

COLONIZATION

With the assurance of the Mexican government that the Mormon Colonists could stay and carry out their plans for colonization, these people began to move out of the La Ascención area to points farther up the Río Casas Grandes. Several of their temporary campsites were at Corralitos and San Jose, both along the Río Casas Grandes. Some of the settlers at Corralitos stayed long enough to raise a crop during the year 1885. In July, of this same year, a part of the group at Corralitos left to search for a permanent settlement site.

They went to Casas Grandes, and on to the present site of Colonia Juárez the first day. Next they traveled up the Río Piedras Verdes, exploring Cave Valley and the Pacheco area, and then went over the mountains into Sonora. The expedition returned from Sonora by way of the Llanos de Carretas to Janos, then up the Río Casas Grandes to Corralitos.

A great difficulty that faced the new settlers for the first few years was the necessity of paying duty on all that they brought into Mexico. Some of them lacked sufficient funds to cover the duty and were forced to leave some of their belongings at the border. Several years after the first colonists crossed into Mexico, the Mexican government made a number of concessions to the new settlers. The government allowed them to bring in many items free of duty, if the colonists stated that they planned to become permanent residents, and if lists of the articles to be brought in were sent to the Government officials at least 60 days before the planned entry into Mexico. Besides the duty concessions, the Mexican Government also exempted the colonists from military service, and some taxes, for ten years after their entering the country.

At this time it was almost impossible for the new settlers to find work that paid sufficiently well to support them. Wages were extremely low, varying from 18 centavos to 1.50 pesos a day. Many of the men found it necessary to go back to the United States

and work, leaving their families behind, in order to save enough capital for the coming year.¹⁶

Colonia Díaz

The newly arrived Mormon campers near La Ascención on the Río Casas Grandes were divided into two groups. During the year 1885 colonists arrived, settled for a few days in one of the camps, then left, going south along the river to the other camps, farther on, and eventually finding the spot where they wished to settle permanently. Some stayed at the original site on the banks of the Río Casas Grandes, not far from their future townsite of Díaz.

The camps were located near the center of a large flat valley, with only hills to be seen in the distance. The Sierra Madre mountains were over 60 miles to the southwest and Columbus, New Mexico was about the same distance in the opposite direction. The land was covered with good grass, except for mesquite brush near the river, and the only trees in sight were the cottonwoods and willows along the river bank.

The first year was most difficult for the settlers. They lived in their wagons or in crude shelters built from willows. The winds came from the east and then from the west or southwest with such force that they were described as being "hurricanes." The early settlers said that when the wind began to blow one could put his hat against a wall and the wind would hold it there for three days. With the wind came dust, and sometimes a little rain.

Some waited for the land to be purchased before beginning farming operations, while others immediately plowed and planted small fields of corn and wheat. In gardens around the wagons and willow shelters, vegetables, melons and corn were planted. Water for the gardens was carried from shallow wells, which needed to be dug only 8 to 10 feet below the surface. By the first of May, water no longer flowed in the Río Casas Grandes. In July, the small acreage that had been planted was harvested.

¹⁶ Romney, op. cit., pp. 68-70.

To get the wheat ground into flour it was necessary to go almost 100 miles south to Galeana, as the mills at La Ascención and Casas Grandes and at other settlements, had a long back-lot of grinding business. Continued need for herding livestock presented a problem to the settlers. Fields were unfenced, and untended cows and horses were a menace to the crops in the fields and gardens.

It was not until the early part of 1886 that 7,000 acres of land were purchased by the Church.¹⁷ The land was resold to the settlers on long term payments. Different types of land were sold at various prices. Pasture land sold for 2.50 pesos a hectare, meadow land for 5 pesos a hectare, and farm land varied from 8 to 12 pesos a hectare.^{18 19}

As soon as the town-site was surveyed the colonists began to occupy it. The town was laid out in 144 blocks, each block 27 rods square. The main street was very wide, and extended for about two miles in a north-south direction.

By September or October of this year the first house was built on the town site. The material used is unknown, but probably was adobe, since the first shingled house was finished on November 14th and fired brick houses came later. The shingles for the first all shingled houses were hauled from Deming, New Mexico. Other shingle houses were built later. Some of the shingles came from the saw mills in the Sierra Madre mountains, operated by the Mormon settlers of other Colonias. Within a few years, fired brick was being made by the colonists for building houses.

Church and school buildings were among the first to be erected. Elementary education through the eighth grade was offered.²⁰

¹⁷ The Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company was organized soon after the first colonist began looking for land. They were too poor to buy much land, so the Company which was financed by the Church, bought land for the settlers. The settlers in turn paid for this land over a period of years.

¹⁸ 1 hectare equals 2.471 acres.

¹⁹ Romney, op. cit., p.76

²⁰ Jensen, op. cit.,

Water was always a problem. From the very beginning, windmills were erected on many town lots. In the spring of 1888 the Colonia succeeded in obtaining permission to use the water from the Mexican water ditch for culinary purposes in town. The amount received was not enough, since it could only be used when there was surplus water in the river. Later in the same year, the people began to buy water from the Palotado ditch, which came from a spring 25 miles southwest of Colonia Díaz.

The clearing of land for farms began as soon as the purchase was made. Much of the farm land was located in the dense mesquite. After finding from the first year's experience that little rain could be depended upon for their crops, they went to work, digging and building canals and diversion dams from the river to their crop land. This construction would supply their land with water when the river had water. In later years it was found necessary to build a dike on the river side of the farm land to contain the Río Casas Grandes when it overflowed its banks.

Colonia Díaz grew rapidly from its beginning. By 1892 there were about 88 families, with a total population of 632.²¹ This was the largest Colonia at this time, although Colonia Juárez, which had been established 71 miles to the south in 1885, had a population of 615. With the rapid growth in population came some industrial growth, but primarily the people were farmers. In late 1887 a candy factory was established, and by 1894 it was a thriving business. The markets were the other Mormon Colonias and several of the nearby pueblos. A small grist mill, using burrs made in the Colonia and using wind for power, was built in 1891. At this same time, it is reported that the mills in La Ascención were powered by burros, and took several days longer to grind the same amount that could be ground at the mill in Colonia Díaz. During the next year an "undershot" water wheel was built to supply power for another mill three miles southwest of Colonia Díaz. About 1894 they began a small broom factory and French burrs, a cleaner and elevators were introduced.²²

²¹ A letter from the Office of the Church Historian, Salt Lake City, dated October 1, 1951, gave most of the population figures used in the text.

²² Jensen, op. cit.

