

Notes and Documents

THE LA JUNTA ARCHIVES *

Missions were established among the Patarabuey Indians of La Junta, the region of the junction of the Rio Conchos with Rio Grande, as early as 1683, and there are numerous documents available dealing with explorations and the founding and maintenance of missions there. To the best of my knowledge, the actual records of the La Junta missions are not available however. Other available documents deal with investigations of the possibilities of locating a *presidio* at La Junta, and with the actual establishment of the *presidio* in 1760. "El Presidio del Norte de la Junta de los Rios" apparently was established in the immediate vicinity of the Indian pueblo which had been named Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and on the present site of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, on the high mesas south and west of the actual junction of the streams.

Early in my research on the archaeology and the ethno-history of the La Junta area I attempted to locate surviving mission or *presidio* records in Ojinaga itself, but without success. During the last summer several Church records were located, and superficially examined, that at least overlap the *presidio* period, although they do not extend back to the previous mission period. These records are part of the archives of the Catholic Church on the old plaza in Ojinaga and were located through the initiative and interest of Mr. Thomas St. Clair of the Border Patrol of the U. S. Immigration Service, then stationed at Presidio, Texas.

In the course of checking the ancestry of individuals thought to be Mexican citizens illegally in the United States, Mr. St. Clair had official access to the various records of modern Ojinaga and thereby discovered the existence of the older Church records. He kindly informed me of his discovery and in June of 1949 succeeded in inducing the *padre* currently in charge of the records to allow me to inspect them briefly. A few notes were made at that time and plans were laid for future more detailed studies. When Mr. William Newcomb, Sr., of the Department of Anthropology of The University of Texas and Mr. James Garner, a graduate student in the department, attempted to investigate the records, however, they were refused permission for further inspection at that time.

Although the records are of limited number and deal with extremely detailed and specialized subjects, they are nevertheless valuable additions to our knowledge of La Junta history and an effort should be made to make transcripts or photostats of them before the older volumes become illegible or are otherwise destroyed. According to my own brief notes the records include the following bound volumes:

- (1) "Matrimonios de 1798-1842" (contains some documents from the 1770 decade).

* Prepared for publication by Charles J. Kelley, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Curator of the Anthropological Museum, The University of Texas.

- (2) "Matrimonios de 1822 [should be 1842?] a 1862."

- (3) "Libro de Partidos y Bautismos pertenecientes de los años de 1856-1857, 1858, 1859, y 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864. 1856 a 1864."

- (4) "Libro de Bautismos del Año de 1864. Pueblo de Ojinaga, Chihauhua, 1864-1868."

The books also contain records of *visitas* of the La Junta mission such as Coyame, Mesquites, etc. Many of the older documents deal with petitions of soldiers stationed at the *presidio* for permission to marry women of the pueblo. Used in connection with the lists of soldiers stationed at the *presidio* or sent on the expedition to found it, and the lists of converts given in available documents, these records should provide considerable enlightenment as to the ethnic sources of the modern population of La Junta. The older documents are badly faded and cracked and desperately need careful attention, not to mention transcription. There may be other records, since the *padre* brought these out one at a time and with considerable reluctance.

Mr. St. Clair pointed out that several changes occur in the name used for the pueblo in the various documents. In the oldest documents the name used is "El Real Presidio de Señor Santiago de la Junta de los Rios." I saw no usage of the earlier name still current in the 1750-1760 decade, "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe." By 1795 the name had been shortened to "El Real Presidio de Santiago del Norte" and shortly thereafter to "El Presidio de Santiago del Norte." This was then further reduced to "El Presidio del Norte," which continued in use until November, 1865, when the pueblo name was officially changed to "Ojinaga," after Manuel Ojinaga, a leader in the fight against the French, and Governor of Chihuahua, who was killed in combat that year. Modern Presidio, Texas, preserves in abbreviated form the old name.

Although I have no means of rescuing, photographing, transcribing, or studying these archives, I will be glad to aid in every way possible the work of any person or institution that is interested in saving these fragments of La Junta history which otherwise will inevitably be lost.

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The Historical Society of New Mexico met in the Women's Board Room, Museum of New Mexico Art Gallery, December 9, 1949, at 7:30 P. M. Officers present were Paul A. F. Walter, President; Wayne Mauzy, Corresponding Secretary; Albert G. Ely, Treasurer; Hester Jones, Recording Secretary.

The minutes of the last biennial meeting were approved as published in the April, 1946, issue of THE NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW. The report of the Treasurer was adopted. It is appended hereto. The Treasurer also reported that the membership of the Historical Society stands at 649.