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of three types: proprietary grants given to individuals; community grants given to ten or more families or to pueblo communities; and the sitio, or ranch, grants, which varied in size from one square league during the colonial period to hundreds of thousands of acres during the Mexican period.

Spanish land grants were concentrated along the Rio Grande and its tributaries between Tacos and Belén. Mexican grants tended to be larger and were located on the periphery of existing grants. Texan independence in 1836 compelled such New Mexican leaders as Governor Manuel Armijo to issue massive grants to New Mexican citizens. Should the American occupation of Santa Fe occur, it was intended to keep as much New Mexican land in Mexican hands as possible. Accordingly, large grants such as Sangre de Cristo, Beaubien-Miranda, etc., were issued.
Land Grants

Nolán, Vigil and St. Vrain, and Conejos were issued in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado during the 1840s in the wake of renewed Texan-Mexican conflict along the Rio Grande.

Spanish and Mexican land grants were protected under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, 1848, which terminated the Mexican War. Hispanic residents were guaranteed the rights of American citizenship, but strict enforcement of treaty provisions was not maintained in the following years. Consequently, land grant controversies have been a major theme of New Mexican history since the 1840s. At issue was the conflict between Anglo and Hispanic land laws and customs, indefinite land grant boundaries, inability of many claimants to prove legitimacy of titles, development of the Santa Fe Ring and its satellites to obscure and manipulate title ownership, and political and legal entanglements leading to major political violence in territorial New Mexico.

When the office of the United States surveyor general for New Mexico was created in 1854, the survey of the territory was to investigate Spanish and Mexican grants and recommend to Congress confirmation of the claims that had sound proof. In 1891, following unsuccessful efforts, Congress established machinery to quiet title to these grants with the Court of Private Land Claims. By 1904 the work of this body was ostensibly completed, with a large number of claims rejected due to imperfect titles. There were also a number of fraudulent documents that had to be litigated, such as the gigantic Peralta claim of 12.5 million acres from Phoenix, Arizona, to Silver City. Even so, land grant issues remain vexing in New Mexico owing to the unfulfilled promise of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

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