By 1894 a great change had taken place in the appearance of the town. Still only a small part of the town site was occupied, but over 2,000 shade trees had been planted along the streets and on the home lots. Too, over 15,000 fruit trees and over 5,000 grape vines had been planted on the farms and town lots.²³ The homes were nearly all built of adobe bricks, without rock foundations. Also, many of the fences that enclosed the town properties were constructed from adobe brick. There were nearly 20 windmills, pumping from depths of 10 to 15 feet. Besides a small store, which sold general merchandise there were the burr mills, the candy and broom factories at this time.²⁴

The land around the town had also taken on a new appearance. It was all under cultivation with crops, mainly wheat, corn, sorghum, beans, potatoes and fruit trees. A few years after the first land purchase, 28,000 acres more were bought (1890). More land could now be devoted not only to cultivated crops, but also to cattle grazing.

The first of a number of fairs was held at Colonia Díaz in 1896. President Díaz of Mexico and Governor Ahumada of the State of Chihuahua were invited, but only the Governor was able to attend. At the fair, all the products of the Colonia were exhibited, - grain, corn, vegetables, fruits, molasses, and even handiwork of the women.²⁵

For the next 16 years, to 1912, there was little change in Colonia Díaz. The population grew but little. There were a few more fired brick houses built, and there were only small increases in farm land and manufacturing, in comparison with the first ten years of the Colonia's existence. Over the years the people became much more prosperous by consolidating what they had acquired during the first years in the Colonia. Possibly one reason for the slowness in growth after the first few years was the fact that they were not near the railroad, as were Colonia Dublán and Colonia Juárez. This made it more difficult to get their farm and manufactured products to suitable markets at low freight rates.

²³ Romney, *op. cit.*, p.75

²⁴ Jensen, *op.cit.*,

²⁵ Romney, *op. cit.*, p.82

The Mexican revolution, which began in 1910, was a problem to these people, but they held to the policy of neutrality. By the summer of 1912 they were advised by the State authorities, as were all the Colonias, to leave Mexico, because of the possible harm that might come to them if they remained longer. During these two years the rebels threatened the Colonist and stole from them. From the beginning of 1912 until they left, the situation rapidly became more serious until finally the rebel forces demanded all of their guns, which would have left them without protection. On July 28, 1912, they left in 86 wagons, arriving at the border the same day. Until August 5th, 31 men remained behind in the Colonia to protect their interests, then they, too, left.²⁶ Several trips were made to the Colonia to bring out household goods and cattle. In February 1913, the rebels sacked and fired the town. Colonia Díaz was never resettled by the Mormons.

Colonia Juárez

After a short rest at the two camps near La Ascension, many of the Mormon emigrants began to move south, up the Río Casas Grandes. Several families stopped at Corralitos for a short while and others stopped at San Jose, both on the banks of the river. In December, 1885, about 30 people moved onto the first site of Colonia Juárez, on the Río Piedras Verdes, about four miles from the San Diego hacienda – one of the many haciendas of Don Luis Terrazas.

Land for a town and farms were purchased from the Mexican government, in the Río Piedras Verdes valley, adjacent to the San Diego rancho. The land, which they thought was the purchased land, was surveyed for a townsite and cleared for farms. This land was located where the valley bottom was about two miles wide. The valley, and the hills on either side were covered with grass. A few miles to the west rose the main eastern scarp of the Sierra Madre mountains.

The first year most of the families lived in wagons or dugouts. Few houses were built. A stockade was erected for use as a meeting house and school. Logs for

²⁶ Jensen, op.cit.

construction were not scarce, as they had been in Colonia Díaz, for the mountains, near Juárez were but a few miles distant. Unable to depend upon enough rain for their crops, ditches were dug from the river to the farm land for irrigation purposes.

During the summer of 1886, the colonists were told that they had settled on the Terrazas rancho. It was necessary for them to move from the “stink town” to a site about two miles farther up the river.²⁷ The new site was rather unfavorable for farming, although they had mowed grass there while living in the original location. The valley narrowed down to about one-half mile, becoming narrower and more rocky the farther up the Río Piedras Verdes one traveled. The valley was flat and grassy, except along the steep banks of the river, where cottonwood, willow and sycamore trees thrived.

The survey of the new townsite was begun on November 3, 1886. In each block there were four lots of about three-quarters of an acre to the lot. A new canal three miles long was laid out and started. There was little that the settlers could do except to harvest their crops on the Terrazas land, and move up the river to the less favorable location.²⁸

As soon as the move was completed the settlers went to work improving their town. By May, 1887 water was brought in by the new ditch. A road was constructed up San Diego canyon to Corrales basin, where a saw mill was built. Much of the lumber used up to this time had to be imported from Deming, New Mexico at great expense, due to the high duty and freight rates. This first year there were a number of adobe houses built, in addition to the building of a meeting house and school. The greatest number of buildings were being located at the northeast side of the river in 1887, because the canal brought the water into town on that site.

In the first days of the settlement, most of the families were very poor, such as had been the case at Colonia Díaz. With the land being paid for originally by the Church, it was possible for them at least to grow most of their food with little cost. Corn meal

²⁷ The original site of Colonia Juarez was called “stink town” by its inhabitants.

