair distance from the main group, and made good time on our travel until along about four or five o'clock I would guess, we were approaching the Pierres [Piedras] Verde River, just below Cave Valley where a little mormon settlement had been started, but had long since been abandoned, when a man from the right guard came in and reported that three or four men had been seen passing around a bend of the river, going in the same direction we were headed, probably was the tail end of a bunch sent out to intercept us.<sup>46</sup> The

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regime. After Madero came to power, Quevedo was freed. He initially supported Madero and was made a captain in 1911 but subsequently turned his allegiance to Salazar and Orozco. Young, *Ordeal in Mexico*, 201–15; *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia*, 3:2850.

45. It is not known which "Ponce" Sevey referred to, Lino or Demetrio.

46. Cave Valley was located on the Piedras Verde River approximately seven miles down river from Colonia Pacheco. (Colonia Pacheco is near the headwaters

supposition really did seem quite plausible, as the timing would agree with the situation.

We moved on up to the brink of the mesa overhanging the river. Here we went into a huddle of pros and cons. Should we turn back on our trail and try to return to our own home range at Chuichupa, or should we try to back up and find a way around? It certainly looked like suicide to go straight ahead. It seemed we couldn't go forward, backward or sideways. I, Myself, was completely stumped, and felt the weight of responsibility weighing me down into a deep, slough of despondency. I felt that we had been deserted by our own friends from [Colonia] Garcia and [Colonia] Pacheco, who hadn't kept faith with us, leaving the appointed place of meeting before we arrived at said rendezvous. Jim McDonald was standing by saying nothing. I had acquired a great respect for Jim's judgment during our trip so far. He was a real mountaineer, always had a cool head and a fearless attitude and what seemed to me solid judgment, offering advice and information only when asked. I asked him if he knew of a feasible way around. He didn't, so I asked him what procedure he would recommend. This was his answer; "If you say go back, I'll go, if you say go around, I will still go along, and if you say proceed on down the trail, I'll stay with you." The last proposition struck me as being the proper one.

We were now at the head of the trail leading down into the river, a narrow river valley sloping down from the river bank to the mountains on either side contained a dense growth of scrub, oak brush which offered an ideal concealment for any contingent that might be laying for us. Being fully aware of the probable danger of being captured and not being willing to expose the whole group to that danger, I proposed that Jim and I would ride down and reconnoiter and if the coast was clear the company could follow up, if we were captured they would have a chance to escape. George Brown suggested that we may need an interpreter, and he would like to volunteer to go along. I've always felt grateful to George for his unselfishness;

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of the Piedras Verde, which eventually flows into the San Miguel River.) In 1887 the first Latter-day Saints settled at Cave Valley. It was also the site of the Cliff Ranch, also known as the Pratt Ranch, after Helaman Pratt, an early colonizer. Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 122 (hereafter cited as *Encyclopedic History of the Church*). Information on location of Cave Valley was obtained from Map of southern Arizona and northern Mexico, [ca. 1900], Church Archives; Map showing the Mormon Colonies in Mexico, 1891, Church Archives; and Canton Galeana, *Estado de Chihuahua* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, ca. 1896).

so the three of us went ahead down the trail. However, before we reached the bottom of the hill I looked back and saw the whole following. When asked why they disregarded our understanding that they were to wait until signaled, they replied that what ever happened to one would happen to all. Hone rye [ornery] cusses, but I couldn't help but admire their attitude, even though they didn't obey orders; not orders really, there were never any orders given, we navigated by pure understanding.

Well, we didn't encounter any hostile enemy at all. At Pratt's ranch we did run into several troopers from Salazar's camp at Pacheco, visiting some farm families who were living at this place. After talking to them, gleaned what information we could concerning Salazar's intentions, we felt much easier in our minds. We continued on our way to the old Williams Ranch<sup>47</sup> a few miles further down the trail. Here we made camp and for my part, I slept soundly after the exciting experiences of the hectic day of August 8, 1912.

**[August 9, 1912]** We begun our march early the next morning, dropping back into the river after having detoured over a ridge for several miles on the west. Again we traveled single file because of the narrowness of the canyon, but we made good time and made noon camp at the old Sevey horse pasture, a small valley that was entered at either end, through a narrow passage in the rocks.

