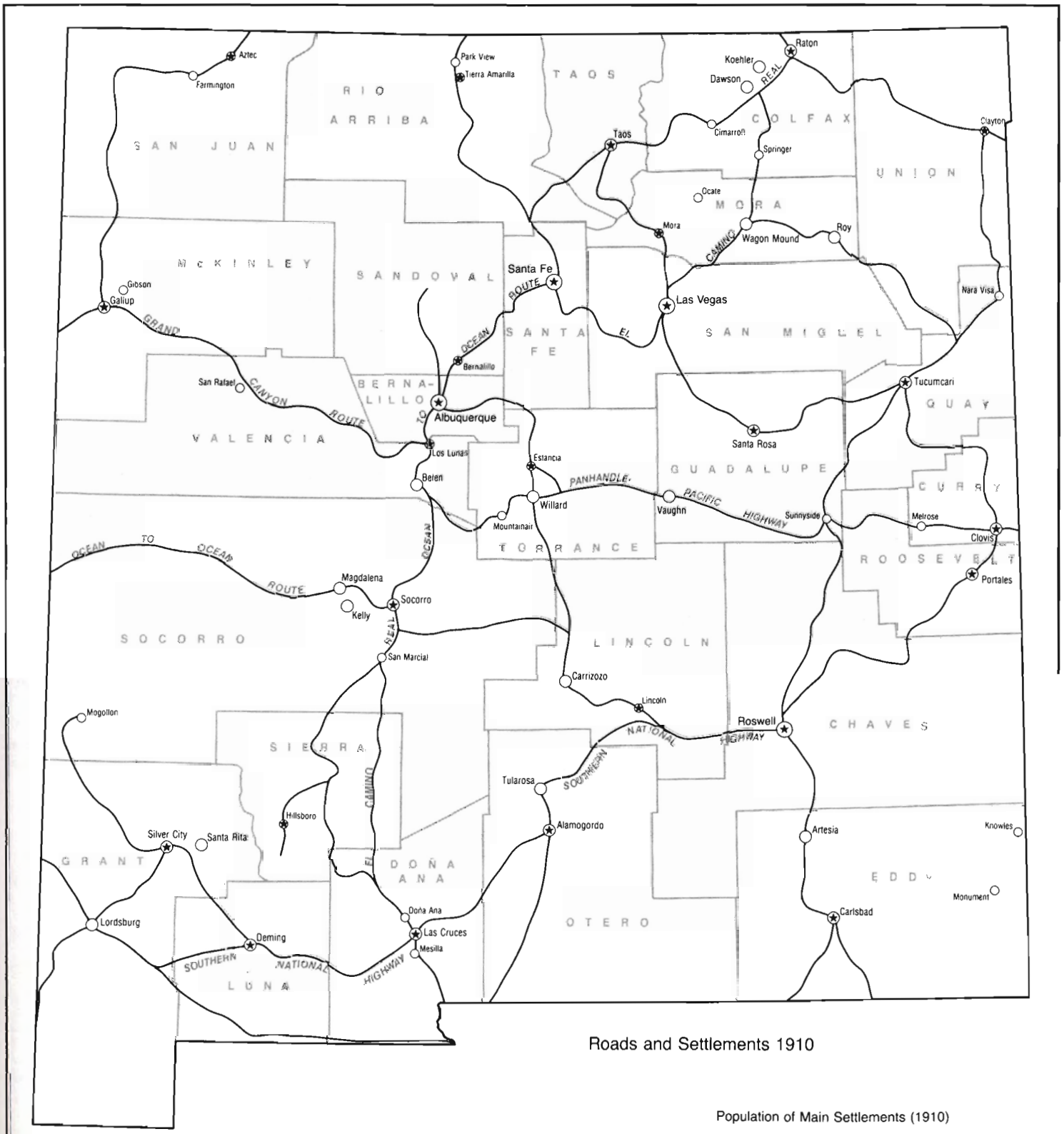
Stages for Statehood, 1912



From *New Mexico in Maps*, 2d ed, edited by Jerry L. Williams, 1986.
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Source: Dept of the Interior, General Land Office Map, 1910