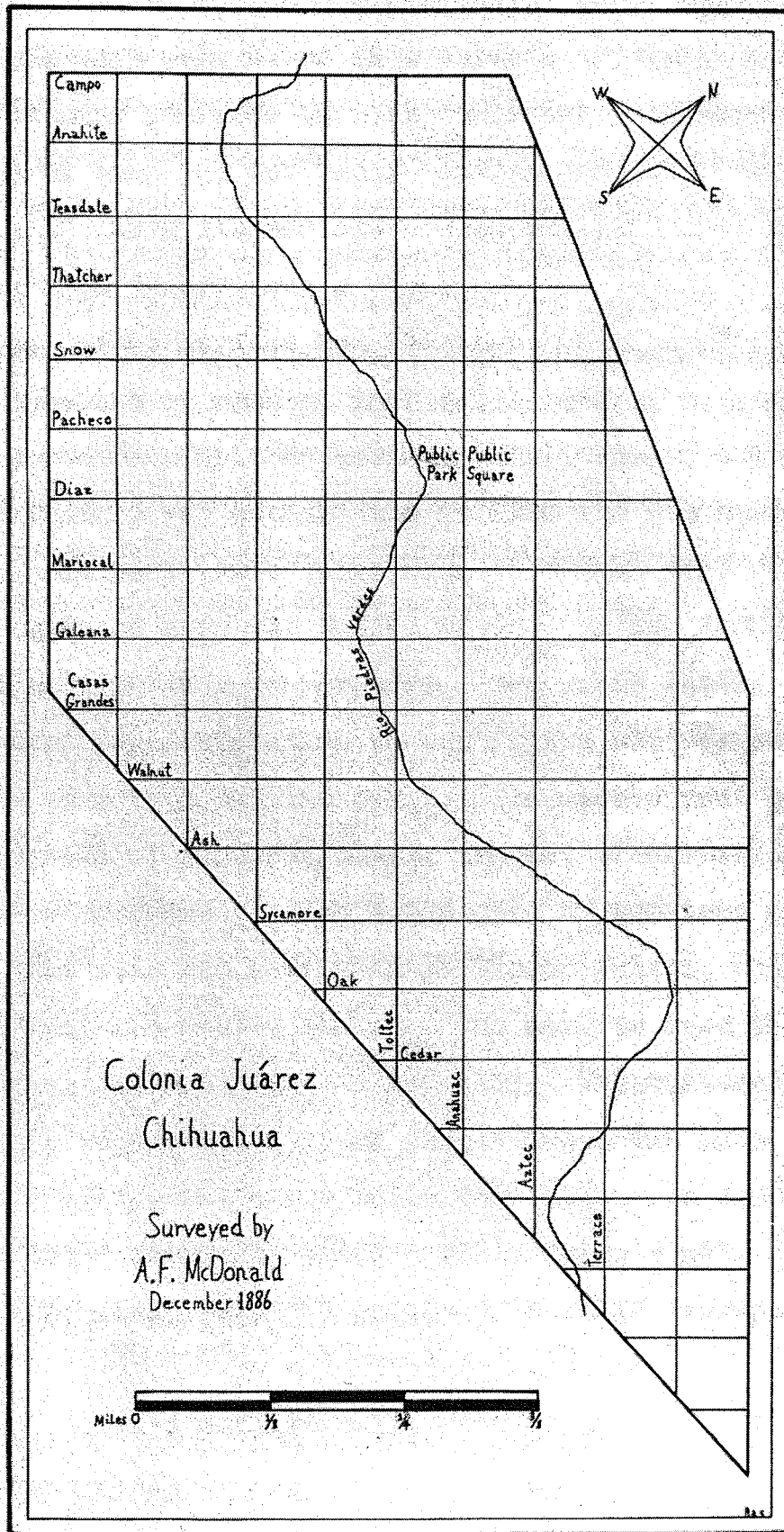
²⁸ Jensen, op. cit.,

mush, corn bread, Johnny cakes of corn, and other corn dishes were eaten a great deal, as it was necessary to sell the wheat, the price received for wheat being higher than for corn. The small amount of white flour that was used was reserved for Sunday use only. Beans were also another staple that were eaten in a variety of ways. It was necessary for many families to have their children work for someone else to help pay for their clothes and other necessities. Some of the girls, who did housework, were able to earn no more than 50 centavos a week.

By 1894, great strides had been made in Colonia Juárez. The town had become as much an industrial town as a farm community. The town was able to boast a population of 809 people by 1894. A tannery was established in 1888 and the next year a flour mill was built with three runs of French mill stones, which were imported from the United States. A new store was established in 1890 as a cooperative. Two years later, a canning factory began operation to can fruits and berries, grown on the town lots and the farms. The second year of operation, 5,000 cans of peaches, plums, grapes, blackberries and strawberries were canned. Also 5,000 cans of tomatoes were processed. The cans had been made in Ciudad Juárez, while the labels came from the United States. The markets were the other Colonias, Chihuahua and Mexico City. Other industries of the Colonia were a harness and saddle shop, two shoe shops, several small cheese factories and a burr mill. In the mountains there was a saw mill, planing mill, shingle mill, and picket and lath mill, owned by people of Colonia Juárez. Farming was limited by the lack of good farm land, but many orchards were planted and did well, with apple trees as the principal trees planted.

There were also a moderate number of cattle on the range. Though farm land was limited, there were several threshers, a reaper and shocker, which were owned and operated by people in this Colonia. Mexican crops and some of the Mormon crops at Colonia Dublán were harvested by these machines on shares, usually the machine owners and operators receiving 1 hec for 10 hecs threshed.²⁹

²⁹ Each hec is equal to 2.838 United States bushels. Hec refers to hectoliter.



With the growth of the community and the passing of the time, the colonists gradually improved their living standards. By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Colonia Juárez was quite prosperous. Many of the streets were landscaped with shade trees. There was the park, and the public square. In the park stood the band stand, which was used frequently by the local musicians for concerts. Most of the homes were made from adobe or fired brick, and had two stories, usually without a cellar. Pickets or lumber fences were needed to keep stray cows and horses out of the gardens and orchards. Water was brought along the edges of the streets in ditches, from the central canal, for culinary and irrigation purposes. There were only a few wells, which made it necessary for most of the families to have barrels in which water could be stored for a day's culinary needs. Early each morning, water was turned into the town ditches for one-half hour, and barrels were then filled from this ditch water. This was called "breakfast water." After a half hour the water was turned into the ditches scheduled for irrigation of the crops and the orchards.

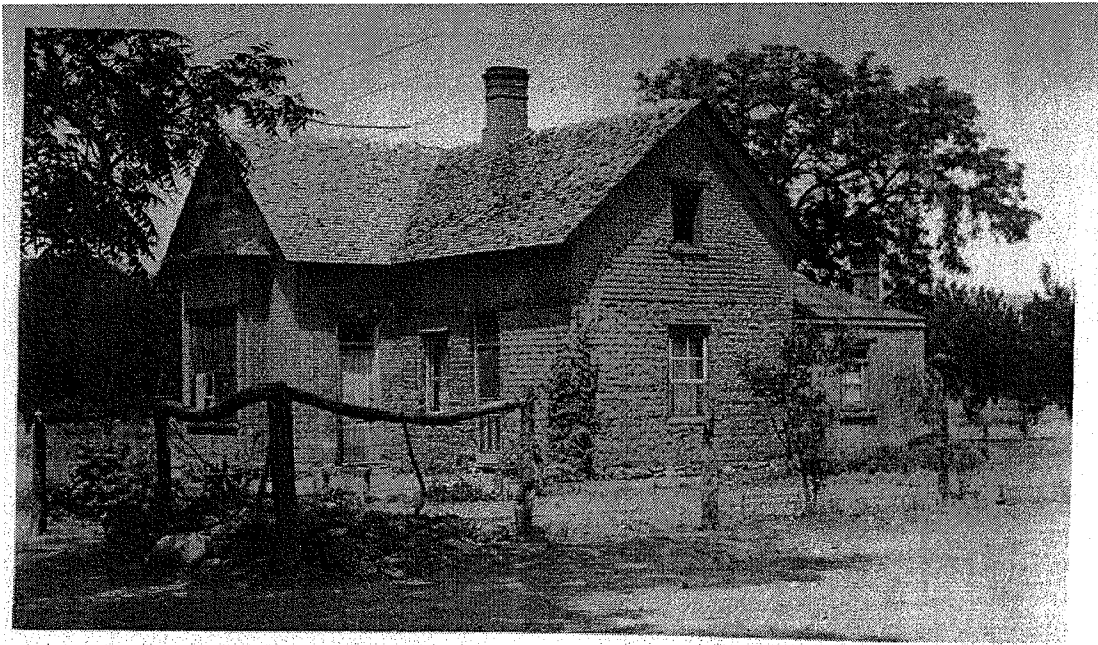


Figure 20: HOUSES OF COLONIA JUAREZ. Brick and adobe house built before the Exodus of 1912. At present lived in by some Mexicans. Apple orchard in the background.