Father used to keep his work and saddle horses there when not in use. It was just opposite the "Stairs" toward the north. The "Stairs" could be reached by climbing a high mountain ridge up a very steep trail [fig. 5]. No one would ever think of riding a horse up, but would walk up and lead. I was now on my own stomping ground and knew it like the palm of my hand. It was only about two miles to the "Stairs," so Charley Martineau and I climbed over the mountain to the place where we were to meet the assembled host from all the other Chihuahua Colonies, but lo, and Behold, they had fled like the other parties that were supposed to have waited for us. I must confess, that I was somewhat disappointed, not with regret that we were left alone, as now I felt that we were practically out of danger, but we felt we had been deserted and left alone to our fate by our so thought to be friends. There was no message of any kind left to indicate to us what had

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47. The Williams Ranch, located in Cave Valley not far from the Pratt Ranch, was started by George Calvin Williams, an early settler in the Mormon colonies. Hatch and Hardy, *Stalwarts South of the Border*, 719; George Calvin Williams, Reminiscences, Church Archives.



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**Fig. 5.** Stair Canyon gate between rock pillars, August 1912. The general rendezvous point and camp for the main body and Sevey's group of men was lower down the canyon. President Romney, along with Jones and Clayson, climbed up the Stairs to hide the stake records (see fig. 2). The other men in the main body would have stayed at the campsite lower down the canyon. (Wall, Biographical Sketch of John Edmund Wall.)

happened, or why they had gone on and left us.<sup>48</sup> Then, we, Charley and I, walked through the deserted camp grounds and saw the litter of camp garbage lying around, noted the heaps of dead ashes, quarters of beef hanging from limbs in the trees [fig. 6]. One pitifully lonely dog crouched under a tree; some discarded cans of fruit and other parcels of food stuff was in evidence. Evidently, the move from camp had been a hurried one, and we wondered what were the circumstances that precipitated the flight.<sup>49</sup> However there was nothing for us to do but to return to our own camp and report the situation as we found it, which we did. The reaction among our boys

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48. Sevey's traveling companion and interpreter, George A. Brown, wrote of similar feelings about being abandoned:

From Scott's Peak, the camp move on, spending the night in Cave Valley, and arriving at the "Stairs" the next day, only to find that camp abandoned, and no word, what so ever left for us, which was not easy for our men to take. We went right on, however over the mountain to the Tapacitas, where they found another abandoned camp, showing so plainly, that the valley men were well on their way to the line, and did not propose to wait for the men from the mountains, or from Chuichupa. Finding no word of instructions, we were somewhat discouraged and disappointed, but after a little rest, we saddled up and went on. (George A. Brown, "Exodus of the Men from Chuichupa in August of 1912," Ruby Spilsbury Brown Collection.)

49. In his history of the colonies, Thomas Cottam Romney wrote that the Dublán men "pushed on and in due time were at the 'Stairs' with the company from Colonia Juárez. Here they remained until the arrival of the men from the mountain colonies of García and Pacheco. The men from Chuichupa were somewhat delayed and sent word that they would overtake the main company en route to the United States." Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 192. The inconsistency of the Chuichupa accounts and Romney's version of events is clarified by the report made of the exodus by Juárez Stake clerk Alonzo L. Taylor. On August 5, Taylor wrote:

The company remained in camp at the "Stairs" waiting for the Garcia and Chuhuichupa [*sic*] brethren to arrive, as word had been sent to those colonies to join the other wards as soon as possible. In the evening, the company held another council meeting and they decided to leave for the United States unless some condition should immediately arise favoring a safe return and peaceful repossession of our homes. Just before dark the García Ward brethren arrived and stated it was very uncertain whether the Chuhuichupa men would arrive within a day or two as most of the men had gone quite a distance into the mountains for a cattle roundup. (Alonzo Leander Taylor, "Record of the Exodus from the Mormon Colonies in Mexico, [1912]," Church Archives.)



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**Fig. 6.** Details of main body of men at Stair Canyon camp, August 1912. Bishop George Sevey wrote that on August 9, 1912, he “walked through the deserted camp grounds and saw the litter and garbage lying around, noted the heaps of dead ashes, quarters of beef . . . discarded cans of fruit and other parcels of food stuff.” (Sevey, “Story of Chuichupa.”) If Sevey’s camp description is not of the Stairs camp, it may be of the next campsite, known as the “Park.” (See Romney, “Exodus of the Mormon Colonists,” 95.)

didn't appear to be one of regret, but rather of relief. We felt that we could move with greater freedom under our own organization, than would be with such a motley crowd.

After dinner we took to the trail again and within a matter of a couple of hours, we intercepted the trail of the camp from the Stairs, as it emerged from what was called the left hand fork of the Piedras Verde River. The trail led down the river for two or three miles to a point that was known as the Walnut Grove. Here, it cut squarely to the east crossing, a mesa to the Teneja Wash,<sup>50</sup> thence straight across another mesa to the Tepacita Wash<sup>51</sup> [fig. 7].

