United States History

In 1848, Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican-American War and ceding the land that is now New Mexico to the United States. The treaty set the new boundary between Mexico and the U.S. and proclaimed to honor the property rights of inhabitants and their heirs as they had been under both the Spanish and Mexican governments.

In 1854, the U.S. Congress established the office of the Surveyor General of New Mexico to ascertain "the origin, nature, character, and extent to all claims to lands under the laws, usages, and customs of Spain and Mexico." These duties included making recommendations to Congress concerning the validity of land grant claims.

In 1891, the US government established the Court of Private Land Claims to adjudicate land grant claims in New Mexico and other states. Some of the decisions of the Court of Private Land Claims were appealed by the United States Supreme Court. The court was disbanded in 1904.

Getting Started

Secondary resources are an excellent place to begin if you do not know the details of which land grant you are looking for or when and where it was adjudicated. There are a number of books, research reports, theses, and articles written by legal experts that have been published for others to retrace their research.


scan and send select pages requested for people who are unable to come here.


Library staff can request to borrow this title from another library.

David L. Caffey, *Chasing the Santa Fe Ring : power and privilege in territorial New Mexico* (2014)

Center for Land Grant Studies, Land Grant Database
http://www.southwestbooks.org/grantsaj.htm


Malcolm Ebright, *Four square leagues : Pueblo Indian Land in New Mexico* (2014)


William Morrow, *Spanish and Mexican private land grants* (1923)


University of New Mexico Natural Resources Center. *Remote claims impact study: Lot II Study of problems that result from Spanish and Mexican land grant claims* (1980)

Juan P. Valdez, *Trespassers on our own land: Structured as an oral history of the Juan P. Valdez family and the land grants of northern New Mexico* (2011)


Victor Westphall, *Thomas Benton Catron and his era* (1973)


Select Journal articles:


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**Primary Sources**

**Spanish and Mexican Law**

Reynolds, Matthew G., *Spanish and Mexican land laws : New Spain and Mexico* (1895)

Available for use in the Law Library only.

*Spanish Archives of New Mexico* Volume I (SANM I)

The Spanish Archives of New Mexico were divided into two sections, the first being entirely dedicated to land grant claims. Ralph Emerson Twitchell first compiled and published a list of these documents with English
translations in 1914. The Supreme Court Law Library has copies of both this and a later reprint available for use only in the Law Library.

**New Mexico Statutes**

*New Mexico Statutes Annotated 1978*
Chapter 49 “Land Grants”
Available in print in the Law Library and online at [https://laws.nmonesource.com/w/nmos/Chapter-49-NMSA-1978#!b/a1](https://laws.nmonesource.com/w/nmos/Chapter-49-NMSA-1978#!b/a1)

**1953 New Mexico Statutes Annotated**
Sections 8-1-1 through 8-10-6
Only available in [print](#) in the New Mexico Supreme Court Law Library.

**1941 New Mexico Statutes Annotated**
Chapter 9 “Community or Spanish Land Grants”.
Available in [print](#) in the Law Library.

**1929 New Mexico Statutes Annotated**
Chapter 29 “Community Land Grants”
Available in [print](#) in the Law Library.

**1915 New Mexico Statutes Annotated**
Chapter 22 “Community Land Grants”
Available online through [Gale Primary Sources](#) and in [print](#) in the Law Library.

**1897 Compiled Laws of New Mexico**
Chapter 22 “Land Grants”
Available online through [Gale Primary Sources](#) and in [print](#) in the Law Library.

**1884 Compiled Laws of New Mexico**
Chapter 22 “Land Grants”
Available online through [HeinOnline, Gale Primary Sources](#) and in [print](#) in the Law Library.
New Mexico Supreme Court Cases

Available online at www.NMOnesource.com

Federal Government Reports

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo definition and list of community land grants
  Preliminary report by the U. S. General Accounting Office.

  Available through HeinOnline and GAO website

Reports of surveyor-general of New Mexico on private land claims
  Available through HeinOnline under U.S. Congressional Serial Set and in print for use only in the Law Library.

Reports of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior from 1885-1911
  Available through HeinOnline under U.S. Congressional Serial Set and in print for use only in the Law Library.

Documents from Court of Private Land Claims

Papers relating to New Mexico Land Grants
  Microfilm reels available for use in the Law Library.

US Supreme Court Decisions

Westlaw and Lexis are both available to search in the Supreme Court Law Library.
Transcripts of court cases involving land grant disputes often include reproductions of evidence submitted during trial such as maps, patents, photographs, translations of the original grant, and testimonies.

*The Making of Modern Law: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978*

Accessible in the Law Library and through Supreme Court’s Internet connection (WiFi and remote desktop).

*Private Land Claims* (Volumes 2-41)

Select transcripts of records and briefs appealing decisions of the Court of Private Land Claims before the U. S. Supreme Court. Available for use only in the Law Library.