The interiors of the houses were furnished much the same as many in the United States at that time. The walls were plastered with a mixture of mud, lime, and hair, and

then painted. Rugs were made from the three carpet looms in town. The rugs usually were made of dyed rags, woven into long strips to cover the entire floor. Straw was put on the floor, the carpet was then stretched and tacked down over the straw. Furniture was made at the local carpenter shop.³⁰ The rooms of the homes were heated mainly by fireplaces, except the kitchen, which was heated with the wood-burning cookstove. A few places had sheet metal stoves in the living room. Oak for firewood was easily obtained from the foothills. Lighting was taken care of by candles, kerosene lamps, and later some Coleman lamps, and still later, electricity. About 1910 an electric lighting system was installed. Also about this same time, a telephone system to various homes of the Colonia was installed.

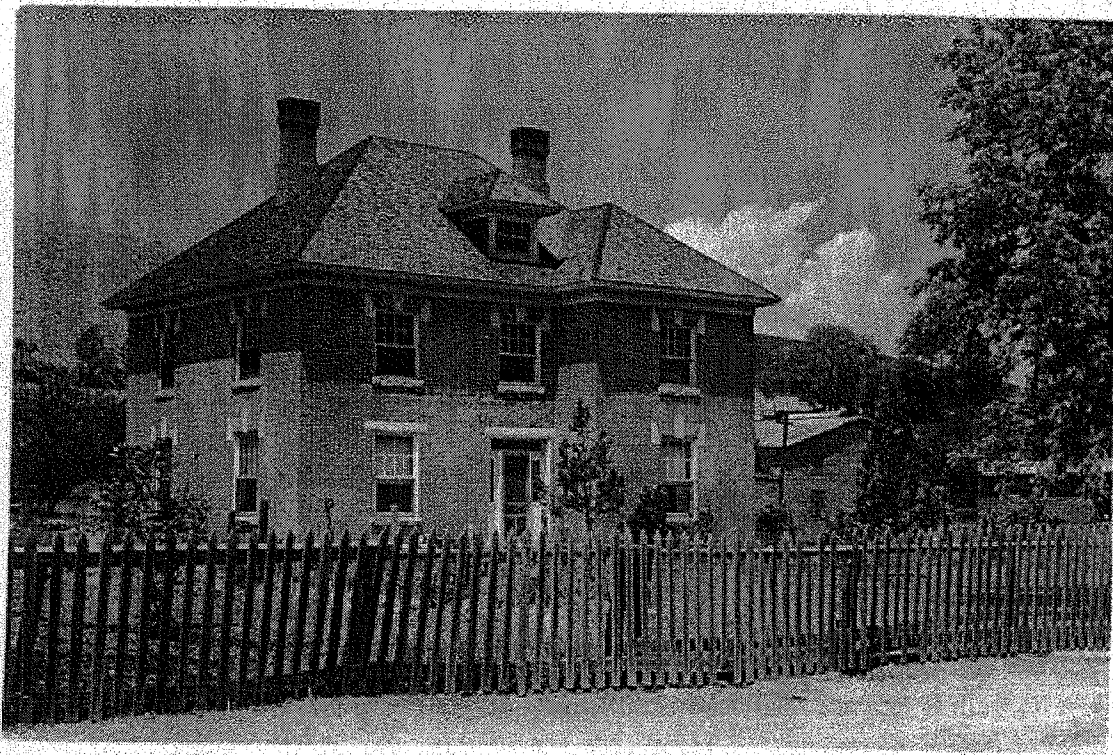


Figure 21 HOUSES OF COLONIA JUAREZ: House also built before the Exodus. Probably one of the last brick houses built before the Exodus. The original builder is still living in the house.

At this time the only good cloth that could be bought in this area of Mexico was unbleached muslin. Muslin was used for a great deal of the cloth needed in the Colonia.

³⁰ The carpenter shop had 16 types of machinery, from a planer to lathe. The power was furnished to the machines by belts, which were powered by a water turbine attached to a single drive shaft.

Before use, it was first bleached white by wetting the cloth, then laying it outside in the sun each day until bleached to the desired whiteness. Shirts, dresses, sheets, window curtains were all made from it.³¹

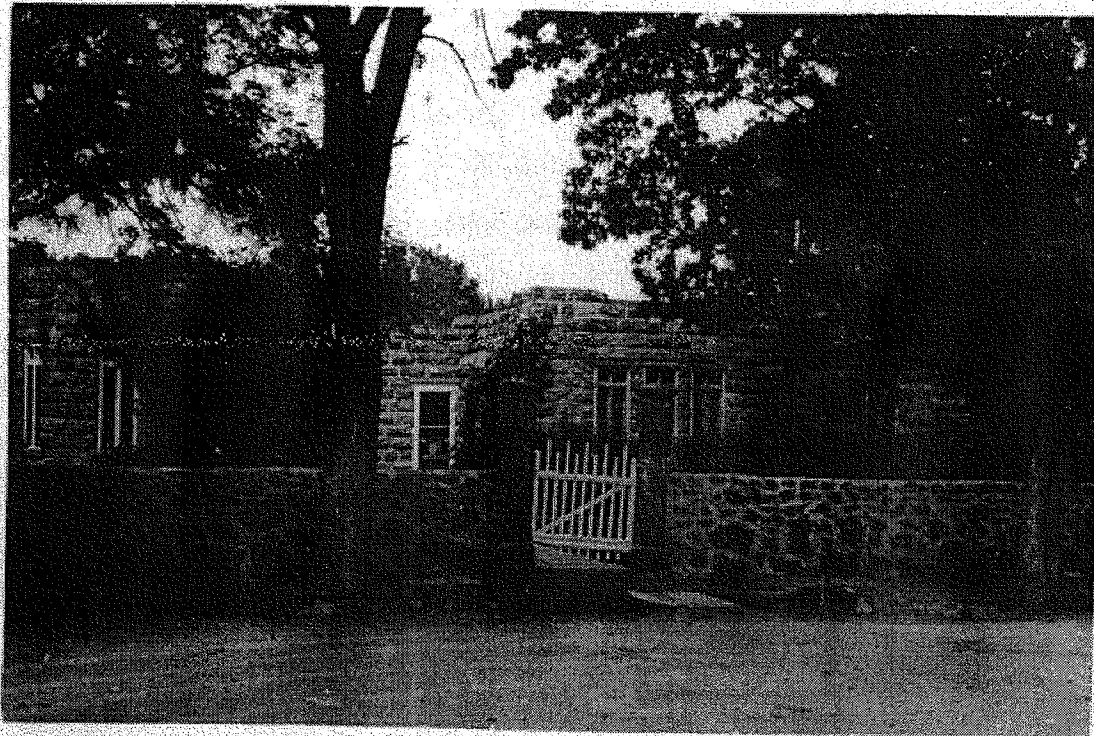


Figure 22: HOUSES OF COLONIA JUAREZ. One of two stone houses in Colonia Juárez. Originally it was two stories, but in recent times has been cut down to one story. Stone was cut locally.

