LAMPAZOS AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

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Resumen
Lampazos de Naranjo, Nuevo León, es bien conocido nacionalmente como el lugar natal de prominentes mexicanos. La contribución de varios lampacences a la Revolución Mexicana son particularmente notorias. Sin embargo, este estudio trata de mostrar lo que la Revolución Mexicana hizo a Lampazos. La investigación de los archivos revela que la mayor parte del tiempo entre 1910 y 1918 los dueños de pequeños negocios y los ganaderos que gobernaban entonces Lampazos, se encontraron así mismos tratando simplemente de sobrevivir a una revolución que no entendían en su totalidad. Estudios adicionales sobre los efectos locales de la Revolución Mexicana en comunidades como la de Lampazos profundizaron el entendimiento de este evento trascendental en la historia de México.

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Lampazos de Naranjo, Nuevo León, prides itself on being the birthplace of many illustrious men—and a few women—in Mexican history. The names of many adorn the streets of contemporary Lampazos: Juan Ignacio Ramón from the independence period; Juan Zuazua from the war against the United States and the War of the Reform; Santiago Vidaurri, once the most powerful man in all northeastern Mexico; General Francisco Naranjo, whose service against the French and later frontier Indians earned the addition of his name to that of his native town. Not all the noted lampacenses were men on horseback. Poets, journalists, essayists and the like added to the fame: Nemesio García Naranjo,
Luis Mario Benavides and Leopoldo Naranjo are some familiar names.

The Mexican Revolution brought another group to prominence: General Pablo González Garza figured throughout the decade of violence; Antonio I. Villarreal, whose career spanned the Revolution from precursors to Cárdenas; his sister Andrea Villarreal, styled by an overly dramatic San Antonio newspaper as the “Joan of Arc” of the Mexican Revolution; Ing. Francisco Naranjo; Vidal Garza Pérez; Fortunato Zuazua; and many others. One time Nemesio García Naranjo, after being reminded of the major products of various Nuevo León municipalities, was supposedly asked “¿Lampazos qué da?” to which the reply was “Lampazos da Hombres.”

The lives and exploits of many of these individuals have received considerable attention. As far as the Mexican Revolution is concerned, the contributions of various lampacenses are fairly well known. Additional studies will increase our knowledge and understanding of these contributions. However, this study will not concern itself with what Lampazos did for the Mexican Revolution. Instead, the focus here is on what the Mexican Revolution did to Lampazos. What were the effects of this epic upheaval in Mexico on one important northern frontier town lying just 70 miles to the west of the United States border at Laredo? Founded as the Mission of Santa María de los Dolores in 1698, Lampazos was for many years the northernmost settlement in Nuevo León. Populating this frontier was extremely difficult, but the Valle de Santiago lying to the south of the Punta de Lampazos was vital to the security of Nuevo León. The town of Lampazos stood like a sentinel between developing mountains, facing the open plains to the north and the east. Frequent Indian attacks from these directions marked the history of the pueblo. Greater importance came with major mineral discoveries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also to the south of Lampazos. The silver strike at La Iguana in 1757 brought many new settlers and “produjo muchos millones en pocas días.” While La Iguana’s bonanza days were limited, it produced a tremendous amount of wealth. Subsequent discoveries of silver at places such as El Refugio, about 50 kilometers south of Lampazos and roughly parallel with La Iguana continued to develop the area.
and draw settlers throughout the nineteenth century. In 1910 some 39 mines were reported in the municipio of Lampazos producing silver, lead, zinc and iron. The latter was the important new product with the growing needs of Latin America’s first steel mill, Fundidora de Fierro y Acero in Monterrey, operating since 1902.4

Following the mining frontier came the stockmen raising sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs in large number, particularly the former. With the ending of most of the Indian wars in the late 1870s and the coming of the railroad in 1882—the main line from Nuevo Laredo to Monterrey—Lampazos entered what native historian Ernesto Zertuche González described as “la bella epoca.”5 Rich miners and prosperous stockmen gave support to what became celebrated annual fairs, and visiting operas, zarzuelas, and dramas appeared in the elegant Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón (completed in 1892) while a Plaza de Toros functioned regularly. The ricos included native lampacenses such as the Naranjos and, increasingly, new men of wealth such as representatives of the Milmo and Ferrara families, builders of Fundidora, banks, and other economic interests in Monterrey.6 To Zertuche and other nostalgic lampacenses, all the grand life of Lampazos came crashing down when the Mexican Revolution arrived—a life never to be recovered.7 To the lampacenses of the time, however, “la bella epoca” was not so apparent and the coming and process of the Revolution for the most part found a people just trying to cope. They did not see their world collapsing. The Revolution brought indelible changes but at the time, paying a school teacher’s salary or lighting the plaza were the issues at hand.