Here we made camp. Darkness had already fallen and as I remember we didn't make any fires that night. Wood was scarce and besides we didn't know but what there might be some scouts of the enemy stationed near enough to spot any fire that might show up and would be sure to investigate. A very sensible conclusion on our part, I think, as there was war, and we were in the proximity of Casas Grandes also Colonia Juarez, which were both the Red's stronghold. So we thought at least, as a precautionary measure, for their own safety, they would naturally keep guards placed at points from which they would observe the whole country. A fire could be spotted at a great distance. So we spent the night in darkness and was on our way very early next morning. And as I have stated we were in open country and moved with as much speed as possible.

[August 10, 1912] Passing around the north end of a mountain spur called "Paraja azul," we went down into a large flat country known as the Doreales [Dolores] Flat, part of a large tract of land owned by the Carolitos [Corralitos] Cattle Company.<sup>52</sup> We camped for noon at a wind mill and a large earthen tank. Grama Grass grew hip high all over this area. We took a good long noon time rest, after which we saddled and packed up and

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50. The correct spelling is Tinaja Wash. This wash is located in the Tinaja Valley, a major fruit-growing region two miles east of Colonia Juárez. Turley and Turley, *History of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 117–24.

51. Variant spellings exist for this wash. Sevey spelled it "Tepacita." John Edward Wall, who photographed the exodus, scratched the spelling "Tapicita" on the glass negatives depicting the wash. A survey map published in Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954) notes the spelling as "Tapiyecitas." A fourth spelling, "Tapiasita," is noted in Turley and Turley, *History of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico*, 118.

52. The Corralitos Cattle Company was a large American-owned enterprise near Janos, Mexico. Lloyd, "Rancheros and Rebellion," 126.



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**Fig. 7.** Detail of main body of men breaking camp on Tepacita Wash, August 1912. During the exodus, “an advance guard carried a white flag to avoid conflict with the

took off northerly across the open country with no sign of mountain or hill that would cross our trail within twenty or thirty miles. We hadn't been on the move very long, until we spied a long distance ahead, and to the west of our course of travel, a dim long line of what looked to be animals or men or both. After watching for sometime, noting the orderly precision of movement, we decided that it must be a moving army and it was moving directly across our path, and the timing looked as though we would reach, or meet the same spot at the same time. Again the question was discussed among us; should we turn back, or try to dodge around them, or march right on up to them. At this time they were still ten or twelve miles in the distance, and we could have ducked that army all right, but what might we run into if we did? I think by this time most of us felt tired of ducking or of even being afraid of anything, so we decided to go right straight ahead and let that blooming army butt into us, and so they did.

As we reached within about a mile or so of them, a detachment of probably one hundred cavalrymen strung out on the east and another one



federal forces.” (Romney, “Exodus of Mormon Colonists,” 100.) The Chuichupa men camped at Tepacita Wash on August 9, 1912.

of about the same number on the west of us. After they had us practically surrounded, another detachment of several hundred charged us from the front, and we rode straight toward them as fast as our horses could run, holding our hands up high indicating that we were peaceable. By the time we met the front charge, the side wings also moved in, and what I mean we were really hemmed in. The captain asked who we were and where we were going. Again George Brown came forth as interpreter and after explaining, the captain or he may have been a colonel, or petty general, I don't know which, explained that the army was General Jesus De Luz Blanco (Federal)<sup>53</sup> on his way to Casas Grande to get Salazar. But we were to appear before the General and explain our position which we did.

The General was quite a large man, clean, intelligent looking, very affable and gentlemanly. After hearing our story, he expressed regret that

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53. Jesus de Luz Blanco, like Orozco, Salazar, and Quevedo, became involved in the anarchist *magonista* movement before the revolution. When the revolution began, he became one of Madero's generals. *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia*, 1:445.

we had been caused so much trouble, and he would like very much to have us return to the colonies with him, and he would guarantee and see that we were protected. We thanked him very kindly and told him that we were on our way to our families, and that all of the colonists were in the United States, and we thought it would be wiser for us to join them, as we didn't know what the situation might be with our families, but after we had arranged our affairs concerning them we would be glad to return to our homes, provided protection was assured. The general then permitted us to go on our way.<sup>54</sup> It was now getting well on toward evening and it wasn't long until we went in to camp, August 10. We went to bed that night for the first time within a week feeling completely secure. It seemed that a whole epoch of my life had passed within the last two weeks.