There was no medical help in the area. In case of serious illness people could be taken by train to El Paso. There was quite a bit of malaria in the Colonia. The biggest medical problem was the danger of the spread of contagious diseases, the most common of which were smallpox and typhoid. To combat these contagious diseases, a building was erected away from the general town, called the “pest house.” Here, those who contacted these diseases were cared for until they recovered or died.

³¹ “Factory” was the name given the unbleached muslin by the colonists.

During the first few years of the Colonia, a school building had been built. In those early years, the students would have to bring their own desks and stools, both usually made from logs sawed off at each end. Later, when more lumber was available, desks and chairs were built. The first school was only for children of the elementary grades. The Juárez Stake Academy was opened in September 1887, (1897) with 271 students attending and the school had nine grades. By 1902, twelve grades were taught. The Academy building during the next few years was continually enlarged until it was an all-brick, two story building. The original brick school and meeting house was eventually again used for the elementary school, since the Academy could not handle all the children.

The Academy was then used as a high school for the children of all the Mormon Colonias in Chihuahua and Sonora. The students from other Colonias were boarded at private homes and the Harper hotel. The other Colonias had only elementary schools. Teachers for the Academy were procured from the United States when possible, and the rest came from the Colonias. All the usual high school subjects were taught, plus religion and Spanish. According to Mexican law, it was necessary to teach so many hours of Spanish a day in schools where Spanish was not the general language used for instruction.

The entertainment of these folk was found entirely within the community. Every Friday night there was a dance. About 1910 it was thought that round dancing (waltzing) was not in the best interest of the young people. It was proposed that this type of dancing be dropped in favor of square and folk dances. The proposal was put to a vote and passed in all the Colonias of the Juárez Stake. From then until 1917, waltzing was not authorized in the Juarez Stake. In place of waltzing came such dances as the Virginia reel and the Scotch reel, the French Four and the Wentworth, the Schottische and the Polka. The organ or a couple of violins and a flute supplied the dance music. The band gave a number of concerts and they would join with the town chorus for a cantata each year. One act plays were staged quite often by various members of the community. Also longer plays were produced by the "Drama Association." Scenery was made for each act,

generally from “factory”, since canvas was not available. The plays were up-to-date Broadway productions, two of which were “Black Eyed Susan” and “The Charcoal Burner.” For the plays produced by the Drama Association there was a small charge to pay for the scenery, and for the labor of the directors.

The agricultural economy of Colonia Juárez was based mostly upon the growing of various fruit trees. There were a few farmers that were buying and leasing land to the south of town, and to the northeast, in the Tinaja and Tapasita (Tapiasita) washes. Corn, wheat and sorghum were the principal crops. A livestock report, made about 1911, gives an idea as to the number of animals owned in the Colonia of 700 people.³²

Cattle, range	5,573	(two-thirds Herefords)
Dairy	299	(two-thirds Holsteins and Jersey)
Horses and mules		
draft	134	
saddle	304	
Hogs	155	(one-half Duroc-Jersey and Poland-China)
Sheep	52	
Poultry	620	(one-half White Leghorns)

Communications in some ways were quite advanced for the time and place. A telephone system was installed in Colonia Juárez during the last part of the first decade of the 20th Century. Not only did the telephone serve the town, but extended to Colonias Dublán, Pacheco, García and Chuichupa. Home rates were 1.50 pesos a month; extra charges were made for calls outside the Colonia. None of the Mexican towns in this area were included in this communications system. There was a daily stage coach and freight wagon between Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán. The stage also made stops at Casas Grandes and Nuevo Casas Grandes, (then not much more than a freight and passenger stop for Casas Grandes.) Many of the Colonists made trips to El Paso once or twice a

³² Report called “Agricultural Report”, given to the author by Joel Martineau of Colonia Juarez. Written just before the Exodus of 1912.

year, mainly for the purpose of buying clothes. There was daily train service between Pearson, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Colonia Dublán and Ciudad Juárez.

There were very few Mexicans living in Colonia Juárez. One that lived in each of the Colonias was the Mexican official, Jefe. There was no official town government, as the Church officials took care of all civil problems that arose.

The Mexican revolution came in 1910. Until 1912 the rebel forces did not bother the Colonists to any great extent, but there had been a few demands for horses, saddles, guns, and food. Too, there had been some raiding and robbing of several Colonists, but not enough to cause great concern. From the beginning of 1912 until the Exodus in July of the same year, the rebel forces became more and more demanding. Many more places were looted, cattle and horses were stolen, demands and threats were becoming an everyday occurrence. Finally, with General Salazar's demand that the Mormons turn over their guns to the rebels, it was decided to leave Mexico, since without arms the rebels could attack them, loot their property or make other demands upon them, and they, the Mormons, would have no way to resist such attacks. The order was given for the Exodus July 28, 1912. Women and children of Colonia Juárez were sent to Pearson with no more than one trunk per family, to catch the train for Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. On August 7th the men of the Colonias left for the border by horseback, taking with them as many horses as possible. All the rest of their possessions were left behind. On August 10th, they crossed the boarder into the United States.

Colonia Dublán

There was no interest in the land around the present site of Colonia Dublán until late 1888, three years after the first Colonists, on there way to settle Colonia Juárez, stopped at San Jose, just across the Río Casas Grandes from Dublán. In the latter part of 1888, Lewis Huller (German-Mexican decent), who owned a considerable number of acres around Casas Grandes, negotiated with George Brown, from Utah, for the sale of 73,000 acres, on the condition that he bring in Colonists. When the title to the land came to be processed, it was found that Mr. Huller could not furnish a deed. Fortunately, the

money that had been advanced on the payment of the land was refunded, but unfortunately some of the prospective Colonist had already arrived.

Just to the west of the Huller's tract were a number of Mexican terrenos.³³ These terrenos were from three-quarters of a mile to one and one-half miles in length, depending on the bends in the Río Casas Grandes. The settlers, with their deposits on the Huller tract returned, bargained with the Mexicans for their terrenos. Those that were unable to buy land leased or rented it.

The first crops were raised in 1889. Water was supplied to the crops by a ditch leading from the river into the terrenos, which was known as the "San Francisco" ditch. Water from the ditch could not be depended upon when needed for the crops, since the flow of the river was irregular, the flow depending upon the rains in the mountains.