The first contacts with the coming of the Mexican Revolution were felt early in Lampazos. Ing. Francisco Naranjo, son of the famed general, organized a club liberal in response to the anti reelectionista liberal movement organized in San Luis Potosí. General Bernardo Reyes, governor of Nuevo León, immediately moved firmly against this club, using the pretext of the club members burning a Judas on Good Friday, April 1, 1901, instead of the following Saturday. Naranjo, Luis G. Avila, César E. Canales, Carlos Zertuche, Luis Mario Benavides were among the members arrested and imprisoned for varying months. This action made Reyes a special villain to the developing Partido Liberal
Mexicano. It also effectively suppressed political activism in Lampazos for a decade.8

Despite this early involvement with the precursor movement, the revolt launched by Francisco I. Madero in November 1910 had little effect in Lampazos. Francisco Naranjo had resurfaced heading up a maderista antireelectionista movement in 1909. At the time the Madero revolt itself came, Lampazos de Naranjo was a municipio of over 8500 inhabitants. Its schools enrolled more students than any city in the state except Monterrey.9 The students, their families, indeed most of the citizens of Lampazos seemed to go about their lives with little change as the aging Porfirio Díaz stepped aside in the Spring 1911. By August of that year a “Club Republicano de Nuevo León” was holding a meeting in the Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón to promote Madero’s certain victory in the upcoming presidential election.10 A preview of some later revolutionary problems for Lampazos came when Ramón González, “El Aguililla”, assaulted and robbed a mezcal factory owner at the Hacienda of Golondrinas and claimed to be working for the maderista cause.11 Distinguishing between bandits and revolutionaries was sometimes no easy task.

Naranjo organized a volunteer group called the Auxiliares de Nuevo León to protect the area. Later with Madero in power Naranjo led forces against the counter revolt involving Benardo Reyes, his old antagonist. His success in these endeavors led to his being sent to Morelos to lead the forces against Emiliano Zapata, when that southern leader rose against Madero. Naranjo, with many lampacenses in his “regimiento irregular,” became military governor of Morelos. With the overthrow of Madero Naranjo continued to support Victoriano Huerta and would return to his native city in 1913 as a colonel in command of the Lampazos garrison.12

The years of Madero were calmer in Lampazos than they were in Morelos. To pass time, a December 1911 inventory of the public library revealed some 44 titles, although several were multi-volume sets, awaiting the curious citizenry. For the less literate, movies were being shown in the teatro—even some from Laredo, Texas. The Academia de Musica continued to offer training to the privileged youth of Lampazos.13
Along with the cultural life, political action heated up in 1912. A public rally in Lampazos supported Nemesio García Naranjo for deputy to the national congress. Both a Club Liberal Lampacense, led by some of the early liberals, and a Partido Constitucional Progresista, headed by local stockmen and store owners appeared. Along with increased political activity came concern about increased revolutionary activity. The instability of Madero's regime threatened interests all over the republic. Even in Lampazos there was concern over Felix Díaz's revolt in Vera Cruz. The key railroad points and mining centers in the municipio were of constant interest to the authorities in Monterrey.  

