

NEH Application Cover sheet (FEL-294258)

Fellowships

PROJECT DIRECTOR

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University of Tennessee

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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Settled Spaces: Tejano Architecture, 1690 - 1848*

Grant period: From 2024-07-01 to 2025-06-30

Project field(s): Architecture; Hispanic American Studies; Latino History

Description of project: This book is an architectural and social history that tells the story of Spanish and Mexican settlers and spaces in Texas. It traces the family networks, placemaking practices, and built environment of Tejano habitation, challenging the pervasive Anglo-centric interpretation of Texas as a no-man's land civilized by American industry. The book offers an alternative perspective that foregrounds the agency of Tejanos, whose architectural knowledge and social practices created the built environment of a mature culture prior to American annexation, and situates Tejano-mestizo spaces within a cultural landscape that evolved over centuries. By introducing overlooked typologies of frontier architecture and locating them in a richly detailed history, the book recuperates a distinctive material and social culture and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of settler colonialism in the borderlands, re-framing this cultural landscape as a neglected part of American history.

REFERENCE LETTERS

Gordon H. Chang
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Settled Spaces: Tejano Architecture, 1690 - 1848

Significance and Contribution

Before the border between Mexico and the United States was drawn in 1848, generations of Spanish and Mexican soldiers and settlers had arrived in the frontier north of the Rio Grande. They intermarried, crossing racial boundaries; they started families and put down roots; they applied for land grants and established garrisons, towns, ranches, and homesteads. My book project tells the story of these settlers and their spaces in an architectural and social history that traces the family networks, placemaking practices, and built environment of Spanish and Mexican habitation in Texas. In drawing a portrait of these “settled spaces”, I seek to *unsettle* the dominant perspective on Tejano architectural history: namely, that little such history exists, apart from the missions and presidios that have been preserved along the San Antonio River. This misperception reflects a pervasive historical narrative which reflects the Anglo-centric interpretation of the region as a no-man’s land civilized by American industry starting in the years leading up to the Texas Revolution.

My book offers an alternative perspective that foregrounds the agency of Spanish and Mexican families whose architectural knowledge and social practices created the built environment of a mature culture prior to American annexation. I re-contextualize this architectural history within Tejano lifeways: the patterns of military life, the environmental prerogatives of stock raising, and the influence of kinship ties. I follow the networks of entanglement that connected soldiers, settlers, and their environment; identify spatial typologies such as the fortified house that blur the lines between military and domestic contexts; and trace the legacy of these typologies in historiography and design, arguing that the spatial form of towns and ranches cannot be understood separately from the social structure of Tejano families.

Tejano architecture has not received the scholarly or popular attention given to the adobes of New Mexico or the missions of California. Yet, as Daniel Arreola has shown in his book *Tejano South Texas* (2002), the region forms a distinct, if seldom recognized, Hispanic culture area. The work of Arreola, as well as that of Americo Paredes, Armando C. Alonzo, Arnoldo de León, Jesús F. de la Teja, and David Montejano, has done much to contribute to our knowledge of Tejano cultural history. Scholarship related to the built environment has examined San Antonio’s urban development, with particular emphasis on the five missions which now form a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage site, and W. Eugene George’s book *Lost Architecture of the Rio Grande Borderlands* (2008), brought to light an important group of stone ranch houses around the Falcon dam. To date, however, there is no large-scale survey that documents and interprets the broad range of spaces representative of the Tejano architectural legacy - a material heritage which is imperiled, largely unprotected, and invisible to the public, being largely located within the 96 percent of Texas lands that are privately owned.

My book will address this lack, joining recently published works that seek to recuperate borderlands history and cultural landscapes as a neglected part of American history, such as *The Remittance Landscape* by Sarah Lynn Lopez (2015); *Blood Oranges* (2016) by Timothy Paul Bowman; *Border Land, Border Water* by C.J. Alvarez (2019); and *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire, and Revolution in the Borderlands* by Kelly Lytle Hernández (2022). To this discourse I contribute a perspective that situates Tejano architecture within a cultural landscape that evolved over centuries. By introducing overlooked typologies of frontier architecture and locating them in a richly detailed history, the book recuperates a distinctive material and social culture and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the borderlands.