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According to the 1910 census 327,301 people lived in New Mexico Territory, an increase of 67.6 percent since 1900. Most of this population increase was in rural settlements in the eastern counties. Ten towns had over 2,500 residents, including Albuquerque with 11,020 (13,163 including Old Town), Las Vegas with 6,934 in the combined towns, Roswell with 6,172, Santa Fe with 5,072, and Raton with 4,539. New Mexico had 26 counties, 8 of which were organized after 1900. By 1910 the eastern plains were dominated by transplanted Texans, Oklahomans, Arkansans, and Missourians with their racial and ethnic biases and Democratic politics. Traditional Republican strength remained in the less populated northern counties dominated by Hispanic dons.

Throughout the territorial period (1850–1911) Anglo politicians had adapted themselves to the don system that had dominated the area for centuries. Statehood politics became inextricably intertwined with land grant, mining, lumber, livestock, and railroad issues. The Santa Fe Ring, a nebulous collection of Anglo and Hispanic politicos, attorneys, territorial officials, and judges, exploited these issues for pecuniary and political gain. Ring partisans, under the leadership of Elkins and Catron, a Santa Fe-based law firm, generally supported statehood, but such obstacles as sectionalism, nativism, and religious bigotry doomed the movement to failure.

Meanwhile, the territorial economy boomed with the coming of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad in 1879. By 1881 construction had moved south past Rincon and at Deming connected with the Southern Pacific heading east to El Paso. The Deming connection gave New Mexico a transcontinental railroad link. A branch line hooked Santa Fe to the railroad at Lamy. Other railroad lines later connected the Rio Grande Valley to Arizona via Grants and Gallup. Railroad construction opened the territory to national markets for agricultural products and livestock. Small branch lines to mining districts such as Kelly, Madrid, and Silver City benefited gold, silver, lead, and coal operations. Tourists and health industries became important as immigration to New Mexico increased substantially, a trend abetted by creation of the Bureau of Immigration.

The Pecos Valley development during the 1880s and 1890s dramatically affected territorial politics. Railroads linked the valley to Pecos City, Texas, in the south, and to Amarillo, Texas, in the northeast, inducing significant immigration from Texas and adjacent states. By 1910 Roswell had become the major political and economic center of southeastern New Mexico, now popularly called "Little Texas." Visionary irrigation schemes promoted by Charles Eddy, Pat Garrett, and James J. Hagerman and exploitation of vast artesian water supplies greatly benefited local agricultural industries. Livestock producers thrived as external markets became more accessible. Construction of the Belen cutoff line at the turn of the century made Clovis an important gateway community on the eastern plains.

Along with economic development and population increase came continued pressure for statehood after 1900. Large

Population of Towns and Settlements, 1900–1920
(Ranked by 1910 population)

	1900	1910	1920
Albuquerque	6,238	11,020	15,157
(with Old Town)	(8,848)	(13,163)	(17,042)
Las Vegas City	3,552	3,755	4,318
(with Old Town)	(6,319)	(6,934)	(8,552)
Roswell	2,049	6,172	7,033
Santa Fe	5,603	5,072	7,236
Raton	3,540	4,539	5,568
Las Cruces	2,906	3,856	3,969
Clovis	—	3,255	4,904
Silver City	2,735	3,217	2,977
Dawson	100	3,119	4,045
Deming	1,341	2,757	4,654
Tucumcari	—	2,526	3,830
Gallup	2,946	2,204	3,929
Wagon Mound	895	1,983	1,775
Alamogordo	1,524	1,948	2,363
Santa Rita	1,874	1,930	3,565
Artesia	—	1,883	1,115
Carlsbad	963	1,736	2,969
Belen	673	1,733	2,253
Socorro	1,512	1,560	1,256
Lordsburg	796	1,323	1,450
Taos	1,125	1,309	1,352
Roy	—	1,293	1,133
Portales	—	1,292	1,154
Magdalena	300	1,226	1,963
Willard	—	1,113	774
Carrizozo	—	1,082	1,405
Santa Rosa	—	1,031	1,390
Vaughn	—	1,025	1,169
Tularosa	752	1,022	1,387
Kelly	616	1,015	407
Tyrone	—	—	4,064
Valedon	—	—	1,470