The Revolution finally came to Lampazos in 1913. In February of that year, after the “Decena Trágica” in Mexico City, Madero was overthrown and murdered. Victoriano Huerta, the porfirista general, took over but faced immediate revolt in the north, led by Venustiano Carranza of Coahuila. Huerta named the elderly porfirista general, Gerónimo Treviño, interim governor of Nuevo León. It was Treviño who then appointed Naranjo to defend Lampazos. Naranjo sent a crew escorted by 80 armed men to repair some railroad bridges. They were driven back into Lampazos and on March 18, 1913, rebel forces under Alfredo Valdez unsuccessfully attacked the city. The revolutionaries in the area were under the general command of lampacense Pablo González Garza. One of the main goals was to cut the rail communications between Monterrey and Laredo. Having taken Bustamante and Villaldama, González and Jesús Carranza turned on Lampazos by late March. Naranjo commanded 200 soldiers, a smaller number of volunteers in a “Defensa Social,” and a few mounted guards from the customs service. He refused a request to surrender to avoid bloodshed, and on March 28 the attack began. The revolutionaries numbered about 500 and were led by Majors José E. Santos, Fortunato Zuazua, Alfred Ricaut, and Francisco Sánchez Barrera. Zuazua was a native of Lampazos—grandson of Juan Zuazua.  

The attack began on March 28 and fighting was intense throughout that day and into the following. On the second day the defenders gave up the plaza and were able to flee to Sabinas without pursuit. In control the revolutionaries burned the railroad station for strategic reasons and burned a mill belonging to the Naranjo family,
probably a personal attack on the leader of the government forces. Sixty-three killed and 22 wounded was the cost of taking Lampazos. Naranjo’s losses were probably somewhat less, but severe. After three days the rebel forces moved on to the Bustamente-Candela area to better defend themselves against federal forces under General Trucy Aubert. The Huerta government felt it could not allow Nuevo Laredo, the “puerto fronterizo,” to fall into revolutionary hands. Huerta replaced Aubert with Joaquín Téllez, who took Villaldama and then marched on Lampazos. Téllez, with 700 men, four cannon, and three machine guns, attacked on June 15, 1913. Within a few hours the rebels, under Jesús Ramírez, Teodoro Elizondo, and others, were driven out of Lampazos.

Huertista forces controlled Nuevo Laredo and had 85 men at Estación Rodríguez, in the Lampazos municipio, to protect the bridge over the Río Salado. Francisco J. Múgica led an attack on the bridge but failed. By the end of 1913 the rebels were back in Ciudad Victoria and Lampazos and the rest of Nuevo León remained in federal hands. Lampazos had also seen all the real fighting it would see in the long years of the Revolution. In 1914 revolutionary, or more often termed, constitutional forces moved back into Nuevo León. Monterrey, naturally, was the key to controlling the area. In early May, González’s Army of the Northeast took the regiomontana capital and with it consolidated the victory in the northeast. With this victory too came significant changes in Lampazos.

The next year, 1915, the victorious revolutionary force split apart and plunged Mexico into a civil war of sorts. In the north carrancistas fought villistas (supporters of Francisco “Pancho” Villa). In April 1915 a villista force under General Orestes Pereyra came into Lampazos without opposition. The fact that carrancista generals González, Antonio I. Villarreal, Fortunato Zuazua, and Vidal Garza Pérez all hailed from Lampazos could not have escaped Pereyra. Before leaving, and ultimately facing defeat on the way to Nuevo Laredo, Pereyra’s troops burned the Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón, apparently to punish this carrancista community. This was but a brief interlude in what was generally consistent support of Carranza from 1914 on in Lampazos.15
The revolutionary activity that began in 1913 obviously affected the daily life of Lampazos. The military, whether federals of Huerta or constitutional forces under Carranza, controlled more of the daily life. The ayuntamiento changed reflecting significant changes in revolutionary fortunes, but it was many of the same shopkeepers and stockraisers in the main local government positions. Samuel Cantú and Juan Sobrevilla, two merchants, occupied the municipal presidency at one time or another over 1913. Through the year, with the federals in control, the city leaders dealt with numerous complaints of depredations by carrancistas. The Lecea brothers, for example, businessmen and stockmen at the Hacienda of Golondrinas, asked tax relief because of losses suffered in carrancista attacks.\(^\text{16}\)

With 1914 and the victory of the carrancistas in Nuevo León, the basic makeup of the city government changed little. The story was different in the countryside, however, and that became apparent very soon. Even in the city itself, the businessmen, well represented in the government, had to deal with the changing value of revolutionary currency. Just as the Army of the Northeast consolidated its position, Lampazos comerciantes were being told they had to remain open to supply necessities without altering prices and they had to accept the billetes in circulation.\(^\text{17}\)

