

P4035 7006

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	AUG 27 1976
DATE ENTERED	OCT 5 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ******
Luna County ~~1910~~ Courthouse and ~~Courthouse~~ Park
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
700 South Silver Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Deming
STATE
New Mexico
VICINITY OF
CODE 35
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
#2
COUNTY
Luna
CODE
029

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Luna County Board of County Commissioners
STREET & NUMBER
700 South Silver Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Deming
VICINITY OF
STATE
New Mexico

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Luna County Clerk's Office
STREET & NUMBER
700 South Silver Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Deming
STATE
New Mexico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties
DATE
July 27, 1973
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
New Mexico State Planning Office, 200 West DeVargas St.
CITY, TOWN
Santa Fe
STATE
New Mexico
87503

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Luna County Courthouse is an imposing 100' x 50' red brick building erected in 1910 in the southwestern New Mexico railroad and agricultural center of Deming, county seat of Luna County. Its construction under the direction of El Paso builder J. C. Huff, using plans drawn by architect W. B. Corwin, demonstrated the growing importance of the new county, created by the Territorial Legislature in 1901, and permitted the consolidation of county offices previously scattered about Deming in rented quarters. With its tall clock tower and Greek portico its design is a combination of architectural styles reminiscent of public buildings built during the late 19th century in the Mid-west and exemplifies the influx of Anglo settlers from that region into New Mexico after the turn of the century. The cool greenery of the landscaping of the courthouse park, surrounding a typical granite war memorial provides a pleasant oasis for citizens of the community on hot summer days which contrasts markedly with the sparse vegetation of the southern New Mexico desert around the town.

The brick work in the front or north facade of the 2 1/2 story courthouse is embellished by quoins, belt courses and vertical details of rusticated brown native sandstone. The same stone is used to highlight the eight window surrounds in each story which are arcaded in the second story and in the double window in the front of the clock tower. The arch is repeated in a detail over the clock tower window and around the doorway in the entry. Access to the building is provided by a flight of concrete steps which rises to the top of the high brick foundation where a porch leads to the front door. The present door is made completely of glass and is obviously a replacement. Two large Ionic columns extend upwards from the front corners of the porch to support a triangular pediment with a boxed cornice and frieze decorated in a dentil design. Situated between the pillars is a balcony with an iron railing which formerly led to the second floor through an entry recently enclosed.

Triangular pediments are found again in the gabled dormers protruding from the roof on each end of the building and on each side of the clock tower. The pitched roof is composed of soft metal sheeting with a scalloped pattern painted silver. Above the tower arranged octagonally are four clock faces separated by louvered panels topped by a tall steeple covered with the same silver roofing material employed below.

Opposite the main entry in a small vestibule is a pair of half-glass, half-wood swinging doors opening into a hallway which gives access to the offices of various county officials. The Assessor and Treasurer are to the left; to the right is the Clerk's office which extends across the west end of the building behind a stairwell leading to both the second story and the basement. The stairways are enclosed by cast iron railings with square cast newel posts and wooden hand rails. The plaster walls of the hallway are painted brown and cream and are protected by 12" mop boards found throughout the building. Directly across from the main entry is an arched doorway, part of the south entrance or back door when the courthouse was first constructed. The square cut door is enclosed by wooden panels under side-lights of frosted glass with diagonal panes topped by a large half-round

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Erected 1910 BUILDER/ARCHITECT J.C.Huff/W.B.Corwin
Addition 1963

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1910 courthouse of Luna County, New Mexico, located in Deming, is an architectural landmark exemplifying Anglo dominance of the traditionally Hispanic area acquired from Mexico in the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. Although permanent settlement in this region which borders the Republic of Mexico was minimal prior to the arrival of the railroads in the early 1880's, relations between the two cultures had been mutually abrasive since U.S. occupation of New Mexico in 1846. On March 9, 1916 the conflict erupted in the famous raid led by forces of the Mexican revolutionary guerrilla chieftain "Pancho" Villa on the village of Columbus, New Mexico and the adjoining U.S. Army installation of Camp Furlong (N.H.L. 5/75). As a result of the attack, in which eighteen Americans and approximately 100 Mexicans were killed, three separate trials were held in April, 1916, and August, 1917 at the Luna County Courthouse in which twenty-four Villista prisoners were convicted of the murder of former New Mexico Territorial Engineer Charles DeWitt Miller, one of the civilian casualties. Six of these men were executed in June, 1916.

