
They Built the *Torreón*: The Miranda Family and Enrique Trujillo of La Placita del Rio Bonito

by Gary Cozzens



The *Torreón* of La Placita del Rio Bonito, December 2013
Photograph by Charles Ruberson, Lincoln Historic Site staff. Used by permission.

Sometime around 1852, several years before previously thought and after three prior attempts, families from the Manzano and Socorro areas of New Mexico settled along the Rio Bonito in what is now Lincoln County.¹ Named La Placita del Rio Bonito (the village by the pretty river), the little village would be renamed Lincoln almost twenty years later in honor of the recently slain President.

In the Manzano area, typically, one of the permanent structures was a *torreón*,² a round, rock structure several stories high which provided the local inhabitants with protection from attacks by Native Americans. This type of structure was a fairly common feature in New Mexico from the colonial period to the nineteenth century.

The first structure in La Placita del Rio Bonito, built in the center of the new plaza in 1852, was the *toreron*.³ The original *torreón* was probably four stories tall⁴ and during times of distress, the women and

1 New Mexico State Planning Office, *Lincoln, New Mexico: A Plan for Preservation and Growth* (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Planning Office, 1974), p. 6.

2 Thomas J. Caperton, *Lincoln Historic Structures Report* (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Monuments Bureau, 1983), p. 46.

3 *Lincoln, New Mexico: A Plan for Preservation and Growth*, p. 6.

4 Caperton, *Lincoln Historic Structures Report*, p. 54.

children went to the ground floor while armed men occupied the top three stories. An armed sentry on the roof would sound the alarm during any threat of trouble.⁵

The Lincoln *torreón* was likely surrounded by a ten-foot high wall; when the villagers went in the *torreón* to seek refuge, they drove their livestock inside the wall for protection since the livestock was probably the most important possession the villagers had.

After building the *torreón*, the settlers next constructed a group of *jacales* surrounding the *torreón*. *Jacales* were houses built of wooden posts driven in the ground with the gaps filled in with mud. Trenches were dug from the *jacales* to the *torreón* so the villagers could go to the safety of the tower without exposing themselves to the danger outside of their houses.⁶

The *torreón* and the *jacales* surrounding it became the plaza for the fledgling community. By the time Fort Stanton was established on May 5, 1855, there were about 100 settlers in La Placita.

Who, then, built the Lincoln *torreón*? While very few records of the founding of La Placita survive, oral history from the early settlers and their descendants provides a glimpse of those original settlers and of one extended family in particular. The *torreón* was built primarily by Enrique Trujillo, members of the Miranda family, and other early settlers.

In an interview on August 15, 1927, Florencio Chavez of Lincoln told J. Evetts Haley, “The old fort at Lincoln was built by Enricos [sic] Trujillo, a farmer and gambler who came here from Socorro. This was the first house built in town and was built several years before I came.”⁷ Enrique Trujillo, originally from Polvadera and later San Pedro, was one of the founders of La Placita and builder of the *torreón*. He married Josefa Chavez⁸ who was said to be the aunt of Felipe Miranda, another founder of La Placita. Enrique and Josefa had one known child, Rosaria, who may have been adopted. Enrique was the *mayordomo* of the local Penitente group. Enrique died before November 1872, as that was when his widow married Deter Bishop.⁹

In her autobiography, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws*, Lily Klasner wrote about the burial of Enrique Trujillo:

There is a story of his burial that is worth recording. When he was about to die, he asked to be buried under a large rock on the outskirts of the town, for fear the Indians might molest his body. Trujillo told his friends that if they did not fulfill his request he would come back and haunt them, and such a threat was sufficient to insure full respect of his wish. When the old fellow had paid his debt to nature, his friends dug his grave as nearly under the rock as possible, and after putting his body in it and refilling it with the earth, they hitched fourteen yoke of oxen to the stone and with the aid of leverage from long logs, they turned the stone over on top of the grave. This rock, which was supposed to be a meteorite, is still to be seen in the disused old graveyard at Lincoln.¹⁰