While Pablo González commanded the Army of the Northeast, another lampacense, Antonio I. Villarreal, led the forces into Monterrey and stayed on as military governor. The Lampazos leaders had been quick to congratulate both native sons on every promotion, particularly since they were winning. Villarreal’s governorship left lasting impressions on all of Nuevo León. In two areas in particular, Villarreal forced more “revolutionary” positions on his countrymen. On June 23, 1914, Villarreal’s government published an agrarian decree to stimulate agrarian reform in Nuevo León. Less than a month later, July 14, 1914, came one of the strongest anti-clerical decrees yet produced by the Mexican struggle.\(^\text{18}\)

The agrarian decree caused considerable consternation among the landed interests, who were already feeling some of the effects of dislocations caused by the fighting around Lampazos. Felix Valdés led the commission to see to the distribution of lands
and waters. No more than three and one half hectaras were to be distributed to individuals. Valdés said there was sufficient water in Lampazos and the Haciendas of Dolores and El Carmen to support the land distributed. This work went on through the summer and the fall, or until Villarreal left the area. The Jefe de las Armas, Col. José E. Santos was called on to provide soldiers to accompany the commission members. Complaints about the program from prominent citizens such as Fortunato Zuazua of El Carmen and others abounded, but there seemed to be a sincere effort to carry out Villarreal’s program. By August 15, 1914, 131 1/2 hectaras of land had been distributed, 122 1/2 of them irrigable land.

Agrarian problems were severe in the municipio. Even before the Villarreal decree, Regidor Plutarco González asked the ayuntamiento to aid the farmers in the area by appropriating $500 (pesos) to be distributed $20 per agricultor for seed. Col. Santos, calling for more support for the Constitutional Army as well as the people of Lampazos, urged that the Molina de Maiz y Trigo be put back in operation. Miguel Ferrara Volpe was the principal owner and a key member of the Ferrara-Bortoni families who had extensive interests in Monterrey as well as Lampazos. Graciano Bortoni y Cía was for many years the largest commercial operation in Lampazos, representing also the Milmo interests. The families were not generally seen as keen supporters of the Revolution.

Some of these actions and reactions resulted in a growing revolutionary fervor. In September Regidor González delivered a long discourse arguing that the ayuntamiento had been passive and servile during the porfírin dictatorship, González said the Constitutional Revolution gave an opportunity for action, particularly to help the community. Of prime concern to González was the fact that ejido lands had been sold off in the past to benefit the few. He proposed that maldistributed ejidos be turned over to service of the community. His proposals were accepted. Plutarco González’s call for action on the ejidos made front page news in La Revolución, Diario de la Mañana in Monterrey.

Villarreal’s anti-clerical decree generated excitement throughout Nuevo León and had substantial repercussions in Lampazos. Before the decree, the Villarreal government instructed alcaldes in the state that all priests who refused to turn
over keys to churches were to be expelled. It was further suggested burning the confessional might produce the keys. Juan Sobrevilla, while alcalde primero, received direct instructions from Villarreal to send a Lampazos priest on the first train to Laredo with an order to leave the country. Greater problems arose over the confiscation of property from the Colegio de Sagrado Corazón for use in the public schools of the municipio. These actions led to conflicts in the cabildo with José María Cárdenas calling one-time alcalde primero Celso Canales a reactionary and an obstructionist. Protracted debate and discussion ensued over the colegio’s piano and other objects said to be hidden in Graciano Bortoni’s house. As the argument went on United States Consul Philip C. Hanna protested that the property of the Colegio de Sagrado Corazón belonged to the Incarnate Word College of San Antonio, Texas. Hanna stated that the piano was being cared for by Bortoni and he asked that it be allowed to remain there. The Lampazos officials replied that under the Laws of the Reform neither national or foreign associations could have private property in the Convento. It was national property. There the matter rested, although Bortoni fled the country for a time. The fugitive piano passed into other hands.