Because most of the prisoners were captured in Mexico by the so-called "Punitive Expedition" commanded by Brigadier-General John J. Pershing and turned over to civilian officials in Luna County without extradition, the trials raised questions of international law still unanswered. In addition, the atmosphere of tension surrounding the trials accentuated by incidents on both sides of the frontier since the beginning of the Mexican revolution in 1910 provoked grave doubts as to the protection of the civil rights of the accused.

After a long struggle similar to those occurring in other western states in which new settlers contested the established political order in an effort to localize governmental powers, Luna County was created by the New Mexico Territorial Legislature March 16, 1901. After considering the names "Florida" and "Logan" the Legislature chose to call the new county "Luna" in honor of Salomon Luna, an important Republican legislator and jefe político (political boss) from Valencia County whose influence was crucial during the negotiations preceding the creation of the county. Made up of portions of Grant and Doña Ana Counties the new entity agreed to assume part of the debts of the older counties and the town of Deming was named county seat. The first meeting of the new Board of Commissioners was held April 8, 1901 in "parlors" of the Bank of Deming.

During its early years county business was conducted in various rented offices around Deming; district court was held in the Clark Opera House. In 1906, the commissioners purchased a site for a courthouse from the Deming Water Co. for \$1785.00 and levied a special tax of three mills on real property throughout the county to establish a courthouse building fund. Construction was delayed until 1910, however, when a \$40,800 contract was

(see Continuation Sheet #2)

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transom composed of a mid-section with segmented clear glass panes flanked by quarter round frosted glass sections. Restrooms are located on each side of the archway.

Extending across the east end of the building's upper story opposite the top of the stairway is a large courtroom. Refurbished in 1965, the 50' x 40' room now has pale green walls and an acoustic ceiling as do the other offices on this floor occupied by the district attorney, the court clerk and chambers of the district judge. An interesting set of oak appointments consisting of a judge's bench, clerk's desk, jury box and witness stand on casters furnishes the courtroom. The bench is decorated with a carved Seal of the Territory of New Mexico and an intricate "egg and dart" design which also embellishes the other pieces. Oral tradition states that these accoutrements were made for the courtroom at Hillsboro after that town became seat of Sierra County in 1884 and were later used at Silver City, in Grant County before coming to Deming.

From the northwest corner of the second floor a small staircase leads to the tower which contains the works of the four clocks. Although the machinery has recently been electrified, the maintenance personnel are experiencing difficulty in synchronizing the four clock faces. The bell in the tower was cast in 1910 by the Shane Foundry in Baltimore for the Seth Thomas Co., the manufacturer of the clocks.

To provide additional space for offices and storage, a 20' x 75' addition was erected along the south facade of the building in 1963. On the first floor, the east half of the addition was used to enlarge the Treasurer's office and the west portion now serves as the vault for the County Clerk's records. The new area adjoining the courtroom on the second floor is used as a law library and as a place for deliberations by the jury when court is in session. In the basement the new section provides storage for the county's voting machines. The original basement contains the offices of the local magistrate and county health offices in addition to the furnace room and extra storage.

In front of the main entrance to the courthouse, resting on a 4' high concrete base, stands the granite monument erected in 1921 as a memorial to Claude Close Howard, Luna County's only fatality of World War I. Howard was killed in the St. Mihiel sector of France, September 24, 1918, while serving with the Machine Gun Company of the 356th Infantry Regiment as described by a bronze tablet on the monument. On each side of the memorial and a tall flag pole just in front of it, rose gardens curve to Silver Street which is bordered by a low hedge. West of the building the formal planting gives way to a large tree shaded park which is used for community celebrations and barbecues.

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*not a resource
L. L. Smith
11.26.76*

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Immediately east of the courthouse is the 1918 county jail and sheriff's office which has recently been replaced by a new one-story structure 150 yards further east. The old jail, a formidable 65' x 35' three-story red brick flat roofed structure, is joined to the courthouse by a 15' steel wall connecting the second story of the jail to the courtroom. The county commissioners are presently seeking voter approval for a bond issue which would permit rehabilitation of the jail for expansion of county offices. Behind the building in a fenced off area are the shops and motor pool of the county road crew.