Precinct data provided if census report did not subdivide specific town.

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landholders, railroaders, lumbermen, and miners who exploited the public domain with little or no restraint tended to oppose the movement. Statehood meant higher taxation to support local government operations, which until that time had been financed by the federal government. Some landholders like Thomas Benton Catron of Santa Fe supported statehood because of expected increases in land values. Statehood was nearly achieved in 1905 when a "jointure" bill linked New Mexico and Arizona as a single state. Although it received congressional and presidential support, Arizona rejected jointure, fearing New Mexican political and economic dominance. In October 1909 at the Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque, southern New Mexico politician Albert B. Fall persuaded President William H. Taft to support the lobby for New Mexico statehood. On June 20, 1910, Taft signed the enabling bill, and New Mexico subsequently held elections for a state constitutional convention.

One hundred delegates met in Santa Fe in September 1910 to draft the state constitution. Seventy-one of the delegates were Republican, including all 33 Hispanic delegates, led by Solomon Luna, don of Valencia County and the largest sheep rancher in the territory. Harvey B. Fergusson of Albuquerque headed the 29–member Democratic delegation, which actively sought progressive political reforms. Under the leadership of Luna, Fall, Catron, and the Republican Old Guard, however, the delegates prepared a conservative document designed to protect railroad, mining, and livestock interests. In this period of national progressive politics the constitution contained no provisions for direct election of senators, recall, initiative, referendum, or women's suffrage. Consequently, most of the Democratic delegation refused to sign the final document.

Luna, however, obtained specific voting and education guarantees for Hispanic residents; namely, that the state legislature was to use both the English and Spanish languages, that voting rights could not be abridged on basis of race, color, religion, or literacy in English or Spanish, and that no child could be deprived of an equal education on the same grounds. Moreover, amendment procedures were made so stringent that Hispanic guarantees and vested interests were protected from popular action. Luna's efforts were aided by Octaviano A. Larrazolo, a Democrat who was not a delegate. Disappointed over previous electoral defeats in Little Texas, Larrazolo left the Democratic Party when its delegates opposed the state constitution. This created a power struggle within the Republican Party between Luna and Larrazolo for control of the Hispanic vote, a struggle that concluded in 1912 when Luna drowned in a vat of sheep-dipping fluid.

On January 6, 1912, New Mexico formally entered the union as the forty-seventh state. Statehood engineered a revolution in New Mexico politics matched only by the impact of the New Deal during the thirties. In the 1911 elections Democrats scored impressive upsets against the entrenched Old Guard. Larrazolo's promotion of Hispanic pride badly split the Republican organization and enabled a Little Texan, William C. McDonald, to become governor. Democrats shrewdly selected Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca, a Las Vegas publisher, for lieutenant governor and diverted Hispanic votes to their slate. Old Guard partisans, however, dominated the legislature and elected Fall and Catron to the U.S. Senate.

The first two decades of statehood witnessed a Democratic-Republican balance of power. Personalities dominated state politics as they had for centuries. Larrazolo's dream of becoming don of all Hispanic voters never materialized. Ironically, it was Bronson M. Cutting, a wealthy New York Protestant, who became the don of New Mexico politics until his death in 1935. Muted and overt ethnic tensions between Little Texas and the northern Hispanic counties characterized state politics until the New Deal fatally undermined the don system in the 1930s.

Stephen Sayles