This new Mormon settlement at this time was known as "Colonia Huller." The next year, 1890, it was known as the San Francisco Branch," and during the same year the name again changed, this time to "Colonia Dublán."

The early Colonists coming to Colonia Dublán found a different situation than the other Colonists who had come into Mexico. The settlers in Colonia Dublán did not have to search for farming land as had the Colonists of Colonia Díaz and Juárez. Many of them knew that farm land was available before they left the United States. At least one family came to the settlement with only a hired team and wagon, and a hired driver from the United States, so for such settlers it was necessary to buy all the farm equipment, which they needed, from the Mexicans and Mormons.

Each terreno had a Mexican adobe house on it when purchased by the Mormons, so they could move onto the land without need to worry about shelter for the coming winter. This left them free to devote all their energy to crop raising. Some of the land on

³³ A terreno, in this case, is a strip of land 70 meters wide running from the river to a prescribed line. This made the lengths of the terrenos vary, since the bends of the river were not taken into account.

each terreno had been cleared and had been under previous cultivation, which saved the newcomers a great deal of work. When it is said that the land had been cultivated it must be explained that no more than ten percent of the terreno land had been farmed in the past, the remaining 90 percent was covered with mesquite, cat claw and sacaton grass. But the small amount of the cultivated land was enough to grow crops for the coming winter.

In 1891 the population of the settlement was increasing rapidly. Families were beginning to live on the east side of the Terreno street. The town was laid out on paper during this year, but was not surveyed for several years. The Mexican terrenos were being bought up rapidly by new settlers. Also terrenos were being purchased by the Mormons in the San Jose tract, located just across the Río Casas Grandes from the Dublán terrenos.

The first store of Colonia Dublán was established in August, 1891. A grist mill about four miles southwest of Colonia Dublán was bought by a Mormon from its Mexican owners. It was located near the Ojo, a warm spring, just to the west and north of Casas Grandes. There were no other commercial enterprises in this area at the time. The majority of the Colonists grew what they could use. Any surplus of butter and cheese could be sold at Casas Grandes. However, the usual practice was for the Mormons to buy from, rather than to sell to, small Mexican stores at Casas Grandes.

As in the other Colonias, the settlers were always having to watch over their herds of cattle and horses to keep them out of their own fields, as well as the fields of others. Too, they had to watch their own fields to keep out the cattle and horses of the Mexicans and especially the cattle from the large Corralitos rancho, which bordered on their terrenos. In the San Jose tract each terreno owner was required to pay a tax, or ride watch on the farms every few nights, or if he had enough money a rider could be hired in his place. In 1891 Mr. A. B. Call bought some black barbed wire in Deming, New Mexico, and had it brought to the Colonia. A fence was erected around his terrenos in Colonia Dublán and in San Jose. No longer was it necessary for him to ride patrol at night or pay

a tax. This stimulated the farmers of the San Jose terrenos to fence around all the terrenos in the tract rather than fencing each terreno.

By 1897 the town had been surveyed and the streets laid out. There were 492 people settled in Colonia Dublán. A new store had been opened. Houses of fired brick were being built. The biggest boom to Colonia Dublán came with the building of the Ferrocarril Noroeste de Mexico through the middle of the planned town. By the end of 1897 the railroad tracks had been completed 12 miles south, beyond Colonia Dublán, which meant a great deal to the future of the town. All merchandise from El Paso or Ciudad Juárez could now be brought in by train rather than team and wagon. It also meant that the produce of the Colonia could be sent to the large border town of Ciudad Juárez and to other cities of Mexico. Too, it relieved some of the financial burden of the settlers, by giving the men employment in building the railroad. These few years of assured employment gave the settlers a chance to build up their finances and farms. The influence of the railroad may be reflected in the population growth. By 1900 there were 763 people in Colonia Dublán, which was more than any of the other Colonias by over 100.

About 1900 the Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company negotiated for part of the Huller tract, which was located just to the east of the Mormon settlement, though the deeds were not secured until 1904. The area was surveyed into 5, 10, 20, and 40 acre plots. After the survey, there was a drawing to see who got first choice of the various plots. Each adult in the Colonia was able to buy 25 acres for each boy in his family over a certain age, as well as 25 acres for himself. In the years that followed there was some farming on the "flat," as this area east of town was called, but due to the lack of irrigation water the crops were sparse.

A number of times in the early days of the Colonia, the river had overflowed in the surrounding fields, during a spring rain. Once or twice water had spread as far as the railroad tracks, more than a mile from the river. By 1904 a dike had been built to the west of the Lucerne irrigation ditch. This kept a greater part of the water out of the town,

though not out of the fields. Some of the early houses were built on mounds several feet above the surrounding land in anticipation of such floods.

In 1904, another project which helped put Colonia Dublán ahead of the other Colonias was the bringing of irrigation water from the lake that was situated about seven miles southeast of town. Soon after the Colonist arrived they had noticed two large depressions to the southeast of the settlement. The Mormons decided to dig a canal from the river to one of the depressions, then another canal to town and the farms. In 1904, these canals were completed and water was let into the new reservoir. With the lake filled, water could then be used on the farms practically any time it was needed, rather than having to depend upon the flow of the river, which was irregular. With this advantage crops were more likely to produce a good yield. Also much new land could be put under cultivation. Before the lake water was used, a farmer could depend only on irrigating his farm once in the winter and once in the month of March. Then, until the summer rains began, which was usually in July, the crops would have to go without additional water.

From the beginning of Colonia Dublán until the Exodus in 1912, the town's population was almost entirely dependent upon cultivating the soil for its livelihood. The farm practices were generally little different from those in the United States, but were quite different from the Mexicans, though the Mormons did take up some of the farm practices of the Mexicans.

For many years after the Mormons came into Colonia Dublán they were planting corn as the main crop, as corn could be grown from the moisture of the summer rains, while wheat had to be irrigated a number of times in the spring. The corn first planted was called "Mexican June." It was the same white-kerneled variety of corn used by the Mexicans. It grew as high as 10 feet with usually 1 to 4 ears per stock; the ears were about six feet up the stock from the ground. If there was one ear to the stock it many

times measured up to a foot long; however, if there were four ears per stock none of them usually measured over four inches long.³⁴

Planting of a large acreage of corn took three to four men. After the ground had been prepared, but before the actual planting, the rows were marked. This was done by a bar with four pegs 42 inches apart. The pegged bar was pulled lengthwise and crosswise over the field, so that a checker board pattern resulted. This was so the corn could be cultivated only one way. After the field was marked, the planting operation was begun. The first man took from one to two chops with a Mexican hoe to remove the dry soil. The next man punched a hole in the ground about one foot deep with a crowbar, then rotated the upper end to enlarge the hole. The last man dropped 2 to 4 kernels of corn into the hole. He then covered the kernels of corn by loosening the dirt along the side of the hole with a sharp stick. This practice of planting was used until about 1908.