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awarded to J.C.Huff of El Paso, Texas. The exterior of the building is little changed since its dedication in the fall of that year.

On March 9, 1916, the usual concerns of the citizens of Columbus, New Mexico, a small community in southern Luna County three miles north of the Mexican border, were interrupted by a startling occurrence with national and international implications. At 4:30AM on that eventful day Columbus and the adjacent U.S. Army camp were attacked by almost 500 Mexican guerrillas of insurrecto leader Francisco "Pancho" Villa. In need of the arms, horses and supplies to be found in the camp and the town and embittered by U.S. recognition of his arch-rival Venustiano Carranza as provisional president of the Republic of Mexico, Villa sought to resupply his troops and assuage his pride with one bold stroke by burning and looting this convenient target. Although the pre-dawn raid met with initial success, soon after daylight the guerrillas encountering unexpectedly strong resistance from U.S. regulars, were forced to withdraw suffering heavy casualties and abandoning much of the booty. Soon after dawn American troops drove Villa's men back across the frontier and continued the pursuit some fifteen miles into Mexico.

Incensed by the audacity of the attack which was regarded as the last straw in a long series of border provocations, U.S. authorities were quick to order troops under General Pershing to invade Mexico in an attempt to seize the bandit leader. The first detachments crossed the border on March 15 and by March 22 had reached the area near the villages of Galeana and El Valle about 135 miles south of Columbus. Although the invaders were able to destroy some elements of the guerrilla command the expedition aroused Mexican nationalist feelings to the point that relations between the U.S. and the Carranza government were seriously jeopardized. Villa was not captured and ultimately the only positive results from the expeditionary force were training personnel particularly officers, and testing new equipment such as trucks and airplanes for the impending conflict in Europe. American troops remained on Mexican soil, however, until February, 1917 although restricted to a small perimeter in the north after a battle with Carranzista troops at Carrizal in June, 1916.

The exact circumstances surrounding the capture and treatment of the

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Villista prisoners are both complicated and obscure. Available documents indicate, however, that the thirty-odd Mexicans held by military and civil authorities in New Mexico may be divided into three groups: five badly wounded men were captured on American soil in the vicinity of Columbus immediately following the raid; six more, also wounded, were apprehended soon afterwards by the Punitive Expedition at San Buenaventura, a small village in Chihuahua near El Valle, and the remainder, approximately twenty-one men, were taken by U.S. soldiers at various locations around Babicora, Namiquipa and Ojos Azules late in May, 1916. Twenty-four of these prisoners were tried April 20, 1916 and August 27, 1917 in Luna County District Court for the murder of Charles D. Miller who had been shot several times outside the Commercial Hotel in Columbus where he was staying.

The second group of prisoners was the first to go on trial. On April 13, 1916 Eusevio Rentería, Taurino García, José Rodríguez, Francisco Alvares, José Rangel and Juan Castillo were brought to the frontier and, after being inspected and interviewed by prospective prosecution witnesses in an army medical tent, were turned over to civilian officials. On the 15 they were indicted by the Luna County Grand Jury for Miller's murder and on the 19th, less than six weeks after the raid, the trial began with Judge E. L. Medler of Las Cruces presiding. J. S. Vaught was in charge of the prosecution while Buel B. Wood of Carrizozo was appointed by the Court to represent the defendants. Testimony by prosecution witnesses described the raid, established that several buildings were burned and that horses and clothing had been stolen. The circumstances of Miller's death were also given although no attempt was made to make any of the accused directly responsible. Under questioning from Attorney Wood the defendants stated that they had all been subject to various forms of impressment by Villa and had served under him only from three weeks to three months, often under surveillance. All admitted being at Columbus during the raid but most of them claimed that they were holding horses for other raiders. Whether or not they were aware that their target was an American town is unclear. José Rodríguez stated that he was a Carranzista soldier captured less than a month before the raid and that he had carried a rifle but had no ammunition - testimony which would eventually save his life. Closing arguments were heard April 20, the second day of the trial, and the jury was out only thirty minutes before bringing in a verdict of murder in the first degree.

Later the same day, Juan Sánchez, the first and only member of the group captured at Columbus to stand trial, was also convicted on the same charge. Of the other four raiders seized at Columbus, two whose names are unknown died before any legal action was taken against them; a third, Pablo Sánchez, who who had been discovered with field glasses and a uniform concealed under peon garments, was bound over for trial at some future time. The fifth, a twelve-year old boy named Jesús Pías was eventually freed because of his youth

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although he testified in the trial of the first six guerrillas.

