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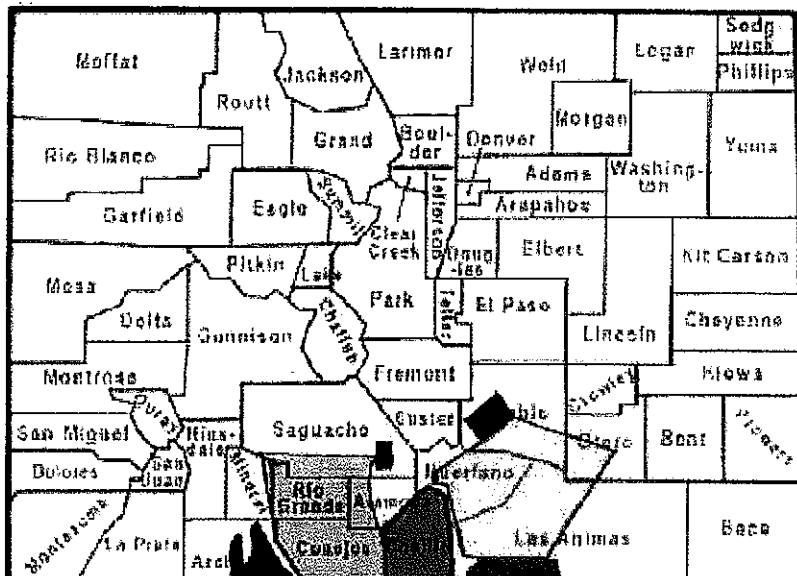
Reapportionment Committee:

I am writing in regards to the redistricting for the state of Colorado. As an historian of the United States and of Southern Colorado I think that it is essential that the communities of Southeastern and South central Colorado remain intact as one district.

The history of Southern Colorado, specifically Pueblo County, Huerfano County, Las Animas County and the San Luis Valley, have shared a common history and culture for hundreds of years. The American Indians that occupied this region used these as living areas and hunting grounds. The American Indians recognized these lands as one area because of their common environment.

Spanish Explorers entered into southern Colorado as early as the 1590s and saw the region as one environmental and political area. In 1821 Mexico Declared itself independent and lands controlled by Spain became labeled as Mexican. Beginning in the 1830s, the Mexican Government, which now controlled the region of southern Colorado addressed in this letter, established a land grant system in which the Mexican government ceded lands to family units or individual owners. The following were land grants granted by the Mexican Government: The Vigil and St. Vrain, Maxwell, Sangre de Cristo, Conejos, Tierra Amarilla, Nolan, and Luis Baca Grants. The image below is a map of the land grants taken from the Colorado State Archives.

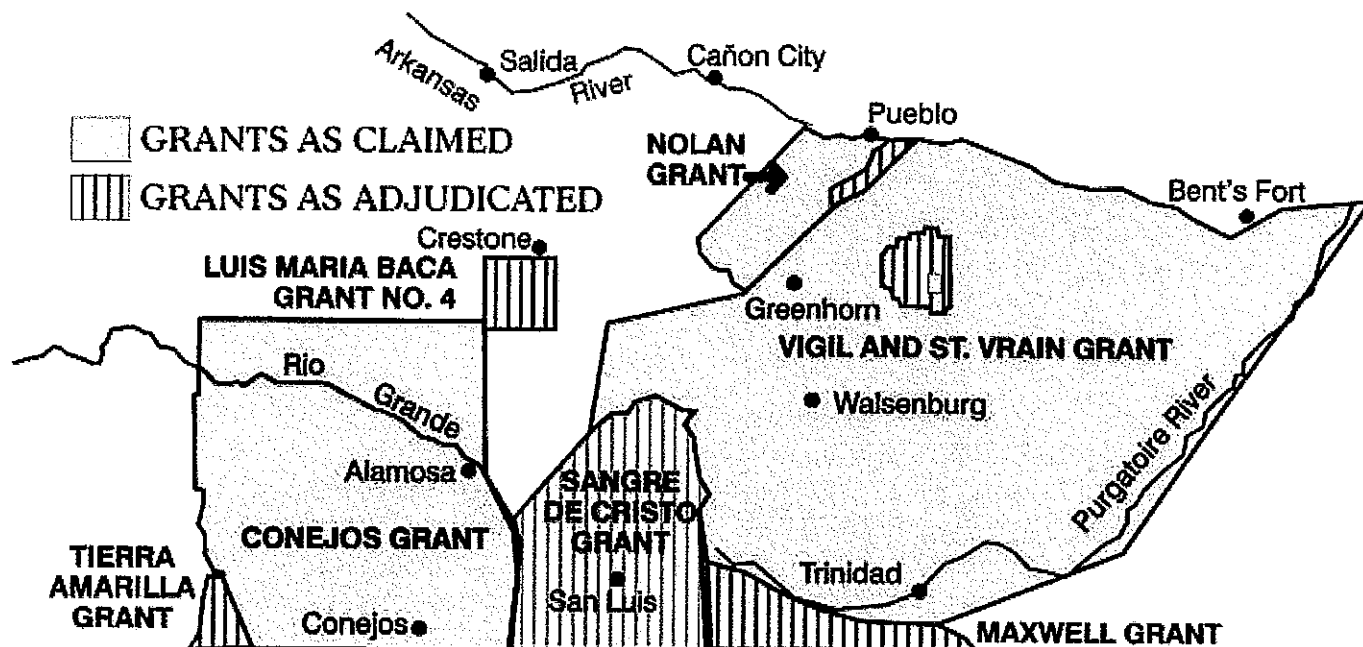
Spanish - Mexican Land Grants: Map



Legend

Vigil & St. Vrain Grant Maxwell Grant Sangre de Cristo Grant
 Conejos Grant Tierra Amarilla Grant Nolan Grant Luis Baca Grant
<http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/mlg/mlgmap.html>

This image from Colorado Central Magazine shows a blown up image of the same area.



<http://cozine.com/2001-december/colorados-mexican-land-grants/>

As you can see the land grants granted by the Mexican government and settled by Hispanos, individuals who claim a Spanish Heritage, are the same areas discussed today. These regions when settled by the Hispanos were used for farming and ranching. The individuals that settled this region were seen by the Mexican government as the same type of people, industrious and independent individuals that would be able to make a profit off of this land.

In 1848 this region became the United States after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Over the next 40-50 years, many of these land grant owners lost their land with the influx of Americans coming in from the east coast. Even today some of these land grants are still claimed by the descendants of the original settlers. As they were displaced many of the Hispanos of this region became share croppers and tenant farmers. In the 1880s and early 1890s with the increase in coal mining and steel production, Hispanos migrated between coal mines in Southern Colorado and many moved to Pueblo to work in the steel mill. As they migrated within the region they continued to see themselves attached to their Mexican and Spanish heritage and culture and more importantly they saw themselves as tied to the same region.

While this is a brief and simple overview of the history of Southern Colorado, specifically Pueblo County, Huerfano County, Las Animas County and the San Luis Valley, I would encourage this committee to think about the history and culture of the region of Southern Colorado and how the peoples living here have been linked to each other and the region for over one hundred and fifty years. The people in these counties are more alike in their history and culture than any other region in this state.

If you have any questions please feel free to email me at fawnamber.montoya@colostate-pueblo.edu or call me on my cell phone at 719-232-6207.

Sincerely,



Fawn-Amber Montoya, PHD

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