Several Colonists built planters, which eliminated the crowbar method of planting corn. The farmers now used a rooter and "jab" planter. The "jab" planter was held in the hands and operated much like the post hole digger. The seed corn was held in a container on the side of the planter. Several kernels would drop into the hole after the planter had been thrust into the ground and the jaws opened. Several years later the "jab" planter was replaced by a funnel, which was attached behind the rooter. The seeds were dropped into the funnel at the proper spacing. The commercial planters on the market at the time could not plant the kernels in moist soil, and therefore could not be used. Moist soil was 4 to 6 inches below the surface, so very often it was necessary to use a shovel plow in front of the rooter to clear away the dry soil.

Before the lake irrigation system came into use, corn was planted in late summer after the rains had started, and consequently many times would not mature, and so could only be used for cattle feed. In the years when the corn matured it was shocked in the field and taken on sleds to the corn crib. During the winter it was shelled. The Mormons used the Mexican way of shelling corn. The sheller was called a "lotero", which was

³⁴ Interview with A. B. Call, who came to Colonia Dublan in 1890.

made from rawhide and corn cobs. The cobs were tied together with wet rawhide, and when the rawhide dried, it shrunk, holding the cobs tightly together. The corn was then run over the ends of the cobs, which took off the kernels. The kernels were then stored, or ground into meal at the nearby grist mill, or in a home coffee mill.

The next most important crop during the early period of Colonia Dublán development was sorghum or “sugar cane” or just “cane”, as the majority of settlers called it. Sugar was very difficult to buy, besides being more expensive than most of the Mormons could afford. Sorghum molasses was used a great deal to supplement sugar and many acres were planted to this crop. As the prosperity of the Colonists grew “cane” acreage decreased.

The sorghum was planted after the summer rains began, therefore there was no need to worry about the moisture requirement. The two main varieties were Orange Amber and Golden Orange.

The harvest began in September. The cane was brought to the sorghum mill and stacked in piles about 10 feet high. The cane stocks were fed into the mill about three stocks at a time. The rollers squeezed out the juice, leaving “pummy”, and juice ran out the bottom into vats. This operation was carried on 24 hours a day until all the sorghum had been processed, which took until the first of December some years. The “pummy” was put in the stock pens for feed or spread on the roofs of cattle sheds, since it absorbs a large quantity of water during the rains.

The juice, after it had run into the vat below the mill, was strained through cheese cloth into another vat. It was then cooked until a green scum came to the surface, then was skimmed. The juice was strained, then cooked again in another vat until it was of stringy consistency. It was then strained as many times as the producer wished, as the more times it was strained the clearer the molasses became. When the operation was completed, the molasses was put into jars or into 40 gallon barrels. The green scum was

saved and made into vinegar. Molasses, during this period, sold for about one peso a gallon.

Wheat, which is now an important item in the economy of Colonia Dublán, was not grown to any extent in the early days of the settlement, because of a lack of enough water to produce a good stand. The river could not be depended upon for water at the right time in the spring. Those who planted it took the chance that it would rain during the spring or that water was available from the river. When the water from the lakes began to be used, more and more wheat was planted. The farmers planted the same type of wheat that the Mexicans were raising. This was "seven head" or "tassel" wheat. There was only one stock to the plant, but branching took place near the top of the stock to form into seven separate heads. Though there were seven heads, each head held very little grain.

The Colonists only planted the amount of wheat in one day that they could cover with soil. There were so many crows in the spring of the year that the grain, if left uncovered for very long, would have been consumed by the birds.

Threshing time was usually in July. All the wheat was cut by hand with a cradle; the Mexicans were still using scythes. The wheat was then put in shocks and later stacked for the thresher. A thresher was owned by a group in Colonia Juárez in 1890. It was used in the Casas Grandes valley for threshing on shares. A few of the Mexicans took advantage of the thresher, but the majority still used the oxen and burros and flailed.

Early in the 1900's a new wheat was introduced, called "Chihuahua red." This also was a Mexican wheat. The yield was far greater than the "seven head" variety, but even with the new wheat the average yield was hardly ever more than 10 bushels to the acre.

Another introduction in the early 1900's was the horse drawn headers, which are still used at the present time by several Mexicans in the Casas Grandes area. A few years later binders were brought to the Colonia from the United States.

Before the Exodus there was little alfalfa grown. Up to the time alfalfa was introduced, grass to the east of town was cut for hay. A problem that prompted the introduction of alfalfa was the large quantity of loco weed (Astragalus mollissimus) in the grazing areas. Before the Exodus at least one "tin can" baler was used for baling alfalfa. Horse powered balers are being used today by several Mexicans in this area.

There were a number of orchards and vineyards started in Colonia Dublán. The orchards were mostly apples and peaches. Neither of these fruits did well, nor have they done well up to the present time.

Just before the Exodus there were 1,200 range cattle and 567 dairy cows in the Colonia. Some cheese was made from the milk, but this did not become important until later. A little butter was canned and sold in the city of Chihuahua and in Mexico City. There were 245 horses and mules, 204 hogs (mostly Duroc-Jersey), and 350 chickens (White Leghorns).³⁵

Corrals for the cows and horses were many times made of adobe. Adobe was used because it offered greater protection for the animals from the frequent high winds, much the same type as were experienced in Colonia Díaz. Barns were built of wood. They were used only for storage of hay, the cows and horses being kept outside the year round.

³⁵ Martineau, op. cit.



Figure 23: HORSE BALER. Horse baler that was first used before the Mexican Revolution is still being used today by some Mexicans.

Colonia Dublán failed to develop nearly as much industry, before the Exodus, as had Colonia Juárez. The Union Mercantile store was the biggest business in town just before the revolution. They sold general merchandise, which was brought to the Colonia from El Paso twice a year. In this two-story building they had a candy factory, a tannery, a millinery shop and a tailor shop. Because of the scarcity of money, much of the merchandise from the store was sold in trade for farm produce. There was some sale of farm produce for cash to the mines at San Pedro and the lumber mills at Pearson and Madéro(Madera). Also there were local sales, and sales of surplus crops to Colonia Juárez. From 1906 to 1912 a wagon carrying 10 to 30 gallons of milk a day and some eggs, traveled to Nuevo Casas Grandes.

Almost from the beginning of the Colonias, fairs were important to the Colonists. The fairs promoted trade with people outside their own group and gave Colonists a

chance to see what the other Mormon settlements and the Mexican farmers were doing. The first fair that Colonia Dublán participated in was held in Mexico City in 1896, the same year as the fair held at Colonia Díaz. There was little that the Colonia could enter, being still a poor and a small settlement. The largest contribution to this fair was butter.



Figure 24: HOUSES IN COLONIA DUBLAN. Wood and adobe home built by one of the first Mormons to settle in Colonia Dublán. Now Inhabited by Mexicans.