Organization, Concepts, and Methods

The argument of my book proceeds through a combination of visual analysis and textual narrative, reflecting my joint disciplinary background in design and history. Both modes of interpretation draw extensively on archival and archaeological material. Since 2018, I have been compiling a relational database from birth, marriage, and death records, land deeds, wills and probate records, censuses, and other documents. The database currently contains information on approximately 10,000 individuals in Northeastern Mexico between 1600 and 1900, a span of about 13 generations, tracking the complex networks that connected frontier families (see Appendix 2). In addition, I maintain a geodatabase containing information on land grants and archaeological

sites from which I will generate maps and diagrams to illustrate the book (see Appendix 1). The resulting picture complements our knowledge of a built environment where evidence for actual dwellings may be limited or lost and gives presence to the people whose knowledge shaped the vernacular landscape.

By emphasizing the agency of Spanish and Mexican settlers, my project contributes to current conversations around settler colonialism, the phenomenon whereby civilians build permanent residences, claim land, and assert sovereignty over indigenous people. Recent scholarship, such as the essays in the special issue of *e-flux* titled *The Settler Colonial Present* (edited by Andrew Herscher and Ana María León, 2020), have considered how today's society is implicated in its colonial past through architecture. As Pekka Hämäläinen has shown in his revisionist histories *The Comanche Empire* (2018) and *Indigenous Continent* (2022), settler colonialism was not a one-way process that inevitably resulted in the oppression and suppression of indigeneity, but was instead a complex and nuanced layering of distinct identities and situations. Extending these ideas, my book engages the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) on the role of practices of everyday life in placemaking, exploring the co-production of Tejano space and society, and asking how Tejano-mestizo spaces challenge and complicate our understanding of the processes of settler colonialism and its legacy in the present day.

The term "Tejano" is of recent origin, but it describes a shared identity that was centuries in the making. Though I take this social identity as a starting point, I aim to show that the Tejano community was not static or monolithic. Geographically, I examine two distinct regions encompassed by the extent of the network of families who brought their architectural knowledge north of the Rio Grande: the San Antonio River valley, anchored by the settlements at Bexar and La Bahía (Goliad); and South Texas, below the Nueces River, originally part of the province of Nuevo Santander and later the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Temporally, I focus on the period from the foundation of the first mission in East Texas in 1690, through 1848, when the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the southern border of the United States. I frame this period within discussions of the reception and interpretation of Tejano vernacular design up to the present day. The chapters are organized chronologically, and each focuses on an individual, their social role, and associated architectural spaces, forming a series of case studies that highlight the diversity of Tejano society. By highlighting socially embedded practices, I aim to bring to light ephemeral spaces that would otherwise go overlooked, and to locate architectural authorship in a vernacular cultural landscape where building knowledge was distributed in a variety of roles. The case studies operate across scales: from the everyday objects and practices that shaped domestic interiors, to the mapping of land tenure patterns over time.

I begin the book with a discussion of the early explorations and mapping expeditions that shaped the Spanish spatial concept of the northern frontier, from Alonso de León's journey in search of the French intrusion at Matagorda Bay in 1690, through the inspection tour of the Marques de Rubí, who brought changes inspired by the Bourbon Reforms to the landscape and social organization of Northern New Spain in 1767. I analyze the spatial artifacts that resulted from these journeys in the form of maps and narratives, uncover their reliance on indigenous placemaking, and identify their precedents in the settlement practices codified in the Laws of the Indies. The discussion of mapping and measurement sets the scene for the second chapter, in which I re-evaluate the survey of *porciones* (long strips of land fronting the Rio Grande) in the *Visita General* of 1767 as an archive for locating concepts of embodied possession in land tenure patterns and regional vernacular and situate such practices within the context of the family. The *Visita General* activated affective ties of family relationships and systems of patronage through colonial surveyors who were chosen from within the community. So-called "acts of possession" - ceremonies which included pulling grass, digging the earth, throwing stones, and reciting certain words - involved practices that placed the body within the landscape through ritual, enacting and reinforcing networks of entanglement. The third chapter looks at this phenomenon in the towns of Revilla, Mier, and Camargo, through the lens of one extended family. Cristóbal Ramírez arrived on the Rio Grande in the 1730s and received land during the distribution of *porciones*. His sons received grants of their own, and his daughters and niece married landowners and operated their own ranches as widows. The family shows how kinship networks influenced the shape of settlement on the landscape as the ranches of Nuevo Santander gradually expanded to fill what became known as the Wild Horse Desert. I examine several sites associated with the Ramírez family that included fortified houses of river sandstone intended to withstand frequent Comanche raids.

