Land Grants: Sangre de Cristo Grant and land access dispute

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Under Spanish Rule

- Prior to 1821
  - Grants were executed by the governor in the name of the king of Spain
- Called ‘encomiendas’
  - Given to a soldier as repayment for his service
  - Also included the rights to demand tribute and labor from the Indian settlers of the area (Serna)
- Mexican Independence in 1821 so new laws regulating land were needed
After Mexican Independence

- **merced** or “grant”
  - Permission granted from the Mexican government to an individual to own, settle on, and develop a piece of land

- 4 Types:
  - Private
  - Community
  - Quasi-community
  - Pueblo
Types of Grants

- **Private Grant**
  - Given to an individual as a reward for service to the government

- **Community Grant**
  - Large amount of land given to a group of 10-100, own individual piece and the remainder was used as community area for farming, ranching, etc

- **Quasi-Community Grant**
  - One or few ‘owners’ that can dish out land to large groups for settlement, similar to community grants
  - not typically in writing which often caused problems

- **Pueblo Grant**
  - Land given to the Indians, what we now call ‘reservations’
Mexican-American conflict

- Treaty of Guadelupe-Hidalgo
  - promised that land grants given to settlers by the newly independent country of Mexico would be honored and that the United States government could not take the land, even once New Mexico became a state

- Even after the Mexican-American War in the 1880s, the US could not declare ownership of previously granted land because of this
Spanish/Mexican Land Grants in Colorado
Sangre de Cristo Land grant

- Spanish for “blood of Christ”
- New Mexican families came into the San Luis Basin to settle along the Rio de la Culebra
- The Sangre de Cristo Land Grant was conferred by Mexico to Beaubien family in 1844
Charles Beaubien

- Charles Beaubien was a French-Canadian fur trader
- Beaubien was married to a Mexican woman, thus he gained the right to ask for a land grant from the Mexican government in 1844
- He invited Hispanic settlers to develop the land
In 1848, 16 families from Taos traveled north to Ute territory to establish a new settlement.

- Attack from Ute
- 8 families return to Taos
- 1850 Negotiated a peace treaty with the Ute and return to the San Luis area
First Settlers

- A promise of homesteading
- A promise of a better life
COMMUNAL LAND RIGHTS ON LA SIERRA

- Farmers and Ranchers
- Well-irrigated farms
- Annual grazing cycle for livestock
- La merced “the grant or gift”
  - La Sierra
- Influenced settlers decision to settle
- “Communal environmentalism provided the foundation for the community’s political resistance”
1960 Jack Taylor purchased 77,524 acres
- pasturage
- Wood & Lumbar
- Settlement rights

“Costilla County Range War”
Taylor fenced in the land and committed several acts of violence
Land Rights Council (LRC) was founded in 1978
- Fight for the rights of the community and to win back the communities access to La Sierra
- Ultimate goal of regaining its community’s lost land rights
EVOLUTION OF LA SIERRA / TAYLOR RANCH

- June 24th 2002 the Colorado Supreme Court rulings against the San Luis community
- 2005 the Colorado Court of Appeals granted limited access of the property
  - Descendants
  - Original settlers of San Luis
  - New owners
    - Better neighbors to the community
Reference

http://www.newmexicohistory.org/landgrants/sangre_de_cristo/english/home.html
http://sdcnha.org/js/costilla-county-extended-info.html#sdclg