In addition to Enrique Trujillo other early settlers included Felipe Miranda, Felipe’s brother Jose Miranda and his family, and a Chavez family. Others were: Isadoro Baldonado, Diego Chaves, Guadalupe Gomez,

5 Caperton, *Lincoln Historic Structures Report*, p. 47.

6 Ibid.

7 Florencio Chavez, interview by J. Evetts Haley, 15 August 15; Lincoln Historic Site, Lincoln, New Mexico.

8 “New Mexico, Marriages, 1751-1918,” index, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/FDPW-XDH> : accessed 14 February 2014), Enrique Trujillo and Maria Josefa Chaves, 31 Aug 1845; citing Socorro County, New Mexico, marriage records, FHL microfilm 16,996.

9 Luis Gilberto Padilla y Baca, translator and compiler, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910* (Albuquerque: HGRC, 2003), p. 4.

10 Lily Klasner, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws*, Eve Ball, editor (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 4th printing, p. 54.

Sabino Gonzales, Teofilo Salazar, and Felice Trujillo.¹¹ The Miranda brothers, Jose and Felipe, owned a transportation business and a sheep ranch. They shipped wool and hides to Chihuahua, Mexico, St. Louis, Missouri, and Las Vegas, New Mexico.¹²

In 1953, Nan Boylan, the curator of the Old Courthouse Museum, interviewed Lorenzita Herrera Miranda, a native of Lincoln, then 92 years old. A portion of that interview dealt with the *torreón*.

Boylan: Do you remember when the torreón was built? Or was it built already?

Miranda: When I first came back at eleven years of age,¹³ I was told the *torreón* was built for protection from the Indians. There were about five families. A man by the name of Enrique Trujillo lived in that little settlement called Las Placitas. He was my husband's uncle or this Enrique Trujillo was married to my husband's aunt and she would tell me all these things as I was growing up. By the time I came back from Manzano, the Indians were at peace but Enrique built that *torreón* because he owned or had a place there. That's when I knew Enrique Trujillo. It was built before I ever came back here. They would put their families in there to protect them from Indians. Enrique Trujillo is buried at that big rock below town. He asked to be buried there. I knew him well. There were few families, four or five families: a brother of Felipe Miranda, a Chavez family. They would go in the *torreón* in night, when the Indians were on the war path. The people had few weapons to defend themselves. When the Indians would come they would enter homes and take everything. In Manzano, too, the Indians would enter homes and take everything.

Boylan: Who did you say built the torreón?

Miranda: Enrique Trujillo. Felipe Miranda's family, he was my father-in-law, Jose Miranda.

Boylan: Did he build it alone?

Miranda: No, the people who lived around the place he did, they all helped. They gathered to build it because the Indians were raiding too often. The place was clean; they had a fireplace to keep warm. Later we also lived in one of those little houses by the *torreón*.

Boylan: About how long did they stay in the torreón?

Miranda: Only at night. They took food only for the children. In the morning they would come out to their houses but at night they would go back to the *torreón* to sleep. The men would stay in the upper part.

Boylan: Every night?

Miranda: Yes, every night until the Indians stopped coming. They were quite afraid of the Indians

11 Nan Boylan, *Oral History*, (Lincoln, NM: Lincoln County Courthouse Museum, 1977); citing Lorenzita Herrera Miranda interview by Nan Boylan, 1953. Also, "American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940," Mrs. Lorenzita Miranda interview by Edith L. Crawford, 5 May 1939, online, Library of Congress, American Memory (www.loc.gov: accessed 14 February 2014). Also, Lucius Dills, "Acceptance and Dedication of Old Torreon or Fort," 24 February 1935; Maurice G. Fulton papers, (MS 057), Special Collections, University of Arizona Library.

12 Frances Miranda Gallegos, *Emilio Herrera Miranda in Lincoln County Tells its Stories* (Ruidoso, NM: Print Right Now, 2014), p. 340.