Fearful for the safety of the seven convicted prisoners because of the deplorable condition of the county jail and the intense hostility of the community, Luna County sheriff W. C. Simpson arranged for their transfer to the New Mexico State Penitentiary in Santa Fe which was accomplished on April 25 under heavy guard. The case aroused considerable attention throughout the nation resulting in letters and telegrams to New Mexico Governor William C. McDonald from groups as diverse as the White House and the Central Labor Union of Miami, Arizona. As a result, the Governor issued a twenty-one day stay of execution until June 9 for further study of the situation. Attorney Wood, now retained by the Carranza government to handle an appeal, was also anxious for more time. During May a gallows was constructed in the adobe-walled yard of the county jail. On June 7 McDonald issued another three week reprieve for five of the prisoners but the following day Juan Sánchez and Francisco Álvares were returned to Deming and on June 9 were executed while two National Guard companies patrolled the streets. Three weeks later the grisly business was repeated when Rentería, García, Rangel and Castillo were executed under the same conditions. The Governor commuted the sentence of José Rodríguez to life imprisonment evidently accepting the argument that he had been a Carranzista soldier forced to join Villa's ranks.

Despite criticism both in the press and by disinterested legal observers of questionable procedures followed in the first trials, seventeen prisoners in the third group were also tried in August, 1917 for the murder of Miller. Because the expenses of the first trials and subsequent executions had severely strained the resources of Luna County the federal government was induced to assist in caring for the later group. Held by the army in the Columbus stockade until their arraignment in February, 1917 the twenty-one Villistas were transferred to the Grant County jail in Silver City prior to their trial in Deming. During their long stay in Silver City one man escaped and two, Jua Meza and Francisco Heras died. Of the remaining eighteen all but one pleaded guilty to a charge of second degree murder and were sentenced by Judge Raymond R. Ryan to terms of 70 to 80 years in the penitentiary. After originally agreeing to the plea-bargaining, the eighteenth, Guadalupe Chavez changed his plea to "not guilty" to the chagrin of the authorities who were at a loss to know what to do with him since most of the military witnesses were then in France. Final disposition of his case is unclear.

The Villistas were not completely without sympathizers, however, and during 1918 and 1919 New Mexico authorities received petitions from families and friends to secure their release. On July 1, 1919 Governor Octaviano A. Larrazolo granted a pardon to Silvinio Vargas on humanitarian grounds because he was a cripple. Finally the sixteen remaining prisoners, including José Rodríguez, were pardoned by Larrazolo November 22, 1920. Evidently one of

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their number, Enrique Adame, had managed to escape. In a political maneuver Lieutenant Governor Benjamin F. Pankey, briefly in charge during the Governor's absence from the state, revoked the pardon but it was immediately reinstated by Larrazolo December 16, 1920.

Today it is clear that although Villa's attack was vicious and unprovoked the treatment of the prisoners was more characteristic of vengeance than justice. The temper of the times may be gauged by a letter from defense attorney Wood to the editor of the Deming Graphic written, ironically on July 4 1916 following the execution of his clients in which he described critics of the proceedings as "chicken hearted" and expressed the widely held belief that the Villistas were not only guilty but had come to the end they deserved.

Although there have been other trials and much routine county business conducted at the Luna County Courthouse in the last sixty years, the Villista trials are certainly the most significant events to occur thus far during its history.

#9

State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico:

Luna County District Court Records:Criminal Case #664, "State of New Mexico vs. Eusevio Rentería et al.," 1916.

Governors' Papers:

Octaviano A. Larrazolo, Penal Papers.

William C. McDonald, Letters Received, March 15, 1916-June 15, 1916.

Barrera, Albert Calzadías. Villa Contra Todos. Mexico City, 1965.

Braddy, Haldeen. "Pancho Villa at Columbus: The Raid of 1916." Southwestern Studies #3, Spring 1965.

Stivison, Roy E. with Della Mavity McDonnell, "When Villa Raided Columbus," New Mexico Magazine, XXVIII, 1950.

Tompkins, Col. Frank. Chasing Villa. Harrisburg, Pa., 1934.