The difficulties Villarreal’s decrees caused in Lampazos were not noticed when the native son came to visit in August 1914. Citizens of all political persuasions contributed to the costs of a reception as well as the expenses of Col. Santos in going to Monterrey to arrange the visit. Bortonis, Sobrevillas, Zertuches, and practically all the commercial interests were on the donation list. Villarreal came with an entourage of fifty on a special train from Monterrey. Along with this group came 100 kilos of ice and plenty of Indio Beer. Budweiser, Schlitz, and 26 bottles of red wine were brought from Laredo, Texas. The carne puerco, tamales, cabrito and the like were produced locally. Soon Villarreal would be off to the Convention of Aguascalientes and Lampazos would not see many benefits of their extravagant entertainment.

After the Convention in Aguascalientes failed to resolve the differences among the revolutionaries a state of civil war developed. As mentioned Lampazos had only one brief, destructive visit from the villistas but deteriorating conditions throughout the country affected the municipio. Money woes grew more serious, with rival
forces issuing and canceling currencies with great frequency. Life went on in Lampazos as C. Holck and Company of Monterrey was contracted to light the plaza and make other improvements. Roque Garza of Monterrey got the contract to build the kiosk. The economic problems associated with short term native son governors became apparent later in 1915. Samuel Cantú informed the ayuntamiento in September that Villarreal had authorized public school repairs in Lampazos the previous year. Bessen Rodríguez y Cfa of Monterrey did the work for $10,000 (pesos). Villarreal left for the final time in January 1915, without arranging any funds. The ayuntamiento then turned to another local-boy-made-good, Pablo González, for a donation. They received some aid from him.

Financial problems grew throughout 1915. Hiring and paying policemen was difficult. A continuing concern was maintaining the schools and paying the teachers. Books and other school supplies came from dealers such as Daniel Montero and C. Holck in Monterrey. Taxes on many of the things the city could tax, such as retail sales, were set from above and could not be changed. The cabildo raised fees for patentes to sell liquor, tobacco, milk, and many other items. City revenues also came from the operation of slaughterhouses. Registration fees for “mujeres públicas” were enforced. The old wood from the decaying city-owned Plaza de Toros brought in $275.40. While the regidores wrestled with the issue of paying for schools, they also insisted eligible lampacenses attend those schools. Fines were levied for non-attendance.²⁸

Even though the Villa-Carranza conflict continued for a time in 1915, Lampazos stayed solidly with Carranza. The ayuntamiento proclaimed the government of Don Venustiano Carranza as the only legal government in the Republic. However, it was not until December that Carranza’s land reform decrees from Vera Cruz the previous January took any effect in Lampazos. Most of what was done was simply surveying the ejidos to determine the property rights.²⁹ Still the revolutionary upheaval drove some of the 1910 elite to temporary exile. Miguel Ferrara Volpe was another prominent temporary resident in Laredo in this period.³⁰ Many of the same problems continued through 1916: setting and collecting patentes; salaries for teachers; salaries for police. The
economic difficulties and monetary uncertainty associated with Carranza's regime affected the municipio of Lampazos as it did every other part of the Republic. By November municipal employees were demanding payment in money "metallica". The federal government maintained close to 100 troops in the municipio in 1916 but the local authorities had to bear much of the expense of maintaining the troops. Further evidence of the continued breakdown of everyday life in Lampazos appeared throughout 1916. In January representatives of the Milmo interests complained to the Nuevo León government that fences were cut and stock run in to graze their land. A junta was established to sell maize to the public. Patentes continued to increase and some merchants were complaining about the clandestine sale of liquor by non-licensed dealers. On the other hand, the Jefe de las Armas was threatening fines if the merchants continued raising their prices. If there was not enough to worry about, the governor's secretary needed to know in mid 1916 how many men, arms, horses, saddles, and ammunition Lampazos could supply in the event of war with the United States. The year ended on a low note with alcalde primero José María Cárdenas fatally wounded in a personal altercation at the Lampazos railroad station.

Bandoleros arrived on the scene in 1917. Court records reveal a great increase in robberies, escapes from jail, and incidents connected with increasing banditry. Ranches in the municipio were attacked by well known bandoleros such as Rafael Hinojosa. Hinojosa boldly entered Lampazos alone one spring day and then eluded the soldiers and police who pursued him. Lucio Vidaurre, Nicolás "El Mechudo" Benavides, and Miguel Hinojosa were among other well known bandits. Some banditry was associated with continued revolutionary action, but most was simply robbery with no pretense of other causes.