13 Lorenzita Miranda was born in Lincoln on 10 August 1861, but moved to the Manzano area when only a couple of days old because her father had been murdered. She returned to Lincoln about 1872.

because they killed women. Doña Genovevas' grandmother was killed coming from Las Chosas in a carreta. The grandmother was holding a baby in her arms and the Indians killed the baby and the grandmother and others in the carreta. This happened about where Dr. Laws' house is now.¹⁴ The Indians were causing much trouble and the people there had few weapons.¹⁵

In addition to being used during raids by the Mescalero Apaches, the *torreón* was used during the Horrell and Lincoln County Wars. During the Horrell War, villagers went to the protection of its walls while the Horrells and their followers ran rampant in the streets of Lincoln. Amelia Bolton Church related that she, her sister Ella, and her mother spent the night in the *torreón* with twenty-four other persons the night the Horrell's shot up the Patron wedding *baile*. She said, "We spent the night in fear and trembling, close by the side of our mother, but morning found us quite safe in the old tower."¹⁶

The tower was occupied by Dolan forces during the Five-Day fight in July 1878. Alexander McSween tried to evict its occupants but they refused to leave. However, they did stop firing briefly during the night of July 15 when Dr. Taylor Ealy was summoned to administer to Daniel Huff in the house next door.

The structure changed hands several times until it came into the possession of the Southern Pacific Railroad in May of 1914. By the time the railroad transferred the tower to the state of New Mexico in April of 1934 it had crumbled and was in disrepair.

The *torreón* was reconstructed in 1935 under the Federal Reconstruction Act by the Chaves County Historical Society. Today the reconstructed *torreón* remains a key part of Lincoln and the Lincoln Historic Site, and descendants of the original settlers still live in the Lincoln area.

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Descendants of Pedro Miranda and Maria Encarnacion Sanchez

Generation One

1. Pedro Miranda, the son of Blas Antonio Miranda and Maria Candelaria Chavez, was born c. 1792 in New Mexico.¹⁷ He married Maria Encarnacion Sanchez, daughter of Juan Pedro Sanchez and Maria Gertrudis Jiron. Encarnacion was born c. 1810.¹⁸

Known children of Pedro Miranda and Encarnacion Sanchez were:

- + 2 i. Jose Miranda was born c. 1821¹⁹ and died before January 1887.
- 3 ii. Maria Marcelina Miranda was born on 20 February 1821 in Sabinal, New Mexico and

14 This is where the Ellis Store is located in 2014.

15 Lorenzita Herrera Miranda, 1953.

16 Amelia Bolton Church, WPA interview by Georgia B. Redfield, 23 October 1928; Lincoln Historic Site, Lincoln, New Mexico.

17 1850 U.S. census, Valencia County, New Mexico, population schedule, Pulvidera, p. 335B, dwelling 2117, family 2129, Pedro Meranda [sic] household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014; citing National Archives microfilm publication M432, roll 470).

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid; dwelling 2120, family 2132, Jose Meranda [sic] household.

was baptized on 23 February 1821.²⁰

- + 4 iii. Jose Felipe Miranda was born c. May 1828 in Sabinal, New Mexico and was baptized on 29 May 1828.²¹
- 5 iv. Maria Gloriosa Miranda was born c. April 1831 in La Joya, New Mexico and was baptized on 2 April 1831.²²
- 6 v. Maria Soledad Miranda was born on 27 March 1834 in Socorro, New Mexico and was baptized on 30 March 1834.²³ She died before March 1891. Maria married Jose Sanchez, son of Juan Andres Sanchez and Juliana Sanchez, on 27 February 1851.²⁴
- 7 vi. Jose Blas Miranda was born on 11 February 1836 in San Lorenzo, New Mexico and was baptized on 14 February 1836.²⁵
- 8 vii. Eduvigen Miranda was born on 17 February 1838 in San Lorenzo, New Mexico and was baptized on 18 February 1838.²⁶
- 9 viii. Maria Luisa Miranda was born on 17 February 1838 in San Lorenzo, New Mexico and was baptized on 18 February 1838.²⁷
- 10 ix. Lucia Miranda was born on 15 December 1840 in San Lorenzo, New Mexico and was baptized on 18 December 1840.²⁸

Generation Two

2. Jose Miranda (Pedro¹) was born c. 1821 and died before January 1887. Jose married Maria Leonarda Fajardo, daughter of Jose Antonio Fajardo and Maria Guadalupe Chavez, on 12 December 1847 in Socorro, New Mexico.²⁹ Maria was baptized on 9 November 1826.³⁰ Jose and Maria migrated to La Placita after 1850.