The second half of the book tracks the evolution of Tejano settlements and identity in the early 19th century, an era of great political unrest and continually shifting loyalties as Texas and Nuevo Santander transitioned from Spanish to Mexican, Texan, and eventually American control. Chapter four traces patterns of military and civilian coexistence in the Gulf Coast region, which centered on the presidio and town at La Bahía. I highlight La Bahía's role in the founding of the town of Victoria in 1824 as the only empresario-led colony comprised of Mexicans at a time when Texas was increasingly opening its doors to Anglo-American settlement. In the next chapter, I tell the story of the community of Losoya and the parish of El Carmen on the Medina River 16 miles south of San Antonio. I trace the stories of two soldiers, Domingo Losoya and Manuel de Luna, who played different roles in the revolutionary battles and whose adjacent land grants were subdivided and developed into the settlement. This example demonstrates how Tejano communities adapted to political and ethnic change, producing vernacular architecture that was a mixture of Mexican, European, and American building traditions. Chapter six is an intimate look at the objects and spaces of daily life on the frontier, synthesizing the themes of the book through the lens of 19th century Mexican interiors. I explore how the broad patterns of frontier life were embedded in the entanglements of families, spaces, and objects, and the ways in which changing national and racial boundaries played out in vernacular design. I argue that interiority served to mediate between racially-constituted categories of exclusion that dominated the spatial politics of land tenure and architecture. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the persistence of Tejano architectural forms, materials, typologies in the 20th and 21st century.

Competencies, Skills, and Access

I was drawn to study Tejano placemaking after I initiated research into my family history and was stunned by the degree of endogamy I could observe within my family tree. This discovery sparked my curiosity about the motivations and stories of the people who pushed the frontier northward over generations, and whose deep connection to the land drove a desire to hold onto their ranches by any means possible. I began the project after completing my doctoral dissertation, which focused on the documentation and interpretative reconstruction of an ancient city and landscape in western Turkey. That project gave me the skills to aggregate and analyze empirical and textual evidence for archaeological sites, and a theoretical framework for interpreting the spatiality of historical environments. In addition, through my training in archaeology, architecture, and the digital humanities, I have acquired skills for documenting sites through drawing, cartography, data collection, and visual storytelling.

Most primary sources consulted for this project are found in archives in Texas. At the University of Texas at Austin, these include the Bexar Archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History; The Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, which contains copies of documents from the Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico) and the W. Eugene George Papers; the Alexander Architectural Archive; and the archives of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The archives of the Texas General Land Office are also in Austin. In San Antonio, I draw on the Spanish Archives of the Bexar County Clerk's Office in San Antonio, which also houses the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Collection; and the municipal archives of the City of San Antonio. The records of the Catholic Church from various parishes in Texas and Mexico, available on digitized microfilm, are also used extensively.

Final Product and Dissemination

The project will be a monograph published with an academic press. It is a cross-disciplinary offering that combines methods from architectural history, vernacular architecture studies, borderlands history, archaeology, and design. I aim to reach an audience of students and scholars in architecture and the humanities, as well as the informed general reader. I have had positive initial conversations with the University of Texas Press. An accompanying long-term digital project, to be completed while the manuscript is under review, is planned for a wider public, and will comprise material from the relational and geographic database, as well as interactive maps, photographs from my fieldwork, visualizations of networks and change over time, and place-based narratives. Both the book and the digital project support my ultimate objective of preserving and presenting Tejano cultural heritage.

Work Plan

The writing of the book manuscript is in its beginning stages and will benefit greatly by the time provided by the fellowship. The first three chapters have been drafted as conference papers, and two of these have been substantially revised. By the start of the fellowship year, I will have completed a substantial amount of the archival research and site surveys for my project, and I plan to spend the summer of 2024 in Austin for additional access to primary documents and sources. In Fall of 2024, I will make additional field visits to sites, and continue writing the manuscript. Winter and Spring 2025 I plan to devote to writing. I expect to complete the manuscript by December 2025.