The second fair was held in the City of Chihuahua, just before the beginning of the Revolution. All the Mormon Colonias participated in one large exhibit, which included all the various products of the Colonias. The Mexican government paid for the transportation of their items as an inducement to the Colonists to participate. The agreement was that the government would pay the freight on the produce to the fair and return, except for those things that were sold at the fair. The transportation on those products sold at the fair would be paid by the Colonists. The main exhibits from Colonia Dublán were wheat, corn, molasses, canned foods, cheese, root, and garden vegetables, and handiwork by the women. Other exhibits from the other Mormon Colonias were harnesses, saddles, shoes, and boots, potatoes, apples and other fruits, brooms and

popcorn. Photographs of streets scenes and various buildings in the different Colonias were also exhibited. Many prizes were taken by the participating Colonists.

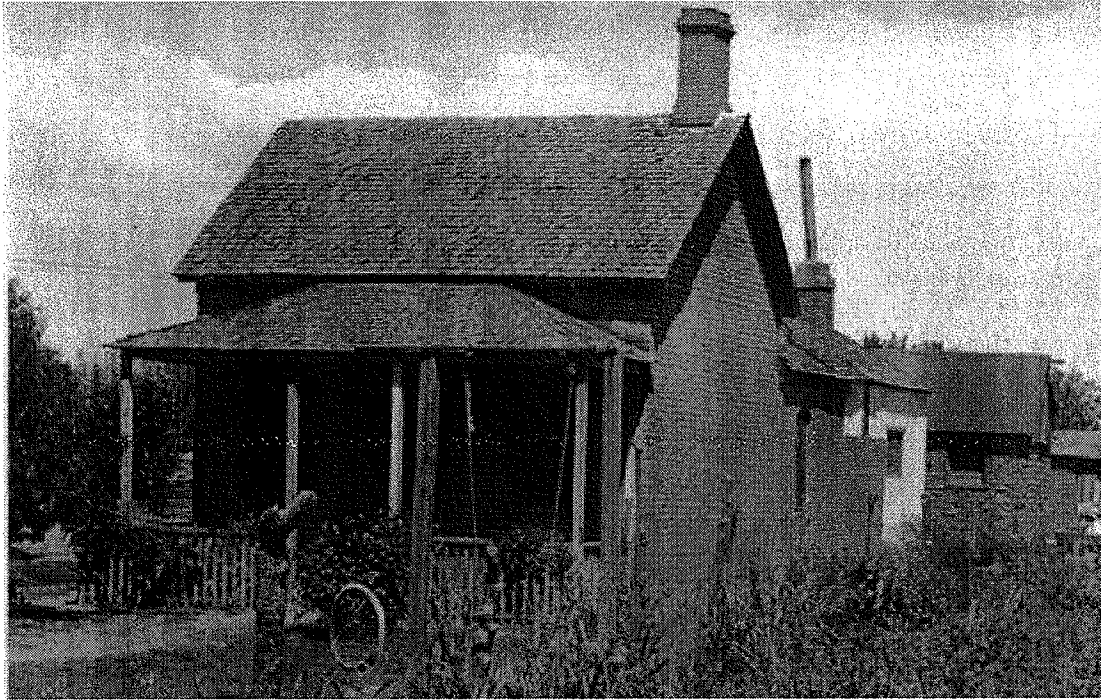


Figure 25: HOUSES IN COLONIA DUBLAN. The first brick house built in Colonia Dublán. Built about 1895. Consists of three rooms.

During 1911 and 1912 a great deal of labor was spent in enlarging the south lake so that it would store more water. A dam was built across its face, with a concrete headgate. The headgate was first opened in March, 1912.

At the time of the Exodus in July, 1912, Colonia Dublán was the largest Mormon Colonia in Mexico. There were over 1,200 people, which was over 400 more than the next largest Colonia. Its advantages lay in the fact that it was the only Mormon settlement located directly on the Ferrocarril Noroeste de Mexico, and was located on a plain where irrigation water could be secured. The homes were much the same as those described for Colonia Juárez. There were very few Colonists that did not live within the town. The cultivated acreage for each family was small, thus making it possible to have

nearly all the farms close to the town. The entertainment was much the same as at Colonia Juárez and the other Colonias.



Figure 26: HOUSES IN COLONIA DUBALN: Another early brick home built by the Mormons.

Before the effect of the additional water from the lake could be seen on the farms, the Exodus from the Mormon Colonia took place. In Colonia Dublán, as at Colonia Díaz and Juárez, the women and children left on July 28, 1912. There was little that could be taken on the crowded train. The men left a few days later, bringing with them as many horses as possible. Crops were maturing, but there was little that could be done to save them. Except for one family, the town was completely deserted by the Mormons.



Figure 27: HOUSES IN COLONIA DUBLAN: One of the large brick houses built before 1907. In 1907 the last brick house was built before the Exodus.

Galeana

Southeast of Colonia Dublán, about 35 miles, is the pueblito of Galeana. In 1895 a few Mormon families went into this valley to settle, and there they found irrigation ditches coming to the settlement from three springs, seven miles distant.

The Mormons built adobe houses and started plowing their land. Within a few months they all were sick with malaria. The irrigation ditches were filled with weeds, producing an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes. Immediately the Mormons helped the Mexicans clean the ditches, so that more water could flow, and so destroy the breeding grounds of the malarial mosquitoes.

Before long, all the families left Galeana except one. The Spencer family stayed until the revolution. Their farm produce included grapes, blackberries, wheat, clover and

a large orchard of many different kinds of fruit trees. Also they had 350 double bee hives, and two molasses mills for the use of farmers who raised sorghum.

When the children of the Spencer family became of school age they and their mother lived in Dublán during the school year, while the father stayed in Galeana working the two farms. When it was decided by the Mormon leaders of Colonia Juárez to leave Mexico for the United States, because of the revolutionist's demands, the Spencer family was one of the two families who did not go. When they arrived in Colonia Dublán from Galeana all the rest of the Colonists had left. The Spencer family remained in Colonia Dublán during the entire time that the other Mormon families were in the United States.³⁶

The Spencer land at Galeana is still being farmed by the same family, though they live in Colonia Dublán, the men going back and forth every few days between the two places.

Guadalupe

Guadalupe was located just eight miles south of Colonia Dublán. At the time of the Exodus there were 14 families living in Guadalupe. The homes, school and church were of brick. There was no formal town site, as in the other Colonias, and each family live on its own farm.

There were no stores or other enterprises except of that of one man, David Stout, who peddled farm produce, milk, eggs, and cheese to Colonia Juárez and the San Pedro mines.

At the time of the Exodus everyone left, and the houses in later years were all torn down except for one. Many of the bricks were used in buildings at Nuevo Casas

³⁶ Jensen, *op. cit.*,