

## **Martín Amador (1836 – 1903)**

Martín Amador was a self-made man who became a successful freighter, merchant and community leader. His life is a good example of the opportunities that activities associated with the Santa Fe Trail offered those who worked hard and showed initiative and creativity. The Martín Amador image is courtesy of New Mexico State University (NMSU) Archives and Special Collections, Amador Family Papers.



Martín Amador, was an entrepreneur, inventor, community leader, and visionary. He was born in Juárez, Mexico in 1836. His mother, Gregoria Rodela de Amador, became a widow, but remarried and moved to the newly settled colony of Doña Ana in 1847. In 1861 Martín married María Refugio Ruiz, the 13-year-old daughter of Juan Ruiz, a well-to-do El Paso merchant. Ruiz became one of the mentors who helped Amador succeed. From a young age Martín worked at a variety of jobs and this broad experience helped him become a successful entrepreneur. Although he had limited formal schooling and grew up speaking Spanish, he learned English by himself, probably while tending the horses of the U.S. Dragoons stationed at Doña Ana. When Fort Fillmore was established, Martín began to work for George Hayward, the post sutler. While doing so he became familiar with store keeping, retailing, wholesaling, and provisioning. His work at Fort Fillmore brought him to the attention of Horatio Stephenson, a wealthy man from El Paso, who in 1853 purchased the Santo Domingo de Las Calzadas mine in the Organ Mountains. Soon Martín became the paymaster for the mine and the manager of the smelter. He also hauled salt from the Estancia Valley to Chihuahuan mines. Salt was essential to the Spanish mining process that was used at that time in Mexican mines. The 1870 Census identified Martín Amador as a freighter “33 years of age with real estate assets of \$7,000 and personal assets of the same value for a total of \$14,000”, making him by far the richest New Mexican freighter listed. At this time Amador was freighting for himself and other local merchants to St. Louis, to southern New Mexico forts, to mining camps, and getting government contracts to provide supplies for the various U.S. Army installations in the southwest. By this time, he had earned enough funds through his contracts to supply hay and lumber to the military. His successful freighting operations allowed him and his partner, José Macías, to enlarge their business by opening a store in Silver City. Amador and Macías were the only Hispano merchants who operated a store in Silver City serving the growing number of miners in the area. In 1881 Amador built a house in Las Cruces. By that time he began to operate several businesses, including the Amador Hotel (which still stands today), a general store, a livery stable, and a business hauling freight and goods from Chihuahua, Mexico to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The hotel, a major building and local institution, served as housing, a theater, the local jail, a courtroom, and post office. It is presently unoccupied and being remodeled, yet it is still an important local landmark. The coming of the railroad changed business opportunities in the region, but Martín adapted and took advantage of the new situation. He continued to operate his stores, but the merchandise he sold not only came from the East, but also from the West coast. The produce from his farms was shipped by rail to northern Mexico and southern New Mexico. He developed a taxi service to and from the railroad depot at Las Cruces. Martín was very innovative. Among his designs was that of a combined plow for which he requested a patent in 1901. Martín died February 7, 1903 in Las Cruces, New Mexico and is buried in the San Jose Cemetery.

Submitted by Susan Calafate Boyle