Writing is the primary activity planned during the fellowship year. Materials will be collected for drawings and visualizations, though these will be mostly executed after the writing is complete. Likewise, an accompanying digital public history project is planned but will not be undertaken during the fellowship year, although the underlying relational database and geodatabase will be utilized and expanded during research and writing (see appendices for examples of visual and database material).

To obtain greater first-hand knowledge of the rural landscapes of South Texas, as well as practices of ranching as they exist in the region today and reflect a continuity of relationship with the land, I plan to collaborate with organizations which are actively involved in land stewardship such Texas State Parks and the East Foundation. I will spend time in the Rio Grande Valley through a residency at either the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (Edinburg), or Texas A&M International University (Laredo), taking advantage of proximity to sites and archival resources, such as oral histories of ranching, that are unique to the area.

July – September 2024: Archival research and writing (Austin)

October – December 2024: Field visits, documentation, and writing (San Antonio and throughout the state)

January – March 2025: Writing (San Antonio/Rio Grande Valley)

April – June 2025: Writing (San Antonio/Knoxville)

Selected Bibliography

Archives

Bexar Archives

Bexar County Archives: Land Records, Spanish Archives, Marks and Brands

Mexico, Catholic church records, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas

Texas General Land Office Archives

Primary Sources

De Palacio, José Fernando, and José Osorio y Llamas. *Visita general de las villas de Nuevo Santander* (1767). Texas General Land Office, Spanish Collection.

Tienda de Cuervo, José. *Estado General de las Fundaciones Hechas por d. José de Escandón en la Colonia del Nuevo Santander, Costa del Seno Mexicano* (1757). Mexico City: Archivo General de la Nación.

Secondary Sources

Alonzo, Armando C. *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

Arreola, Daniel D. *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province*. 1st ed. Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and Culture; No. 5. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Bowman, Timothy P. *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

De la Teja, Jesús F. *San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

De León, Arnoldo. *The Tejano Community, 1836 – 1900*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982.

George, W. Eugene. *Lost Architecture of the Rio Grande Borderlands*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

Gonzalez Mireles, Jovita. *Life along the Border: A Landmark Tejana Thesis*. Elma Dill Russell Spencer Series in the West and Southwest; No. 26. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006.

Greaser, Galen D. *New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas*. 1st edition. Texas General Land Office, 2009.

Hämäläinen, Pekka. *The Comanche Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Hodder, Ian. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Landa Ruiloba, Pablo. *Arquitectura Popular del Noreste*. Consejo para la Cultura y las Artes de Nuevo León, 2020.

Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

Osante, Patricia. *Orígenes Del Nuevo Santander, 1748 - 1772*. Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Serie Historia Novohispana 59. Universidad Autónoma de México, 1997.

Paredes, Americo. "With His Pistol in His Hand", *A Border Ballad and its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. *Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Seed, Patricia. "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1992): 183–209.

Wilson, Chris. *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*. 1st ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

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Education

- 2015 **Ph.D. Architecture**
University of California, Los Angeles
Dissertation title: "Cave and City: A Procedural Reconstruction of the Urban Topography of Magnesia on the Maeander"
- 2010 **M.Arch. Architecture**
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2002 **M.A. Archaeology**
Durham University
- 2001 **B.A. Humanities**
University of Southern California

Academic Appointments

- 2021 - **Assistant Professor**
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
School of Interior Architecture, College of Architecture + Design
- 2019 - 21 **Academic Technology Specialist**
Stanford University
Department of History and Stanford Libraries
- 2017 - 19 **Postdoctoral Fellow**
Rice University
Humanities Research Center
- 2015 - 16 **Postdoctoral Fellow**
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Department of History

Publications

Book Manuscripts in Preparation

Settled Spaces: Tejano Architecture, 1690 - 1848

Book Chapters

"Province of Interiors: Strategies and Tactics on the Frontier of Northern New Spain,"
Interior Provocations 22: On Edge (accepted, forthcoming)

"Interiority and Mestizaje: Entanglements in the Tejano Borderlands," *Race in Design History* (submitted for initial review)

Journal Articles

(b) (4)

“An Integrated Approach to the Procedural Modeling of Ancient Cities and Buildings.”
Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, Vol.30, Supplement 1 (2015), pp.48-63.