[August 11–12, 1912] I think it was the next day, August 11, that we crossed the border at Dog Springs, New Mexico<sup>55</sup> [fig. 8]. We camped there that night and moved on into Hachita, New Mexico, the next day,

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54. On August 16, 1912, the federal army led by General Blanco defeated the rebel forces in nearby Ciudad Juárez. This would mark the end of organized military resistance of the Oroquistas, who resorted to guerilla tactics thereafter. Michael C. Meyer, *Mexican Rebel: Pascual Orozco and the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1915* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 83.

55. On current USGS topographic maps, the only locality in New Mexico known as Dog Springs is in Socorro and Catron counties, north of Hachita. The exact locality of Dog Springs mentioned by the colonists is uncertain. However, Taylor O. MacDonald, *Jess and Hazel Taylor: A Borderland Family History* (Utah: By the author, 1998), 233, indicates that Dog Springs is located nine miles due west of Corner Ranch. “Corner Ranch is located in the SW Panhandle of New Mexico. It is found in the SE corner of the panhandle, located 20 miles due east of Antelope Wells, NM, which today is a border crossing point into Mexico. That would mean that Dog Springs is located 11 miles due east of Antelope Wells, NM, and 9 miles west of Corner Ranch, New Mexico.” Francis C. Alder letter to author, 2004, from a conversation with Bill Adams of Las Cruces, New Mexico, 2004. Alder also notes “that Dog Springs is not located on any modern day map but it was well known to the Saints in the colonies. It is even noted that Gen. John J. Pershing’s army passed through there in 1916–1917.”

In addition, Dog Springs could be located right on the border near the Dog Mountains that run perpendicular to the international border between Chihuahua and Hidalgo County, New Mexico. *Dog Mountains Quadrangle, New Mexico-Chihuahua, 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic)* (Reston, Va.: United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, 1983).



Fig. 8. Dog Springs, New Mexico, August 1912. Note the trees and building in background. Both the main body of men and Bishop Sevey's group made their first camp on U.S. soil at Dog Springs. Apparently no longer a current place name, "Dog Springs" was located on the United States–Mexico border approximately eleven miles east of Antelope Wells and nine miles west of Corner Ranch, New Mexico. (Taylor O. MacDonald, *Jess and Hazel Taylor: A Borderland Family History* [Utah: By the author, 1998], 233.)

August 12<sup>56</sup> [fig. 9]. At Hachita we stored all our paraphernalia, left our horses on pasture there with those of the other colonies and proceeded on to El Paso that same afternoon by train. Dave and some of the other men were there to meet us and for a time we reveled in the exchanging of stories and happenings of our respective camps during those twelve thrilling but hectic days. I received the information that most of Chuichupa people had been transferred to Thatcher, Arizona, temporarily where they could receive a little better care than in El Paso. My folks had been sent to Blue Water, New Mexico, where my wife's father and brothers, Frank and Shirley

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56. Hachita is located in southwest New Mexico near the Little Hachet mountains, midway between Animas and Columbus, New Mexico.



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**Fig. 9.** Hachita, New Mexico, August 12, 1912. On August 10, the day after crossing the U.S. border, the main body of colonists “moved to Alamo Hueco where they camped . . . then traveled to Hatchet Ranch . . . where their last camp was made. . . . Hachita was reached on August 12.” (Romney, “Exodus of the Mormon Colonists,” 102.) In Hachita, the colonists found a place to store their horses, wagons, and other equipment. (Hatch, *Colonia Juarez*, 201.) They then “took the night train for El Paso, arriving about nine a.m. on August 13<sup>th</sup>.” (Hatch, *Colonia Juarez*, 201.)

The men from Chuichupa crossed the U.S. border on August 11, and “moved on into Hachita, New Mexico, the next day, August 12. At Hachita we stored all our paraphernalia . . . and proceeded on to El Paso that same afternoon by train.” (Sevey, “Story of Chuichupa.”)

were then living.<sup>57</sup> It was decided that I should go to Thatcher and visit our people that were there and do what I could to cheer them up. There was not much I could do, however, but I was really thankful for the privilege of seeing them and greeting them again. I returned to El Paso and went from there with Ben to our families in Bluewater. Here ends a fabulous chapter of my life.

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57. Bluewater, a small Latter-day Saint settlement between Gallup and Albuquerque, New Mexico, was founded in the 1890s. It was organized as a ward in the St. Johns Stake in 1907. Many Mormon colonists fleeing Mexico found temporary refuge at Bluewater, and some permanently resettled in the community. Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church*, 73–74.