Known children of Jose Miranda and Maria Leonarda Fajardo were:

- 11 i. Maria Inez Miranda was born c. 3 May 1848 in San Lorenzo, New Mexico and was

20 Lila Armijo Pfeufer, extractor, Margaret L. Windham and Evelyn L. Baca, compilers, *New Mexico Baptisms: Church of Our Lady of Belen, 1810-1851* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Genealogical Society, 1998), p. 102.

21 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: Church of Our Lady of Belen, 1810-1851*, p. 161.

22 Lila Armijo Pfeufer, extractor, Margaret L. Windham and Evelyn L. Baca, compilers, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Genealogical Society, 1998), p. 59.

23 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 81.

24 "New Mexico, Marriages, 1751-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Jose Andres Sanchez and Maria Soledad Miranda, 27 February 1851.

25 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 91.

26 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 108. Noted as a twin.

27 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 108. Noted as a twin.

28 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 136.

29 "New Mexico, Marriages, 1751-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Jose Miranda and Maria Leonarda Tafardo [sic], 12 December 1847.

30 "New Mexico, Births and Christenings, 1726-1918," index, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/V24R-2M5> : accessed 14 Feb 2014), Maria Leonarda Fajardo, 9 November 1826; citing Nuestra Señora de Belen, baptisms 1793-1851, FHL microfilm 16,730.

baptized on 6 May 1848.³¹ Maria married Jose Lucio Montoya on 12 October 1881 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.³²

- 12 ii. Miquela Miranda was born c. May 1851 in Socorro, New Mexico and was baptized on 1 June 1851.³³
- 13 iii. Prudencia Miranda was born c. 1855.³⁴ Prudencia married 1) Jack Wood, son of Christopher and Mary Wood, on 30 May 1869 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.³⁵ Jack was born in Texas. Prudencia married 2) Cleto Chavez, son of Mauricio Chavez and Paula Lucero, on 15 May 1888 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.³⁶
- 14 iv. Pablo Miranda was born c. 1857.³⁷
- 15 vi. Jose Patricio Miranda was baptized on 2 December 1860.³⁸ Patricio married Juana Mills on 1 November 1880 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.³⁹
- 16 vii. Julio Miranda was born c. 1863⁴⁰ and died before March 1902. Julio married Antonia Molina, daughter of Victor Molina and Albina Silva, on 20 January 1887 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.⁴¹
- 17 viii. Cruz Miranda was born c. 1865.⁴²
- 18 ix. Ysabel Miranda was born c. 1867.⁴³ Ysabel married Liberty W. Walters, son of Martin Walters and Angelina Ostick, on 9 October 1886 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.⁴⁴
- 19 x. Rosaria Miranda was born c. 1871.⁴⁵
- 20 xi. Beatrice Miranda was born c. 1874.⁴⁶

31 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 253.

32 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 7.

33 Pfeufer, *New Mexico Baptisms: San Miguel del Socorro Church, 1821-1853*, p. 301.

34 1860 U.S. census, Socorro County, New Mexico, population schedule, Rio Bonito, p. 142 (penned), dwelling 1322, family 1222, Jose Miranda household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014); citing National Archives microfilm publication M653, roll 714, imaged from FHL microfilm 803,714.

35 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 1.

36 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 20.

37 1860 U.S. census, Socorro Co., NM, Rio Bonito, p. 142, dwelling 1322, family 1222, Jose Miranda household.

38 "New Mexico, Births and Christenings, 1726-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Jose Patricio Miranda, 2 December 1860; citing Our Lady of Immaculate Conception (Tome, New Mexico), baptisms 1847-1956, FHL microfilm 17,027.

39 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 6.

40 1870 U.S. census, Lincoln County, New Mexico, population schedule, precinct 1, Fort Stanton post office, p. 279 (stamped), dwelling 102, family 102, Jose Miranda household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014); citing National Archives microfilm publication M593, roll 894, imaged from FHL microfilm 552,393.