Conference Proceedings

“Procedural Modeling for Rapid-Prototyping of Multiple Building Phases and Hypothetical Reconstructions of Early Rome.” *International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences*, Vol. XL-5/W1 (2013).

Awards and Honors

- 2014 **Fortier Prize**
Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations International Conference, Lausanne, Switzerland. Award for best paper by a young scholar.
- 2012 **Anne Greenwald Traveling Prize**
Department of Architecture and Urban Design, University of California, Los Angeles.

Grants and Fellowships

- 2017 - 19 **Mellon Spatial Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship**
Humanities Research Center, Rice University
- 2015 - 16 **Digital Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship**
Department of History, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
- 2014 **Dissertation Year Fellowship**
Graduate Division, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2013 **Dixon Fellowship**
Department of Art History, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2013 **Graduate Summer Research Mentorship**
Graduate Division, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2012 **Edgardo Contini Fellowship**
Department of Architecture and Urban Design, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2012 **Moore Traveling Seminar Fellowship**
Department of Architecture and Urban Design, University of California, Los Angeles

Languages

French: proficient reading, conversational speaking

Spanish: proficient reading, basic speaking

Appendix 1: Sample of Visual Material

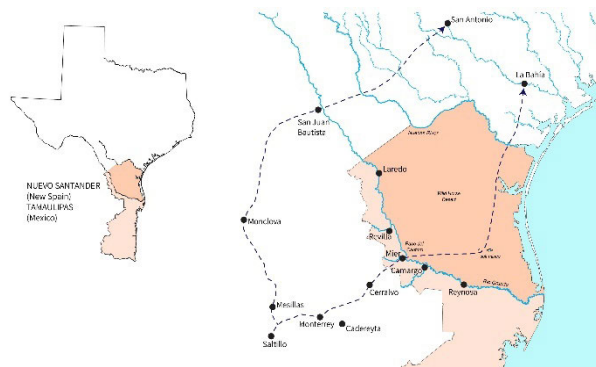


Figure 1: Map of Nuevo Santander/Tamaulipas in relation to the current boundary of the State of Texas. (Drawing by author.)



Figure 2: Rancho de los Corralitos, Zapata County, Texas. (Photograph by author.)