The population of the municipio declined with the breakdown of law and order. Between 6000 and 7000 people resided in the municipio in 1917 according to several estimates. Included in the jurisdiction of Lampazos were six haciendas and 80 ranchos producing maize and wheat along with the varied livestock. Some hacienda lands were fairly well divided up before the Revolution, but now many were overrun with squatters. The Patricio Milmo
holdings had been taken over by small stockmen. Leopoldo Naranjo was holding on to Dolores for the family. He also continued to operate the Naranjo’s mining interests. Other prominent mining entrepreneurs of long standing were the Graciano Bortoni interests, who also operated one of the four mills in Lampazos. A new miner rising to prominence was Epigmenio Ayarzagaitita. There were fifteen foreigners living in Lampazos—the prominent Italians as well as some natives of Germany, Wales, Ireland, and the United States.38

The school situation worsened through 1917, and reached a crisis point in early 1918. Adding to the misery was a smallpox epidemic beginning in late 1917. Sixty-six deaths resulted—51 in January 1918 alone—and hardest hit were the very young.39 The schools closed, partly because of the epidemic and partly because the teachers had not been paid since November. The new ayuntamiento which took office on January 1, 1918, blamed the previous government for the problems and looked to the state government to resolve them. The state government agreed to pay the December salaries and the teachers returned to work. However, in February, classes were consolidated, assisting teachers let go, and salaries reduced. Cristóbal Cárdenas, the head teacher whose salary was cut to $100 a month, made it clear he would not return to Lampazos in the fall 1918 unless his salary was raised to $125 oro nacional. Cárdenas did not return. The Nuevo León director general of education hired Ramón Osuna, a Monterrey business school director, to replace Cárdenas at $100, payable in oro americano if there was no oro nacional. Pablo González sent $200 to assist the schools.40 It was a struggle but Lampazos consistently fought to keep the schools of the municipio operating.

In August 1918 Fermin Garza Pérez, prominent citizen and several times member of the ayuntamiento, was murdered near his home by Ignacio Cárdenas. The Cárdenas family was also prominent in Lampazos. The murder was an outgrowth of a feud from the year before which had already seen Rafael Cárdenas, the father of Ignacio, lose an arm.41 With such lawlessness among the leaders of Lampazos an invitation from the International Immigration Company of San Antonio, Texas, that same August must have tempted less prominent lampacenses. It offered $1.75 a
day and $1 per hundred pounds for picking cotton. Industrial
workers were held out the possibility of earning $5.00 or more a
day. It is not known if there were applicants but the ayuntamiento
publicized the offer.\textsuperscript{42}

The bandolero problem also worsened in 1918, especially
through the summer and fall. Attacks continued on area ranches
where the bandits often made off with horses and saddles as well as
weapons. Attacks on mining headquarters increased. In June a
group of ten armed and mounted men assaulted and robbed the
Fundidora de Fierro y Acero company at Piedra Imán, one of the
largest operations in the municipio. It was hit again in October.
Bandolero activity remained heavy, actually for several years.\textsuperscript{43}

By the end of 1918 Lampazos seemed to be staggering
through difficult times to even more difficult times. The problems
did not go away in the subsequent years. Lampazos de Naranjo
experienced what many small northern communities experienced in
the 1920s and 1930s. The other communities did not have “la bella
epoca” and “los hombres ilustres” to look back on, so perhaps that
made things a bit harder on the lampacenses. Increasingly,
moreover, the Revolution came to be viewed more in terms of what
various lampacenses contributed to it, not by what difference it
made in Lampazos. Lack of funds, lands being overrun, mines
playing out, bandoleros here and there, all contributed to a
population concerned mostly with surviving from day to day. It is
perhaps symbolic of waning revolutionary fervor in Lampazos that
in 1918 the ayuntamiento was considering trying to rent that famous
piano of Sagrado Corazón for use in its Escuela de Niñas.\textsuperscript{44}
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