41 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 17.

42 1870 U.S. census, Lincoln Co., NM, precinct 1, dwelling 102, family 102, Jose Miranda household.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 17.

45 1880 U.S. census, Lincoln County, New Mexico, population schedule, Junction Plaza, enumeration district (ED) 18, p. 394B, dwelling 2, family 2, Jose Miranda household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014); citing National Archives microfilm publication T9, roll 802, imaged FHL microfilm 1,254,802.

46 *Ibid.*

4. Jose Felipe Miranda (Pedro¹) was born c. May 1828 in Sabinal, New Mexico and was baptized on 29 May 1828. He married Maria Dolores Chavez. Maria was born c. 1830.⁴⁷ They migrated to Lincoln before 1860. Felipe was a member of the coroner's jury that investigated the death of Alexander McSween during the Lincoln County War.

Known children of Jose Felipe Miranda and Maria Dolores Chavez were:

- 21 i. Juan Miranda was born c. 1854.⁴⁸
- 22 ii. Jose Dolores Miranda was born c. 1858⁴⁹ and died on 28 October 1928 in Lincoln, New Mexico. Jose married Lorenzita Herrera, daughter of Gregorio Herrera and Geralda Torres, in January 1877 in Torres Ranch, New Mexico. Lorencita was born on 10 August 1861 in La Placita, New Mexico⁵⁰ and died on 27 November 1958 in Las Cruces, New Mexico.⁵¹
- 23 iii. Eliza Miranda was born c. 1862.⁵²
- 24 iv. Maria Dionisia Miranda was born c. October 1866 in Rio Bonito, Socorro County, New Mexico and was baptized on 15 October 1866.⁵³
- 25 v. Placida Miranda was baptized on 15 October 1869.⁵⁴
- 26 vi. Jose Porfirio Miranda was baptized on 28 October 1872.⁵⁵ Porfirio married Maria Catarina Chavez, daughter of Manuel Chavez and Maria Velasquez, on 27 August 1898 in Lincoln County, New Mexico.⁵⁶

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47 1860 U.S. census, Socorro County, New Mexico, population schedule, Rio Bonito, p. 143 (penned), dwelling 1328, family 1228, Felipe Miranda household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014); citing National Archives microfilm publication M653, roll 714, imaged from FHL microfilm 803,714.

48 1870 U.S. census, Lincoln County, New Mexico, population schedule, precinct 1, Fort Stanton post office, p. 282B (stamped), dwelling 214, family 214, Felipe Miranda household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 February 2014); citing National Archives microfilm publication M593, roll 894, imaged from FHL microfilm 552,393.

49 Ibid.

50 "American Life Histories," Lorencita Miranda interview, 5 May 1939. Also, Boylan, *Oral History*, Lorenzita Herrera Miranda interview, 1953.

51 Lincoln Cemetery, Lincoln County, New Mexico, database, *Find A Grave* (<http://findagrave.com> : accessed 14 February 2014), entry for Lorenzita H. Miranda (1861-1958), memorial #14457521.

52 1870 U.S. census Lincoln Co., NM, precinct 1, dwelling 214, family 214, Felipe Miranda household.

53 "New Mexico, Births and Christenings, 1726-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Maria Dionisia Miranda, 15 October 1866; citing Our Lady of Immaculate Conception (Tome, New Mexico), baptisms 1847-1956, FHL microfilm 17,027.

54 "New Mexico, Births and Christenings, 1726-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Placida Miranda, 15 October 1869; citing Santa Rita (Carrizozo, New Mexico), baptisms 1869-1956, FHL microfilm 16,754.

55 "New Mexico, Births and Christenings, 1726-1918," index, *FamilySearch*, Jose Porfirio Miranda, 28 October 1872; citing St. Francis of Paula (Tularosa, New Mexico), baptisms 1869-1956, FHL microfilm 17,008.

56 Padilla y Baca, *Lincoln County [New Mexico] Marriages, June 1869 - December 1910*, p. 38.