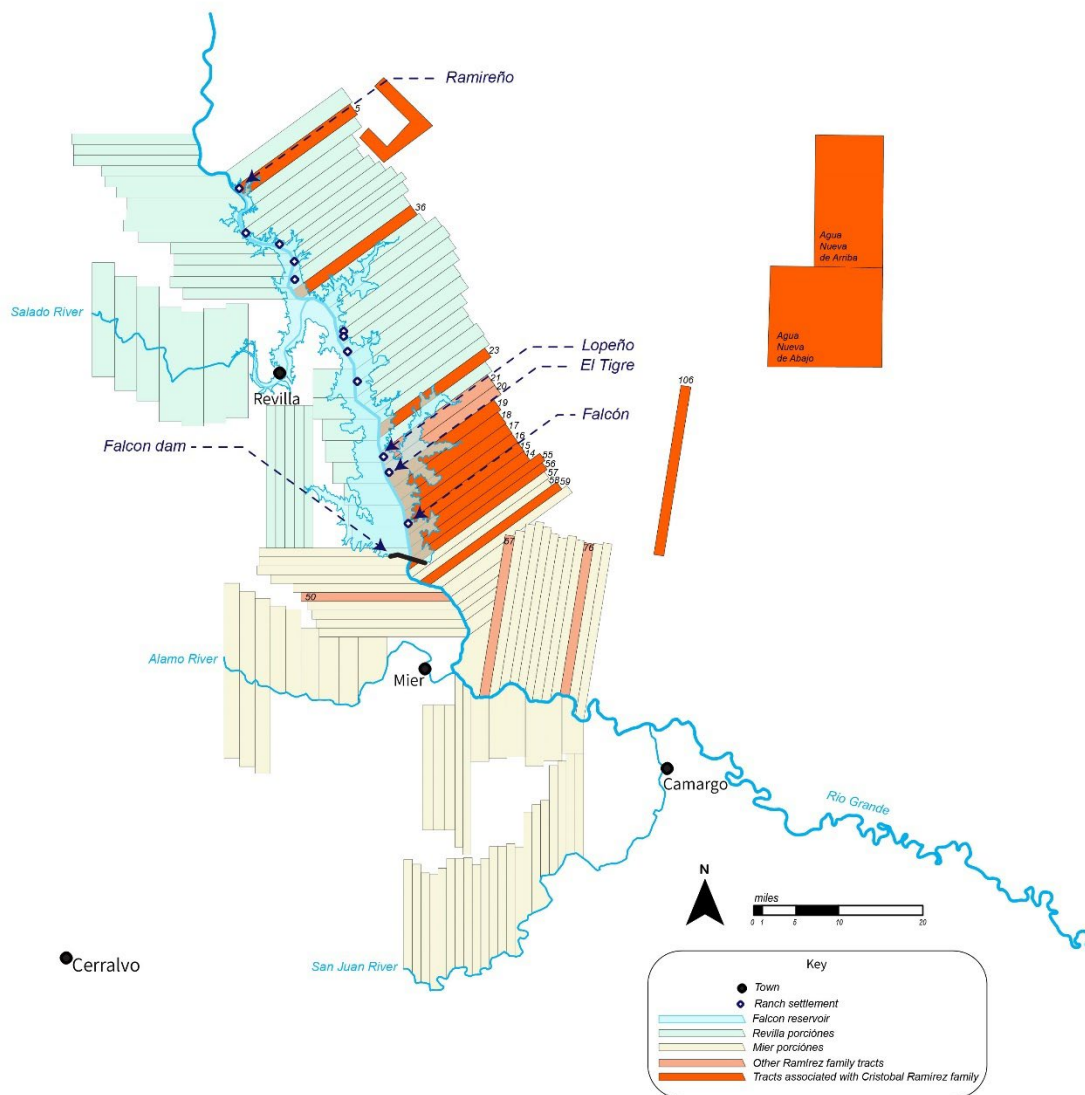


Figure 3: Map of Paso del Cántaro, the site of the Falcon reservoir and the towns of Mier and Revilla, showing porciones and land grants associated with the Cristóbal Ramírez family. (Drawing by author.)

Appendix 2: Sample Relational Database EntryTable 1: Person Entry

ID	2376
First Name	Cristóbal
Last Name	Ramírez
Generation	7
Baptism Date	9 Feb 1712
Baptism Place	Saltillo (Hacienda de Mesillas)
Baptism Source	<u>Registros Parroquiales de Saltillo, Coahuila: Bautismos 1684-1700, 1706-1723</u>
Race on Baptism Record	Español
Father ID	2375
Father's Name	Antonio Ramírez Marquina
Mother ID	3287
Mother's Name	Juana Sánchez Navarro de las Casas
Padrino ID	8362
Padrino's Name	Nicolas Ramos
Madrina ID	8363
Madrina's Name	Javiera de la Cerda
Marriage 1 ID	54
Marriage 1 Spouse ID	120
Marriage 1 Spouse's Name	María Antonia Arredondo
Marriage 2 ID	652
Marriage 2 Spouse ID	1652
Marriage 2 Spouse's Name	María Matiana Hinojosa
Date of Death	10 Aug 1778
Place of Death	Revilla

Table 2: Marriage Entry

Marriage ID	54
Bride ID	120
Bride's Race	Español
Bride's Residence	Hacienda de Mesillas
Groom ID	2376
Groom's Race	Español
Groom's residence	Hacienda de Mesillas
Marriage Date	17 Feb 1733
Marriage Place	Saltillo
Marriage Source	<u>Registros Parroquiales de Saltillo, Coahuila: Matrimonios 1703-1757</u>
Notes	Groom's parents were "sirvientes de Da. Ana Maria [de Almandos?]"

Table 3: Land Grant Entry

Grantee ID	2376
Porción number	17
Municipality	Revilla
Location	East Bank, Rio Grande (Zapata County, Texas)
Ranch name	La Santísima Trinidad
Acres	5,896

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Sincerely,



Gordon H. Chang

Professor of History

Olive H. Palmer Professor in Humanities



Baylor University

To NEH Reviewers:

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[REDACTED]

Kenneth Hafertape

Kenneth Hafertepe
Chair and Professor
Fellow, Texas State Historical Association