

Nestor Armijo (1831-1911)

Nestor Armijo is an excellent representative of the second generation of highly successful Hispano merchants who diversified their mercantile operations and established businesses in Chihuahua and other Mexican cities.

Nestor Armijo image is courtesy from the Albuquerque Museum.

Nestor Armijo (1831-1911) was the eldest son of Juan Cristóbal Armijo and Juana M. Chávez, members of two of the most influential families in New Mexico. At the age of 12 Nestor attended school at St. Louis University and after completing his education he returned to Old Town Albuquerque. In 1851 he married Josefa Yrisarri, the daughter of Mariano Yrisarri, another wealthy entrepreneur. Shortly after his marriage Nestor made his first trip to California following the Gila and the Colorado Rivers, and eventually crossing the Mohave Desert. He was part of a team driving 55,000 sheep to gold mining communities and the San Francisco market. In 1862 he moved to Las Cruces where he opened a supply store on North Main Street, part of a chain of similar enterprises in Albuquerque, El Paso, and Chihuahua. To supply these stores Nestor regularly travelled to Westport, Missouri, returning often with large wagons full of various types of general merchandise. He continued such trips to the east for 20 years, starting in the spring of each year, and returning in August. Armijo, like other successful Santa Fe Trail merchants, greatly diversified his operations. In addition to buying and selling goods, he also invested in real estate and mining, and worked as an investor, lender, and speculator. Though his permanent home was in Las Cruces, Nestor operated in Chihuahua, Mexico, up to the time of his death. In 1868 he made a trip there to sell American goods wholesale and to also purchase property. Because of political unrest in 1872 Armijo deemed it unsafe to remain in Chihuahua and moved to Las Cruces. He was forced to leave valuable real estate and lost funds that he had lent. Yet he would continue to conduct businesses in Mexico. Nestor was still in Chihuahua in November-December 1876 when he paid his monthly contribution for the state security forces known as Guardia de Iturbide. In April 1892 he purchased additional land in Chihuahua from Nestor and Helena Ascárate and in June, additional land and cattle from Hugo Stephenson and his wife. He also had shares in the Banco Minero de Chihuahua. He continued to travel frequently to Chihuahua to manage his holdings and made investments in that province mostly via Don Luis Terrazas, who controlled most of Chihuahua's land and financial resources. Nestor invested in real estate and banking interests in Las Cruces and El Paso. In 1877 he purchased the Las Cruces home of Maricita Daily for \$4,050. He would eventually enlarge the house and add a second story. The house has been described as the finest 19th Century house in Southern New Mexico. He also owned ranches at Tres Ritos (Three Rivers) near Tularosa, New Mexico, and at Janos, Chihuahua, and purchased several properties around Albuquerque in the 1880s during the boom associated with the coming of the railroad. He did suffer financially from the Mexican Revolution upheaval. Armies and guerillas butchered his cattle and sheep and confiscated his horses. His bank stock, both in Mexico City and Chihuahua, lost most of its value. The El Paso Mortgage and Investment Company failed and the value of real estate and rents dropped dramatically.



Submitted by Susan Boyle